

Fear, Trembling, Weakness, Wisdom

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead emphasizes the importance of simplicity and reliance on God's power in preaching the gospel to maintain unity and clarity in the church.

Duration: 45:14

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 16:19-20, Romans 15:18-19, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Topics: "Weakness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a past conference where he had used scientific illustrations to convey spiritual truths. However, he realized that his approach had catered to the flesh and appealed to the educated rather than relying on the demonstration of the Spirit and power. The speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching in a way that allows God to confirm the message through signs and wonders. He references Mark 16:19-20, where Jesus ascends to heaven and the disciples go forth preaching with the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following. The speaker urges the audience to learn how to preach in a way that allows God to confirm the message and emphasizes the need for preaching that honors the Lord and is sealed with his confirming demonstration of power.

Transcript

In this series of messages on the First Epistle to the Church at Corinth, we are finding that Paul is very concerned about the fact that divisions, wrangling, and strife has come into this company of people that he personally had led to the Lord and had seen gathered together in the form of a church. He's greatly concerned about it. He discovered that it was the strategy of the enemy, wherever the church was planted, to do one of two things to it.

First, to destroy it by persecution or to destroy it by infiltration. By infiltration I mean to cause the people to become more concerned about each other than about the Lord. And apparently there was considerable evidence that the church at Corinth was about to be split into three sects, be torn into three or four different parts.

And Paul is ministering now to this condition, striving for the unity of the spirit in order that there may be preserved in Corinth the testimony. To do this, to further his argument, in the portion we have, verses one through eight, the Apostle Paul reminds this congregation of the manner of his preaching. You see, there were four groups that were there.

There was the one group that had met around, perhaps around Apollos, who was from Alexandria, a great seat of learning. And with this group, wisdom was that which gathered them together. Education, philosophy, these were the things that drew them to each other.

Then there was a second group that were mighty, powerful people. They were the men of influence, the merchants, those that had money and influence in the community, because of what they had achieved. There was a third group that met around birth, the high-born, these that were, if I can use the term, the blue bloods.

And they had, of course, a more restricted company because nothing that one could do of his own would by any means make it possible for him to get into that select group. And then there was the fourth group that had none of the other three. They were the low-born and the poor and the uneducated, but I rather feel that that was the group that said, we are of Christ.

And they became spiritually proud and met together in this fashion. Well, Paul is greatly concerned about this because he wants the people to understand that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God and that the achievements of man are paltry little toys and that there is no true aristocracy except on the part of those that have been born into his family through faith in his son. And then we find that the other group find nothing in which they can rest, saying they're poor and uneducated because when they are in Christ, they have all things.

Now, today, we notice that Paul is telling this company to remember the manner in which the gospel was presented to them. How he preached the gospel is important for he is reminding them that he came to them not with excellency of speech. They were followers of Apollos, eloquent, earnest, a sincere servant of God, but they had used his eloquence and his sincerity as the coagulation point of their own personal pride and interest.

And so Paul says, I want you to remember that when I came to you, I did not come with high flown oratory, with skillfully phrased sentences, with words that were simply beautiful to hear. I came to you, said he, in simplicity of speech, not with excellency of speech. He's not the only one that did this.

I was most interested to read this week in the introduction to the Book of Sermon by John Wesley the following. Is there any need to apologize to sensible persons for the plainness of my style? A gentleman whom I much love and respect lately informed me with much tenderness and courtesy that men of candor made great allowance for the decay of my faculties and did not expect me to write now either with regard to sentiment or language as I did 30 or 40 years ago. Perhaps they are decayed, though I am not conscious of it, but is not this a fit occasion to explain myself concerning the style I use from choice, not necessity? I could even now write as floridly and rhetorically as even the admired Dr. Boswell, but I dare not because I seek the honor that cometh of God only.

What is the praise of man to me that have one foot in the grave and am stepping into the land from whence I shall not return? Therefore, I no more dare to write in a fine style than to wear a fine coat, but were it otherwise, had I time to spare, I should still write just as I do. I purposely decline what many admire, a highly ornamented style. Paul could have said the same thing, but he purposely declined.

He said, I have come to you with a message, I've come to you with facts, I've come to you to present to you truth, and as you see and hear that truth, there will be worked a miracle in your heart. I want nothing to obscure the miracle. I want you to see it so clearly, so unmistakably, that there will be no hindrance at all

to your meeting Christ.

