



# The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

*“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24*

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Page 1

## WHERE DOES YOUR FAITH STAND?

*By Dean Robinson*

**“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:5)**

Today the city of Corinth is a small town with little significance other than from a historical perspective. But in the New Testament times it was at one time a thriving, prosperous city. Because of its location it became a major trade center resulting with a cosmopolitan population as merchants, shoppers, and sailors from many parts of the world settled there. It is believed by some historians that during the time the apostle Paul was there that there may have been a population as large as 200,000 people along with an additional excess of half a million slaves.

Corinth was also a great sports center. Every 2-3 years the city was host to the Isthmus games which included such things as racing, boxing, wrestling, discus throwing, etc. The hallmark of Corinth, however, was not her commercialism or the athletic contests. The city was infamously known for its moral corruption. The name of the city actually became synonymous with moral depravity. About the lowest accusation you could make against a person in that day would be to call that person a “Corinthian,” which came to represent gross immorality and drunken debauchery. It was in such an environment that a New Testament church was established through the faithful (See **FAITH STAND, Cont. Page 7, Rt. Col.**)

## CHRIST’S ESSENTIAL WORK

Preached at Central Baptist Church Sunday P.M. 9/16/07

*Pastor Bill Lee*

**TEXT:** Matthew 20:20-28

Tonight in the Book of Matthew, and in Chapter 20, let us read verses 20 through 28. We will begin our reading in verse 20. **“Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the**

**baptism that I a baptized with? They say unto him, we are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so**

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among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Our text this evening is verse 28. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

There are two basic facts concerning the Lord Jesus Christ coming into this world. The

first of those is that he came **on** purpose. And the second being that he came **for** a purpose, or to accomplish a purpose, and by this I mean that Jesus came voluntarily. He voluntarily purposed to come into this world and he had a definite purpose in coming.

I want us to begin in verse 28 by noticing his Name. And that has a lot to do with his coming and why he came. You will notice that he refers to himself as "the Son of man" Now, we know that he is the Son of God, He is the Infinite Eternal God, but yet he refers to himself as the Son of man. And that is the frequent way that he does refer unto himself as the Son of man, and that has a lot to do with his purpose in coming into this world. Keep in mind that it was man that sinned. And if there is going to be redemption, it must be man that makes the atonement.

That is very important to understand in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man is the one who offended God. Man is the offender, and it must be man who satisfies God and pays the penalty. If you would, go with me to Romans and in Chapter 5 and what I just mentioned, I think that a lot of people fail to understand that and in viewing the humanity of Christ and the great importance of it. Man sinned. Man must pay the penalty of sin. It is just that simple! In Romans in Chapter 5, notice with me in verse 12, if you would. "**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world,**"

Now sin did not come into this world by an angel; it did not come into this world by Satan. The Bible says "**by one man sin entered into the world.**" Look at verse 17 if you would, "**For if by one man's offence death reigned**". Notice again that it is man. In verse 19, "**by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.**" By one man!

If you would, go over to the Book of First Corinthians in First Corinthians and in Chapter 15, and in verse 22 the Bible says, "**For as in Adam all die.**" Now Adam is the "one man" by which sin entered into the world. It was Adam's disobedience that brought death into this world. In verse 21, it says "**For since by man came death,**" notice in the same verse, "**by man came also the resurrection of the dead.**" There is the importance again of the humanity

of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look back to verse 22 again, **“For as in Adam all die,”** in one man all die. And that means every one that was in Adam died through Adam’s transgression. We commonly refer to that as “The fall of Man”, or the fall of mankind. **“By one man”** sin entered into the world. It says here, **“In Adam all die”**.