It is told that James II, the King of England, asked a certain painter who specialized in painting flowers to paint his portrait. And when the portrait was finished, this flower specialist had put so many garlands of roses and of other flowers around that they could hardly find the King. And I am rather afraid that that's what a great many speakers have done.

They have become so flowery in their speech and in their eloquence that they've obscured the Lord Jesus Christ. It was G. Campbell Morgan talking with a friend in England who made this statement. Well, he was a prophet, but now he has become an artist, and the artist in him has obscured the prophet.

And I am afraid that this is exactly what we find happening today in a great many cases. Paul would not be bothered. He could not stoop so low as to try and gild the glorious lily that come from the throne of God.

He would do nothing to make this message palatable to the congregation. He was going to present him as he was and would let the people choose or refuse as they might, but he would not appeal to their vanity. Then Paul said, I not only did not come to you with excellency of speech, but I did not come to you with profundity of wisdom.

He said, I didn't want to pose as a philosopher. I didn't want to pose as a scholar. Now he was a philosopher and he was a scholar, but he would not come in that guise.

He wouldn't come in that way. He came as a herald to simply proclaim a message. I was talking with Dr. William Wrighton, who has for many years in the past taught in some of our fine universities, been the head of the Department of Philosophy in two of the state universities, and he has a splendid volume of Philosopher's Love for Christ.

And I was talking to him about some of the problems and questions that I encounter among students from time to time and asked him if he thought it wise for me to spend a great deal of time becoming acquainted with all the categories of thought they use. He said, no, you become a specialist in the truth of God. You haven't the time, the energy, nor, I believe, the incentive to master this.

You simply stay where God has put you in the field that he's placed you. But I have discovered from personal experience something of what can happen in this regard. I'll never forget my first occasion of meeting with a group of inner varsity students.

It was about three or four years ago in Christmas holidays when they'd gathered for a conference. I had a message that had seemingly been quite effective in some places. I'd used a little bit of my Reader's Digest science, you know, to illustrate certain truths.

And the consequence of it was that I came before this group and I wasn't aware of it, but there must have been a good pit of smugness there to think that I knew one or two things, you know. Well, after it was over, some of those dear, honest students, so transparently honest, came to me. And I felt just like a little lamb that had been caught in a field with a whole flock of buzzards.

There just wasn't a shred left on me when they finished. And I'm very grateful for it, you know, because I must confess that there's a human heart to want to be thought well of. And this was very good because it brought me to see on this first occasion of meeting with students that I was there as just, well, only an expert in one field.

And that is what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for me, not even in the Bible. There's so much of the Bible that we haven't time to study and to read to the degree to which one poses an expert. But like Paul, I know whom I believe and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.

And this was the manner in which Paul came, simply heralding, simply declaring. You see, after all, Solomon was used of God to try and teach the Jews the meaning of wisdom. And Socrates was used, I think perhaps even of God, to try and teach the Greeks the meaning of wisdom.

But you find that neither of them succeeded too well. And then Rome came along and gathered up what both the Jews and the Greeks had done and put it in a crystallized form that all could see, so that the bankruptcy and the tragic weakness of the wisdom of men could be seen. So when the Lord Jesus Christ came, he came to an hour, a generation, that had exhausted itself in its vain appeal to try and reach God by its own means, by its own shoestraps.

But here's what Paul is facing at Corinth. This effigy of wisdom from the Greeks and the Jews now is standing there like a specter or like a haunt to cause trouble in the church. And all Paul really wants to do is to get the people to realize how utterly impossible it is for their group to be divided in this fashion.

Well, we found out how he didn't preach, but how did he preach? It's very interesting here in this third verse. I was with you in weakness. Now this was not the weakness of cowardice, nor was it physical weakness or sickness, in my estimation at least, but I think it was that weakness that comes from a total disavowal of fleshly means.

When a man as Paul, who was trained and skilled in oratory and argument, is forced to lay this all aside and simply stand there as a herald with a proclamation, my friend, he has nothing in which to trust. He may have had been the most successful debater in the Sanhedrin and probably was, but when he comes now to this church at Corinth, he's not a debater any longer. He's simply a witness.

He's simply testifying to what the Lord has done. And Paul says, I was with you in fear. I do not believe this was the fear of men's faces or the fear of failure, but I think it was the fear that he had that somehow he might obscure the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ to these people, that he might get in the way, and that they might see him.

I believe everyone that would seek to ever exalt the Lord Jesus through the spoken word has a constant prayer, O God, may they see no man save Jesus only. And I believe that there was a fear that somehow he might obscure the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the hearts of these people. Then he said, I was with you in much trembling.