Every one that Adam represented died in Adam. Now that is the very reason that you and I were born into this world, dead in trespasses and in sin. We died in Adam. Adam represented us. And every one that Adam represented died in Adam. But notice verse 22, **“For as in Adam all die, even so”** Now those two words are important because it means ‘in like manner’ **“in Christ shall all be made alive.”**

I have heard of, but I have never met a Universalist, As many people as I have known and talked to through the years, I have never met an individual who truly believed in Universal Salvation, or Universal Redemption. I have met some who thought they did until I asked them a few questions. And then, they had to retreat on their position. For instance, I have never met anyone who believed that the Atonement covered, or was for, any of the “fallen angels”. Angels sinned. There were some angels who sinned and left their first estate. A true Universalist must believe there is Salvation and Redemption for the “fallen angels”. I have never met anyone who believed that the Atonement was extended unto Satan. A true Universalist must believe that if they are a Universalist; if they truly believe that the Atonement was for everyone. I have never met anyone that truly believed that the Atonement that Jesus made that day at Calvary was for anyone who was already in Hell. A true Universalist must believe that! They must believe that there were people in Hell and that Jesus made Atonement for them, but yet they remained in Hell.

I mention all of that because in verse 22 the Bible says, **“Even so, in Christ shall all be made alive”**. Now that “all” is just like it was with Adam. **“In Adam all die”**. And I said everyone who Adam represented died in Adam. Even so, everyone who Christ represents shall be made alive. **“In Christ shall all be made alive”**. It is important here to keep in mind Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ. And

remember our text when Jesus referred to himself as **the Son of Man**.

If you look over to verse 45. In verse 45 it speaks about **“The first man Adam”**. But in that same verse it speaks of **“the last Adam”**. The “first man Adam” and “the last Adam”. I have heard, again, people not meaning to, I do not think, but misrepresent the fact in referring to Jesus as “the second Adam”. But the Bible never refers to him as “the second Adam”, for if it did, it might imply there would be a third or fourth Adam. But it is very definite that He is “The Last Adam”.

Now, the first Adam represented all of the human race. The Last Adam represented those that were in Him...those who were given to Him of the Father. The important thing here is both, the first Adam and the last Adam, are representatives. And both of them have humanity.

In the first man sin came into the world. And all died because that first Adam represented all of mankind. But then, the last Adam came, and He is the “Son of man”. Another man came, and He represented a group of people...and in Him shall all be made alive. Jesus is the Last Adam. He is the second man’s representative. Notice back in our text that he refers to himself as the Son of man. Now, he is not the son of “a” man... it does not say that. And he is not simply a son of man. It does not say that. But rather He is **“the Son of man”**. There is no other “Son of man” like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look back to Daniel, if you would. He is the one who was prophesied. He is the one who was promised to come into this world. In the Book of Daniel and in Chapter 7, notice in verse 13, if you would, Daniel said, **“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.”** Notice that Daniel refers to this coming one as “the Son of man”, and Daniel in this vision saw him coming. The Son of man came with clouds of heaven. Now, keep that in mind, if you would, and go over to the Book of Mark just a moment. The Book of Mark and in Chapter 14, Jesus refers to that statement of Daniel. In Mark Chapter 14 and in verse 61, the Bible says, **“But he held**

his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

He is referring to that passage we just read back in Daniel. when he said **“ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.”** He is the Son of man.

In our text in Matthew Chapter 20 and verse 28 Jesus said, **“Even as the Son of man came”**. Now we know that he was sent of the Father. Probably one of the first things you learned in your youth about the Lord Jesus Christ was that God sent forth His Son. I mean everyone who knows anything at all about Christianity knows that God sent His Son into the world. But I think sometimes we may look at that, and we should never lose sight of it, but I think in looking at that we may overlook the blessed truth that He came! He was not only sent, but our text says He came! The Son of man came! He came from the highest glory in Heaven with the Father unto a manger in Bethlehem. And He came into this world. The one who is infinitely the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the mighty God, he is eternal Jehovah. He came! He came into this world.

The Bible tells us in Philippians Chapter 2, and in verse 8 that **“He being found in fashion as a man,”** Now, you and I will never in this lifetime and probably not in all of eternity be able to fully comprehend that! That He came and was found in fashion as a man. My mind is not large enough. My comprehension is not great enough to fully understand how the Infinite could become an Infant. That is just beyond me. Paul said “Great is the mystery of Godliness that God was manifest in the flesh.” Our text says that the Son of man came. And it tells us something very interesting about his coming into this world. It says **“the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”**

Now again, that would go contrary to human reasoning and logic that the Great Creator, the Great God of all ages. You would think that when he came into this world he would come to be served. But, that is not what he said. He said

he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Maybe we could understand it a little better if we look at the word “minister” there, and understand it as “serve”. He came not to be served, but he came to serve.