I do not think that this was trembling in the face of criticism or rejection, not at all, but rather it was that trembling that comes with the realization that he is the vehicle for omnipotence. Some of you have journeyed across the ocean on one of the large liners, and you know that as the turbines propel the ship through the sea, the whole vessel trembles, trembles with power, with the surge and thrust that ignores the mountainous waves as it forces its way through the ocean. And so I feel that Paul said he was there in trembling, conscious of his own weakness, but conscious also that he was the vehicle of God's omnipotence.

And he realized that what was done would have to be done by the Lord through him. Then said he, and my speech was not with enticing words. How we have changed, how things have changed.

Now you know the man is honored and promoted that can use enticing words. I went to school for several years to find out how to frame enticing words, for we were told, if not by direct statement, at least by implication, that the ones that were promoted and honored and given national recognition and national ministry were the ones that could frame, turn a neat phrase, you know, and could cause the people to laugh and to enjoy themselves. And if you wanted to succeed in American evangelical Christianity, you had to be a kind of a cross between a Harry Lauder and a children's kindergarten teacher so that you could make profound things simple.

Of course, the trouble was we so often simplified them to absurdity. But at the same time, in the present day, you're honored and promoted in terms of your enticing words. Paul said, no, I can't do that.

I can't play down to the crowd. I can't seek applause. I can't ask to be promoted.

I can't do anything. Nothing will I do that will in any wise cater to the flesh. I have no use to appeal, no purpose to appeal to the philosophers and the educated.

I have absolutely no intention of turning this message into a means of entertainment. I have one desire and one only, and that is that I may proclaim the truth in the demonstration of the Spirit and in power. This was how Paul preached in the demonstration of the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps you'd like to turn with me to Mark, the 16th chapter, and let the Spirit of God impress upon your heart a simple, lovely little word in these last two verses. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, confirming the word with signs following.

You know, isn't it strange? They went and the Lord went with them. I wonder today, I wonder today, if those who go to church go to see what a mighty God can do for needy people, or perhaps if most don't, just go to see what mighty men can do for a needy God. They went everywhere, the believers, preaching the word, and the Lord went with them, confirming the word.

Oh, how different. The demonstration of the Spirit and power. In Romans, the 15th chapter in verses 18 and 19, one of the most startling statements that you'll find anywhere in the scripture, it's either made by a mad egomaniac who is making a statement that is so absurd that intelligent men will have to completely ignore it, or it's the simple statement of a child of God that is testifying to the truth that is being acknowledged by the Holy Ghost.

I think the latter is the case. But listen to what Paul says, for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem, and around about, and to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. From Jerusalem to Yugoslavia, one man could say I have fully, fully, fully preached the gospel of Christ.

How? In the demonstration of the Spirit and power, he declared the facts. That was his responsibility. God confirmed the facts.

That was God's responsibility. Beloved, if there is any need that we have in the century, it is to learn how to preach in such a way that God can confirm the message. Not just that men accept it, and honor it, and agree with it, but that God will seal it.

Why, so much of what is preached today so dishonors the Lord that you can wonder, would wonder how he would ever acknowledge it. But oh, that we may be taught again that message that God will own as his, and seal with his confirming demonstration in power. Our hearts have been greatly refreshed and encouraged as we've learned in the last few years that God is still willing to do that.

Every time my heart grows a little weary as I see too clearly into American Christianity in the 20th century, I'm encouraged by the recollections of what God did no less than 10 years ago in the Hebrides, there in the north of Scotland, through this honored servant Duncan Campbell. These three men that met for prayer for three months, and God spoke to their hearts through Psalm 24. They broke in confession saying, when they read, who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.

They broke. They met together in prayer. They acknowledged their spiritual pride and their, the sentiments of unkindness in their heart.

And then God moved upon them for another month in prayer until prayer had prevailed. Duncan Campbell was brought by the Lord supernaturally from Ireland over to uh, the Hebrides. They had that first meeting on a Sunday morning.

It was nothing. Nothing happened. That first, the second meeting, Sunday night, cold.

They went to prayer, did a group of them that were concerned about revival in that island. After the evening service at 1130, one of the brethren came and said, Brother Campbell, they're coming. They're coming.

Oh yes, that he, tomorrow night we've announced the service. Oh no, he said, the Lord is witness to my heart that they're coming tonight, tonight. And just then the church door opened and a family, a husband, wife, and children came in with tears streaming down their cheeks.