Now, Jesus is telling us in verse 28, a positive and a negative about his coming into this world. He did not come to be ministered unto. But, rather he came to minister. And that just informs us that he did not come on a selfish errand. He did not come for personal gain. As you think about it, when you put the word “gain” with an infinite God you get into the ridiculous, because God can have no gain. He certainly did not come for personal gain. He did not come to be served. He came to serve! And even as he is there by the right hand of God right now, he is still doing service on our behalf. That is the role of a High Priest. To represent and do service for others. He is there, the Bible says, making intercession for us. He is still doing service. Notice, in our text it says, **“He did not come to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life”**. He came to give his life!

I have known people over the years, and I am referring now to some preachers I have known, who seem to have the idea that Jesus came into the world just to set a good example. They seem to have the idea that if we follow that good example we will be saved. That, also, is ridiculous doctrine. He did not come to just set us an example. He did not come into this world even to just reveal the Godhead unto us. Even though he could say, **“If ye have seen me you have seen the Father”**. That is not the reason he came into this world! He said he came to give his life. And if you will notice in our text, he did not come to give his life in some haphazard manner. I said at the beginning, he came on purpose. He purposed to come and he came for a definite purpose. And he said, **“to give his life a ransom for many”**. Now, that is Christ’s essential work there! Summed up in those few words. This is why he came, and this is how he died. It is how he died! He came to give his life a ransom for many!

In First Corinthians, and in Chapter 15, and you are all familiar with these words we are about to read, but I want you to consider them again with me, if you would. In First Corinthians

and in Chapter 15, and in verse 3, the Apostle Paul said **“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures:”** Now, when I read that there is always this question that comes into my mind – how did Christ die? How did he die? And if your answer is only that he died by crucifixion, you know very little about the death of Christ. But, it is sad to say, that is all that a lot of people know about the death of Christ...that he was crucified. But there is more to how he died than crucifixion. Paul said how that **“Christ died for our sins”**. How did he die for our sins? Well, the answer is in our text. In Matthew Chapter 20 and verse 28 **“to give his life a ransom”**. He died for our sins. He died according to the scriptures. And he died as a **“ransom for many”**.

Now, I surely don't have to explain to you what a ransom is. Everyone knows what a ransom is. And that is what Jesus said concerning his death – that he is our ransom price. He came to give his life a ransom. He came to give his life as that price that must be paid in order for sinners to go free. Now the fact of a ransom is—if a ransom is not paid, whoever is held captive does not go free. But if the ransom is paid, the captive is released. Now, Jesus said that he **“came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many,”** He said that he did this for many. And this word “for” here in verse 28 carries with it the meaning of “substitution”. He gave his life a ransom in the place of many. That is substitution! He gave his life as a ransom for them. Redemption! A ransom must be paid.

The Bible says **“you are bought with a price”**. You are redeemed. How could that be? How could it be that we are redeemed? Well, it is only by a ransom. It is only by Jesus Christ giving his life a ransom for many.

Now again, note in your Bible that he did not give his life a ransom for a few! That is not what it said. Nor, did he give his life a ransom for all! That is not what it says. It clearly says **“to give his life a ransom for many”**.

Who are these “many”? Who are these “many”? Well, we can find out who they are by

exclusion, I would think. These “many” cannot include those who were already in hell. These “many” do not include those who will yet be consigned to hell. No ransom was paid for them. For when there is a ransom that is paid, there can be no condemnation, if the debt is truly paid. There cannot be any penalty. God is a Holy God! And God, according to his holiness, and because of his holiness, cannot and will not demand two payments for one death. God just simply cannot do that. He is restricted by holiness from doing that.

You and I would think anyone was a scoundrel that sought in our business world to collect the same debt twice by two people. And it would be far worse if God did that! Jesus said **“to give his life a ransom for many”**.

Now, go with me to Hebrews, if you would, in Chapter 2. These many – who are they? Well, none of us can name them by name, but you know, the Bible says in 2 Timothy Chapter 2 and I verse 19 **“The Lord knoweth them that are his.”** That is all that matters. It does not matter whether you and I can call their name or point them out. The Bible says, **“The Lord knoweth them that are his”**. And they are many. In the Book of Hebrews, in Chapter 2 and in verse 10, the Bible says, **“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”** Notice, “the captain of their salvation”.

Who does that “their” – this pronoun – refer to? Well, it refers to the “many sons”. The many sons who shall be brought to glory. In the Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, and in Chapter 2, and in verse 13, the Bible says, **“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”** Now, whoever is involved in verse 13 makes up that “many” for whom Jesus gave his life as a ransom. Does it include all? Well, stay in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians and in Chapter 2, and I will just back up to verse 1. **“Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in**

mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doeth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way, And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”

I read the entirety of the chapter where no one could say I was taking verse 13 out of its context. If you look back to verse 11, **“for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all**

**might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”**

I heard a preacher say one time - he had just a country way of putting things – He said “This is not for Top Water Christians! “ That is what a lot of Christians are – just Top Water Christians. You know the bigger ones, the deeper ones ... you have to get deeper. That is what he was saying. This if for people who go deeper in the scripture.

God sends some strong delusions that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned who had pleasure in unrighteousness. That is why Paul said, **“We are bound to give thanks for you. Because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation.”** Now you know, the only thing that causes me to be in verse 13 instead of verses 11 and 12 – is the Grace of God! That is the only reason. You know, I thank God every day for my election. There is not a day that goes by that I do not thank God for choosing me unto salvation! By right, I deserve to be in verses 10, 11 and 12. And it is only by God’s choice ... not my choice, but His choice! That I find myself in verse 13 and verse 14. Who are the “many” who Jesus gave his life a ransom for? Surely, it is these in verse 13 whom God has chosen to salvation.

If you go back to John and in Chapter 17 to that great intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 2, Jesus, as he speaks to his Father in prayer, he says, **“As thou hast given him power over all flesh”**. Now, he said that while he was here. He did it for a specific reason and for a particular people. **“That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”**

Go back with me to Matthew, and Chapter 26, and think back, if you would to that night, just before Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane—just before he prayed so intently that his sweat became drops of blood – just before he entered into such agony, he instituted that Great Supper...the ordinance. In verse 27 of Matthew 26, it says, **“He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’** Now, he said, his blood was shed for many. And it was for the remission

of sins.

If you will look back in our text in Matthew in Chapter 20, and in verse 28, **“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”** I want to tell you something, and I hope you understand what I am about to say. No one has ever been saved by God’s mercy only! No one has ever been saved by God’s grace only! The Bible says, **“without the shedding of blood there is no remission”**. In order for any to be saved, it required a ransom, a price had to be paid. No one ever has been saved by faith only, mercy only, or grace only. That would totally exclude the blood.

There is a sect of people who have accused Baptists for years in believing in faith only, and I have told them repeatedly no true Baptist believes anyone is ever saved by faith only. We believe we are saved through Sacrifice... through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It required a ransom. Sin is never remitted without the shedding of blood. No debt owed unto God is ever remitted unless it is paid. That is just a simple fact. It must be paid! And I could not pay my debt, but the Son of man came into this world, and I am thankful he did not come to be ministered unto, but he came to minister and to give his life a ransom for me. For I know I am in that “many”. And Jesus paid that price, and I will say again, God cannot and God will not demand two payments for one debt. And Jesus gave his life a ransom.

Look one more place back to the Old Testament to the Book of Job. Job, and in Chapter 33, it is recorded in verse 24. If you will notice the last words of that verse it says, **“I have found a ransom.”** If you do a word study, you will find that word “ransom” means “atonement”. God could say “I have secured a ransom. The ransom is the atonement. And Jesus said he came into this world as the Son of man. To die for man. He took upon himself the nature of the seed of Abraham, not the nature of angels, but he came as a man, and as a man he took our place...he paid the ransom. Now, I will say, as the songwriter said, “Jesus Paid it All”.