By 1230, there wasn't a vacant seat in that auditorium. It was filled with sobbing people. By 130, the church yard had over 200 people gathered for there wasn't room for them in the church.

By 230, they couldn't find a cottage anywhere in the village that didn't have its lights on. God the Holy Ghost had settled down upon an island. Within two weeks, there wasn't a young person between the age of 12 and 21 that had not bowed at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now today, 10 years afterwards, 95 percent of them are going on steadfastly with Jesus Christ in the demonstration of the Spirit and in power. But now I want you to notice what the Apostle preached. I said we must know that which God will honor.

So we find that he is preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified, not the wisdom of the world. Men would have applauded if Paul had used his skill, turned on his personality, and had done those things which he was equipped to do. But God would have disowned him.

It would have been Ichabod, and the glory of the Lord would have departed. And Paul said, I can afford to be forsaken of all men, but I can't afford to lose the blessing of God. It's better to have the seal of God's power, better to have God's blessing, than to have the throng at your feet, at your heels.

Better to have God say, this is my truth, to a few hearts. All but remember this, when Paul preached, the word that he preached had to do with the sovereignty of God's Son. They never presented Jesus Christ as Savior alone.

They always presented him as Lord and Savior. Unknown in the New Testament is the idea that you can take Jesus Christ as Savior now, then six years later when you get tired of living your own way, you can go to a Bible conference and take him as Lord. The modernists cut Christ in two, you know.

They say he's man, not God, and they hand you the the human part. But I'm afraid we evangelicals have cut him in two lengthwise. We've said here you can take the Savior half, you can leave the Lord half later.

If there's any one thing this church stands for as far as its pulpit ministry is concerned, it is this, that no one ever has or can experience salvation, truly be born of God, unless he is willing to consent to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in his life. See this in Acts the third chapter, where Peter has spoken to this layman. He's risen and stood there and has been given this, the whole wholeness and healing.

Peter, verse 12, and Peter saw it and he said, why marvel ye at this? And then on to the 14th verse, but ye denied the Holy One the just and desired a murder to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know. Yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

And then verse 19, repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. Ye kill the Prince of life. God hath made him to be both Prince and Savior, both Lord and Christ.

And in the house of Cornelius he said, he is Lord of all. What was the message? Jesus Christ is God. God come in the flesh.

God that died and was raised from the dead. And because he is risen from the dead, you must acknowledge him to be Lord. And only then can you know him as Savior.

Your crime is, said he, said these in the New Testament. You were Lord of your own life. This is the essence of sin.

Is there any possibility that you could be forgiven of such a crime while still purposing to continue as Lord? Unthinkable. Unthinkable is the word that comes. You must receive him as Lord and as Savior.

Confess with your mouth Jesus to be Lord. And believe on him in your heart that God has raised him from the dead. Thou shalt be saved.

This is the message of the cross. This is that which God ordained to be spoken. This is that which he intended to be given.

And the company of people that call themselves Christians were those that had bowed to his sovereignty and abandoned all rights to their own lives. And in this message we find two things. First, the wise of the world didn't understand it.

But there were those that did. Such as should be saved. And we find that there was wisdom to the mature.

There was an insight that was given to those that were prepared for the grace of God. It'll always be that way. Our Lord Jesus had a throng that ate the bread.

But when he told them how to have eternal life, that they must eat him and drink him, eat his flesh and drink his blood, while they had no life in them, they turned and followed him no more. He lost the crown, but he held the blessing of the Father. And so it was that these that followed him lost the crown, the throng, the products of the wise and the mighty.

But there were some that were saved. And it was these that had had this miracle performed upon them that became the heirs of salvation. We have seen how he preached and what he preached, but just a brief notice of why the apostle preached Jesus Christ and him crucified in this manner.

First, he preached it because it was the testimony of God, the truth of God's holiness and justice and righteousness, that man is totally morally depraved before God, that man is a monstrous criminal, that the crime that he's committed is that he's turned to his own way, enthroned himself in his own heart and worships himself as God. The essence of sin is self-idolatry, self-will, being God in one's own life. This is revealed to us as a monstrous crime, for there at Calvary, God displayed his wrath against sin, against selfishness, against playing God or going into the God business for oneself.

And there, God poured out his anger and his wrath upon his own son. The arrow that had been put into the bow of God's justice was drawn into the heart of the Lord Jesus. The sword that had been wet and prepared for judgment fell upon the Lord Jesus.