**(FAITH STAND, Continued From Page 1)** preaching of the apostle Paul according to Acts 18.

The fact that a church was started there only goes to show the great power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to change the worst of sinners into saints of God. Some time later when Paul wrote his first letter to this church they were already in serious trouble. To begin with, they had become a divided church with different groups quarreling and competing for prominence and leadership within the church.

They were also a defiled church in the sense that some of the members were guilty of immoral behavior and worldly living. All this meant that the church as a whole had become a disgraced church because instead of being a place where God was glorified, they had become a shame to the cause of Christ and a hindrance in the preaching of the gospel.

One of the problems that gave the church at Corinth trouble was the persuasive influence of pagan philosophy. The Greeks were a people who were in love with human wisdom. They believed that philosophy was the all-important thing. Corinth was a proud city full of philosophical movements and parties promoting their ideas and viewpoints on just about everything ranging from the meaning of life to man’s origin, significance, and destiny. There were as many philosophies as there were philosophers and people tended to line up behind their favorite one.

Unfortunately this philosophical approach to life was allowed to spill over into the church at Corinth. In their attempt to mix human wisdom with God’s revealed truth, division was created within the congregation, being made up of different schools of thought, instead of being united behind the gospel message. Whenever you have a people full of self-pride depending on human wisdom while adopting the lifestyle and thinking of the world, you are going to have severe problems in the church.

In order to help solve their confusion and division, the apostle Paul begins in chapter 2 to remind this church that one of the fundamental aspects of the gospel message is that it centers upon a crucified Saviour. In other words, what made the difference in their life was not the

result of some man-made philosophy or idea but it was through the preaching of the gospel of Christ by which they were saved and changed by the grace of God.

In the opening verses of this chapter, Paul reminds this church of some important things when he first came to the city of Corinth.

**First of all, Paul reminds the Corinthians of his approach: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” (vs.1-2).**

Paul reminded them when he first came to Corinth and preached the gospel that he did not do so with impressive words of human reasoning. When Paul went to Corinth, he did not try to imitate the ways and methods of the philosophers of his day. He did not use their philosophical verbiage and terminology. His preaching was not with **“excellency of speech or of wisdom.”**

This does not mean that he believed his grammar of speech or pronunciation of words to be unimportant. His emphasis here was that he had not come to Corinth to exalt himself or start a new religious fan-club for himself. He had come to glorify his Lord through the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Just as the gospel of God’s grace cannot be obtained through human wisdom, neither was it to be preached and presented through human wisdom.

The philosophers and teachers of Paul’s day depended on their wisdom and eloquence of speech to gain followers. The city of Corinth was filled with such captivating orators. Paul did not depend on eloquent speech or clever arguments. He simply declared God’s Word in the power of the Holy Spirit and depended upon God to give the increase.

Paul thought of himself as an ambassador for Christ, not some kind of a Christian salesman. Had Paul used spectacular speech and sophisticated philosophy, he would have magnified himself and hidden the very Christ he came to preach. God had called and sent him to preach the glorious gospel of Christ, **“not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1:17).**

The apostle Paul did not come to Corinth as a philosopher but as a gospel witness, **“declaring unto you the testimony of God.”** The word “testimony” carries the idea of being a witness. A person can only testify to what he himself has seen, heard, or experienced. A witness in a courtroom is to repeat only what he knows objectively, factually, and personally. He is not to speculate or guess. Paul was a witness of the gospel message, not of his own human understanding or reasoning.

In 2 Timothy 4 the apostle Paul charged a young preacher by the name of Timothy to preach the Word and be ready to do it in season and out of season. Many churches today do not want their pastors to preach only the Word. They are not looking for a word from God to believe but for a word from man to consider. We are living in the day and age where many **“will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.” (2 Tim. 4:3)**

It is as one writer observed: “In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism, and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like the flies in Egypt. The demand creates the supply. The hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found.” I feel sorry for those people who are constantly searching for the perfect preacher who preaches perfect sermons to a perfect congregation. Their idea of perfect preaching is not sound doctrine based upon biblical exposition but it is humorous stories and tear-jerking illustrations that are based on man’s wisdom and the philosophy of the world.

When Paul preached to these Corinthians, the thrust of his message was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He was not interested in discussing men’s ideas or insights. He would proclaim nothing but Christ, the crucified, risen, and redeeming Lamb of God. He did not preach Jesus Christ simply as the perfect teacher or the perfect example or the perfect man, even though He was all of these. The foundation of all of his preaching was the Lord Jesus Christ as the divine and all-sufficient Saviour for sinners.

The message that all men need to hear is recorded in the words of 1 Timothy 1:15, **“This**

***is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."***

The story is told about a certain church which had a beautiful stained-glass window just behind the pulpit. It depicted Jesus Christ hanging on the cross. On one particular Sunday morning, this church had a guest speaker preaching who was much smaller in size and stature than the pastor of the church. About half way during the sermon, a little girl leaned over to her mom and whispered in her ear, "Where is the man who usually stands there so we can't see Jesus?"

I use that illustration to make a point. I am afraid that story illustrates an all too-common occurrence of what takes place in many churches where preachers behind the pulpits are there to magnify themselves and their philosophies, ideas, and wisdom. Not so with Paul. He gloried in the cross of Christ and made it the center of his message. ***"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14).***

The apostle Paul reminds the church at Corinth of not only his approach but also of his attitude when he first came to the city: ***"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (vs.3-4)*** The apostle of the Lord came to Corinth after being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, run out of Thessalonica and Berea, and scoffed at in Athens. Having every human reason to be discouraged and no doubt every temptation from Satan to compromise, Paul would not change his method or his message.

The apostle may have been fearful for his own life or safety because the Lord spoke to him in a vision one night and said, ***"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10).*** Here we see that the apostle Paul was assured by the Lord that many sinners would be brought to the Saviour. The doctrine of God's sovereign election unto salvation is one of the greatest encouragements to the preaching of the gospel. Because Paul

knew that God already had a people set apart for salvation, he stayed where he was and faithfully and fervently preached the gospel of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. While Paul's responsibility was to obey the commission, it was God's prerogative to save sinners as He saw fit.

Paul was especially determined, therefore, that his message and preaching would not be carried out under the cloke of enticing words of man's wisdom. Human words of wisdom, no matter how impressive or persuasive, would have robbed the gospel of its power and God of His glory. The apostle Paul saw no place for calculated theatrics and techniques to manipulate the response of his hearers.

I am sure that if Paul had been able to attend the latest seminar on soul winning, that he would have gotten a wider and more receptive hearing but without the Spirit of God and the power of God, his hearers would have been left lost in their sins without Christ as their Saviour. It has been said that the great preacher Jonathan Edwards would read his sermons in order that he would not be guilty of using human persuasive techniques to gain a response. He wanted only the message to bring the results.

Such was the attitude of Paul. He did not come to Corinth to put on a religious side-show. His preaching was not a performance of the flesh but a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. What happened in Corinth was a demonstration of what God can do when His gospel is preached in its purity and power. When you read about those who made up the membership of this church, you have to admit that wicked sinners were gloriously transformed by the power of God: ***"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you..." (1 Cor. 6:9-11).***

This only goes to reinforce the blessed truth of Romans 1:16 when Paul declared, ***"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every***

***one that believeth...***” It should be understood that the power does not reside in the messenger but in the message of the cross which declares Jesus Christ to be the one and only Saviour who is able to save lost sinners by His wondrous grace. ***“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*** (1 Cor. 1:18)

In verse 5 the apostle Paul reminds this church of his aim in coming to Corinth, preaching the only thing he knew to preach, Christ and Him crucified, in order ***“that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”*** Paul wanted the people at Corinth to trust in the message of God and not in the messenger that God had sent. Had he depended on human wisdom and preached the gospel just as another system of man’s philosophy, then the Corinthians would have put their trust in an explanation rather than a demonstration. If the Corinthians had come to have faith in the wisdom of men, even in Paul’s wisdom, they might have been changed intellectually but they would not have been changed spiritually. Paul did not come to them with his own words and message; instead he had come simply as a channel of God’s Word and message and only the message of God brings with it the power of God.