This is the testimony of God's holiness and God's righteousness, and God's wrath against sin is that Jesus Christ and him crucified. But it's also the testimony of God's measureless grace, for there the Lord Jesus endured the just anger of God against sin that he might redeem us unto himself. And this is the message that he ordained be preached, for it is a message that will bring with it the demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God.

Remember, no one is born of God simply because he hears that Christ was born of a virgin and lived a sinless life and died an atoning death and was raised from the dead. No one is born of God without this message, but simply agreeing to it is not to be equated with salvation. There must be a miracle.

It's something supernatural. Conviction of sin is the revelation of the Holy Ghost to the human heart of this monstrous crime. And no one is ever born of God until he is convicted of the nature of his crime.

Then it is a revelation of the enormity of God's wrath against sin. It's the revelation of the wondrous love of God. It's the revelation of man's hopeless helplessness, that he must cast himself wholly upon the grace of God.

My friend, there is nothing that so strips us of pride and arrogance as the fact that every one of us, regardless of whether we were born in the home with a silver spoon in our mouth or in the slums, that we come and stand at the cross as self-condemned criminals that have absolutely nothing in which to trust. Our education is of no avail. Our background is of no help.

Our possessions are of no value. We stand there as did the publican God be merciful to me, a sinner. The only one that will ever find life is the one that comes poor in spirit.

Poor, this poverty of which the first beatitude speaks, is not a false humility, but it is the fact that one has discovered that in him and his flesh is no good thing, nothing in which to trust, and he simply must stand there hopeless and helpless, a self-condemned bankrupt sinner. It is a revelation of God to the human heart. Then it is a revelation of the grace of God.

And then, said Paul, would it please God to reveal his son in me? There is the revelation of life in Jesus Christ. Salvation is revelation. And it's a demonstration of the spirit and of power.

Dr. Ironsides had a solemn statement that he made. If one makes a profession of salvation on the strength of a discourse that has stirred his emotions and made him feel that he ought to do something about it, and also because of his admiration of the preacher, then when the preacher is gone, his emotions are no longer stirred, he will find himself wondering if he is converted or not. Dr. Ironsides, like Paul, was concerned about the fact that many people have their faith stand in the wisdom of men, as you find the reason for Paul's preaching as he did in verse 5, that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men.

Just this week a booklet has come into my hand, written by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, the pastor of the Westminster Chapel in London. He succeeded Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. An interesting thing, he began to preach the sovereign grace of God and real salvation, and the crowd emptied.

From about 1,500 that attended Dr. Morgan's ministry, he was finally preaching to 40 or 50, and they said, see, no one can follow Dr. Morgan. But he knew what he was doing. He knew that he had to get a people that were committed to truth that God could bless.

And then he began to build. Now he's speaking to between 1,400 and 1,500 every Lord's day, and they've opened the second balcony. And he has 800 to 900 in his Friday night Bible class.

But this has come from the pen of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a question, I think, which forces us to examine ourselves in the light of Dr. Sargent's thesis. Dr. Sargent, William Sargent, wrote a book, *The Battle for the Mind*, in which he contends that all conversion can be explained in terms of Pavlov's experiments with the dogs. And so he says that he's answering this.

And he says there is a question which forces us to examine whether or not there isn't certain grounds for what Dr. Sargent said, the so-called temporary results of evangelistic efforts. We must note the discrepancy between the large number that go forward and the small numbers that remain and join the church. It is not simply enough to say, but look at those who stick.

That's all right, but what has happened to the others? What at the outset did happen to them? What about the students? What about those in advanced children's efforts? What about others that make a profession of faith and soon are back in the world? So many of them fall away. I do not know the exact figures. May I pause in the reading to say this, that Mervyn Rosell, a friend of mine from the West Coast, stated to me last March that it's his mature opinion that probably only one half of one percent of those that make first-time professions of faith give any evidence of real salvation a year later.

This is startling and I'll pass on to Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. I do not know the exact figures, but there is at any rate a serious leakage. Is it not the case that some of our methods and approach to evangelism are not beyond suspicion? Wrong methods are unscriptural.

They bring the gospel into disrepute. They allow the man who is outside the church to scoff. He comments, this is all psychology.

You can see it happening at the time and look at what happens afterwards. In such a manner, the gospel is discredited. The most serious reason, however, which should impel us to examine ourselves is that such tendencies and use of techniques imply a lack of faith in the work of the Holy Spirit.

What then are the more detailed lessons for evangelistically-minded Christians? The first consideration that there must be no divorce between the message we give and the methods we use. Surely all must agree that our methods as well as our message are controlled to be controlled by the New Testament and its teaching. The crucial passage on this matter is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, 1 to 5, and especially those words, My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Here the great Apostle goes out of his way to explain to us that he deliberately rejected certain methods and he did so in order that it might be clear to everybody that the results were not of man but of God. In this statement we have the apostolic pattern and the apostolic authority for saying that our methods must be controlled in a similar manner and that always it must be in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. In the second place, I think we must avoid that leads to a suspicion that in evangelistic activities we are conditioning people in a psychological manner.

This again suggests that we must avoid any deliberate use of techniques as aids to the gospel. We are to present the truth, trusting to the Holy Spirit to apply it. Another important principle is that in presenting the Christian gospel we must never make a direct approach either to the emotions or to the will.

The emotions and the will should always be influenced through the mind. Truth is intended to come to the mind. The normal course is for the emotions and the will to be affected by the truth after it is first entered and gripped the mind.

It seems to me that this is a most important principle of Holy Scripture. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones is conversant with the fact that in the 20th century, as in the past century, we had this tendency to exalt the words of men, the ideas of men, the cleverness of men, and we've obscured the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. And beloved, the question I want to ask you today is, does your faith stand in the wisdom of men or does it stand in the power of God? Is it in your head or in your heart? What a tragedy that so many are going to miss heaven by 18 inches because they have all their salvation here and it never made the tremendous distance from intellect to spirit.

Salvation is not in a plan, it's not in theology, it's not in doctrine. Salvation is through a plan and through theology and through doctrine, but salvation is in a person, Jesus Christ. Christ in you the hope of glory.

This was Paul's concern. He did not want a congregation of people that had been sovereignly and supernaturally born of God. And so said he, when I came to you, I disavowed wisdom.

I disavowed philosophy. I came in fear, in weakness, in trembling. I stood before you knowing that if you were born of God, it would require a supernatural operation of the living God, that it was as much a miracle for you to be born again as to take a piece of granite and turn it into living, throbbing flesh.

It was as much a miracle as to raise Jesus Christ from the dead. So said he, I came to you completely defrosting in the Holy Ghost to honor the message and bring life through it. Oh, let me ask you, is your faith stand in the wisdom of God, the power of God, the demonstration of the Spirit of God? Or are you

trusting a plan, a verse, a doctrine? Do you know Christ or just know about him? Paul was concerned and every honest servant of God in the 20th century must be concerned.

Beloved, if we want the blessing of God, we must have something God can bless. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, look thou upon us as a people. Thou dost know our hearts and all that concerns us.

There's nothing here, Lord, in this congregation that's hidden from thine eyes of love, nothing that obscures thy face of love. Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we're here and everyone is known to thee. Should there be someone in this company that's trusting in the wisdom of men, trusting in words or even scripture verses, instead of having used the truth and doctrine and words to press on to meet thee and the revelation of thy Son in them.

Oh God, for them we pray just now. But then our Father, we pray for this testimony, this assembly of believers. Oh God, make us of one mind and one heart.

We either have to choose, we must choose, Lord. We either must use the methods of the world and cleverness of speech and program and activities and entertainment and go on and get wood, hay and stubble and mountains of chaff or else, Lord, we must come to thy word, to thy truth. Disavow our confidence in all these things and simply take a message that's ordained of thee and to trust in the sovereign and supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost and make our appeal not to the emotions and not to the will but to the minds of men.

That the truth may grip emotion and will but that we will not browbeat. We'll let thee do a work, a real work in their lives. We must choose, Lord, all might it be that elders and deacons and Sunday school teachers and everyone in this fellowship with glad heart chooses to stand on the side where stood the Apostle Paul.

To stand for that eternal revelation of thy Son and against the world, against a stream, against all who might come from any quarter, simply to say this we believe, for this we stand. And then, Lord, to have a message, to have lives, to have our prayer life and our waiting before thee in our worship such that thou canst bless it, that we may again see that the Lord our God in the midst is mighty. Oh, how we long for the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Prepare us, Lord, teach us, bring us to that place. We will not take a substitute. We will not accept anything else, Father.

We must have reality. Our souls demand reality and we are committing ourselves in this people, Lord, to thy truth. And we will, Lord, go before thee with broken hearts and open lives that thou mayest do all that thou hast purpose to do to secure a testimony wherein thou canst let reveal again the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

For this we're willing to live, yea, Lord, for this we're willing to die, to see our Lord Jesus receive the glory that is his due. In his name and for his sake we pray. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/25/SID25539.mp3>

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