Because Paul declared the Word of God in the power of God, many Corinthians experienced God and His saving grace at work in their lives. The unbelievers of that city desperately needed the demonstration of the Spirit and of power and that is what Paul had brought them. Only God’s Spirit and power could deliver them from their sins and bring them to God Himself. The apostle Paul did not want these Corinthians to have a new philosophy of life but new life in Christ. Paul was not interested in trying to change people’s minds; his prayer was for God to change their lives. He did not have a message of his own to preach; he was called to proclaim the gospel and that was what God blessed and used in his life and ministry.

It was C.H. Spurgeon that once wrote: “The power that is in the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men

would be the converters of souls, nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul.” May we never forget that the gospel is still God’s power to change men’s lives. Effectiveness in evangelism does not depend on our brilliant arguments or persuasive gimmicks, but on the power of the Spirit of God at work in people’s lives through the proclamation of the Word of God.

Without question we are living in a day and time where the offense of the cross has been systematically removed so that the gospel message might be made more acceptable to unbelievers. Biblical preaching is being discarded or downplayed in favor of newer methods which supposedly are more effective. The philosophy being experimented with by many churches today seeks to use various marketing techniques and worldly gimmicks in order to stimulate church growth. This philosophy assumes that if you package the gospel right, people will be saved. It is a philosophy that is rooted in Arminianism which makes the human will, not a sovereign God, the decisive factor in salvation. The goal of a market driven ministry is an instantaneous human decision rather than a radical transformation of the heart wrought by Almighty God through the Holy Spirit’s convicting work and the truth of God’s Word. Human wisdom wants to devise a way of salvation where people get the credit. If they can’t have all the credit they will settle for some of it. But in God’s design no one who is saved by the grace of God has anything to boast about. That is because God accomplishes everything on behalf of those He saved. He chooses them, calls them, draws them, and enables them to repent and believe. It is God’s sovereign will, not human resolve or a human decision, that determines who will be saved. An honest belief in the sovereignty of God in salvation would bring to an end a lot of the nonsense that takes place in many churches of our day.

There are churches that have decided that

traditional worship and preaching to be outdated and ineffective. The truth is, we don't need clever approaches to see people saved; we simply need to proclaim God's truth and depend upon the power of God to work in the lives of His people. Let us not forget that it is the Lord who gives the increase; it is He who must add to the church. Human philosophy and methodology cannot accelerate or supersede the divine purpose that God has chosen whereby lost sinners are saved.

Those who want to replace preaching the gospel with some other means would do well to consider that God purposefully chose a message and a method that the world's wisdom considers as foolishness. People do not come to a knowledge of the truth through human ingenuity; people cannot reason their way to God or be led there by manipulation. We are told ***"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"*** (1 Cor. 1:21). Preaching the gospel of Christ is God's plan ordained in the perfect wisdom of God.

When Paul came to Corinth he was not willing to modify the gospel in any sense or alter God's design for preaching it. He would not cater to the preferences of human wisdom; he would not mold or fashion the message of God in philosophical terms for those who thought of themselves as intellectually superior. Instead Paul preached Christ crucified, a stumblingblock to the unbelieving Jews and foolishness to the philosophical Greeks.

He may have been tempted to be less confrontational in his preaching, tone down or soften the offense of the cross but Paul explicitly says that he consciously determined not to do any of those things. He was bound by a holy calling of God upon his life to faithfully declare Jesus Christ as the only true hope for lost sinners. If we attempt to win others to Christ with entertainment, clever arguments, or worldly wisdom, we will end up making them nothing else than two-fold more a child of hell. Our faith cannot and must not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God.

The apostle Paul was content, as we must be, to allow the power of the gospel to stand on its own. When Paul came to Corinth his goal as a preacher was not to entertain people with his

preaching style or to amuse them with religious humor, clever insights, or sophisticated methods. He simply preached Christ and Him crucified.

Moral lectures and motivational talks are no substitute for God's Word. What made Paul and his ministry effective was not marketing savvy but it was a stubborn devotion to God's truth. For Paul, the Word of God was something to be declared, not negotiated. Paul was not a salesman or a marketer but he was a God-called preacher, an ambassador for Christ that clearly was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Paul shunned clever methods and gimmicks that might lead people to false professions through fleshly persuasion. We cannot afford to be indifferent to God's divine calling upon our lives and our churches to declare God's inspired, unadulterated truth lovingly, but uncompromisingly to a lost and dying world.

The world today, just as in Paul's day, is caught up in the admiration and worship of human opinion, human wisdom, and human desires and aspirations. Modern man has made his own god out of human opinion. What people fail to realize is that the wisdom of man is fallible, limited, and unreliable. The only source for true wisdom can only be found in God and His Word which is reliable, sufficient, and complete. This is where our faith must stand. May it be that our faith will stand and rest upon the Word of God, not the wisdom of man, upon what God says, not what man thinks. May our faith stand and rest upon the Lord Jesus Christ who is the very essence of the power and wisdom of God.

The apostle Paul summarized it best when he told Timothy, ***"preach the Word."*** (2 Tim.4:2) We have nothing else to preach; there is no other message to declare. There is no other ministry that God has called us to do. We have a solemn responsibility that demands unwavering devotion to a very specific purpose—preach the Word without fear or favor of man in the power of the Holy Ghost, depending upon the Lord of the harvest to give the increase as He sees fit. Herein is where our faith must stand. Where does your faith stand? Is it in the wisdom of men or in the power of God?

## CAUSES OF HUMILITY

By James Meikle, 1730 - 1799

As only in night dreams I cross impassable rivers, climb tremendous precipices, or fly in the open air; so it is only in spiritual slumber that I mount on the imaginary wing, climb the height of self-conceit, and stand on the precipice of pride. Were I truly awake, instead of being puffed up, I should tremble at my situation.

In truth, there is nothing either in the fortune, persons, or minds of men, that ought to make them proud. We should never be proud of **riches**; for, besides the disquieting nature of them, we can never be possessed of so vast a sum—but we may die beggars. We should never be proud of **honor**—for our glory may turn into disgrace, and our character into reproach. We should never be proud our **children**—for death, like a lion, waits only God's permissive nod, to devour every one of them. We should never be proud of **strength**, **health**, or **beauty**—for disease lies dormant in every bodily part—ready to break out into the canker of corruption. We should never be proud of any faculty of the **mind**, seeing our brightest wisdom is but folly to God, yes, to angels; and sickness can deprive us of our boasted intellect, and render us objects of pity unto all.

I see, then; that pride springs from blindness and thoughtlessness. But how surprising is this, that one who has his eyes open to the things of God, should be guilty of pride! Now, as spiritual things are more noble and more excellent than carnal things, so 'spiritual pride' is more abominable than worldly pride. For the Christian, of all men, should be most humble. Whence, then, these risings of heart? whence this self-conceit, and high opinion of myself? Is God good to me—and must I turn the grace of God into pride and vanity? Surely, if ever I have cause to fear the sincerity of my graces, it is when I grow proud of them.

Grace is a humble thing. It thinks lowly of all but Christ. It keeps an eye ever open to its own failings; and though believingly bold, yet being conscious of its imperfection, it wears a blush before the throne.

The reasons of my pride are merely imaginary—but I have a thousand real causes for the profoundest humility. I have many carnal

thoughts—even in my solemn devotion. I am guilty of ambitious lustings, unbelieving circumscribings of the power of God, misimprovement of God's judgments and of mercies, over-attachment to the things of time, dullness about the things of eternity, ignorance of God, and of spiritual, heavenly, and divine things. Yes, besides all these, the daily iniquity of my heart and life—should always keep me humble.

But, my soul, your very situation, (for you are yet on enchanted ground,) may keep you humble. Though you were as spotless as a seraph, yet that flood of iniquity that swells around you may keep you humble; but though you were in the midst of a paradise of innocence, yet there is such a world of wickedness within you, as might banish every spark of pride forever. And when these considerations fail, and pride again begins to appear, the very appearance may plunge you into the profoundest abyss of humility and self-loathing, out of which you should never rise, until raised to the perfection of the sons of God.

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