

Chapter 2

What Paul preached 2:1-5

v1 Christian brothers and sisters, when I came to you I did not come with clever words or great ideas. I preached to you the truth about God's love. v2 I decided to concentrate on only one thing while I was with you. That was Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. v3 When I came to you, I was weak and afraid. I was trembling. v4 I did not preach my message with clever words to persuade you. As I preached, the Holy Spirit showed his power. v5 That was so that you would not believe because of clever human ideas. But you would believe because of God's power.

Verses 1-2 Paul calls the Christians his 'brothers and sisters' because they are all in God's family. Paul decided that in Corinth he would only use plain words. His 'foolish' message would be about Jesus' death on the cross. There may be two reasons for this decision:

1. Paul had come from Athens. There he had explained his message in a way that used philosophy. And he referred to Greek writers (Acts 17:22-34). But only a few people had become Christians.

2. Some people in Corinth were disappointed about the way that Paul preached: 'His words amount to nothing' (2 Corinthians 10:10). Paul knew that clever words might attract attention to the speaker rather than to his message.

Verse 3 He said that he was 'weak'. He may have meant a physical weakness. We know that he had a problem of some kind. It made him suffer (2 Corinthians 12:7). He may have been emphasising that his message was about the 'weakness' of God (1:25). He was afraid and trembled. Paul did not fear for his own safety. He was anxious to carry out his work well. He probably thought about the enormous task to preach the gospel in a city like Corinth. Its people came from many countries. There were many gods. Everyone knew about the bad

behaviour of those who lived in the city. Paul would tremble as he thought about all these problems.

Verses 4-5 Paul's plain words had results. The Holy Spirit's power convinced people that the message was true. People changed and became Christians. The Holy Spirit also showed his power in the gifts that he gave to the Christians at Corinth.

The wisdom from God 2:6-9

v6 However, among those who have grown in the faith, I do use wise words. But these words are different from those of the wise people or rulers in this age. People like these will not succeed. v7 We speak about God's secret wisdom, which has remained hidden until now. It is a wisdom that God planned before time began. He planned to bring us the glory of eternal life. v8 None of the rulers of this world understood God's wisdom. If they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. v9 The Scripture says, 'God has prepared things for those who love him. But nobody has seen those things and nobody has heard about them. And nobody knows what they are.'

Verse 6 Those who had become Christians would know the main facts about the gospel. These facts were that Jesus died and became alive again. God forgives those who trust Jesus. But Paul could teach more about God's wise plans to those whose faith was strong. Some people thought that they were wise. But Paul was not talking about their kind of wisdom. Their wisdom would have no results.

Verse 7 Paul was speaking about the way that God had planned to save his people. God planned it, even before the beginning of the world. God's plan was that people should finally share in the wonderful life of heaven. God's plan was 'secret'. Only humble people

can understand what God has shown us by Jesus.

Verse 8 People cannot understand by an effort of their minds. That is why the rulers could not understand that Jesus was the Lord. So they crucified him. But those who love God will receive blessings from him. Those blessings are impossible to imagine. Paul used a verse that comes in part from Isaiah 64:4.

The Holy Spirit understands 2:10-16

v10 But God has shown his plans by his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit understands all things. He understands even the thoughts of God that are most difficult to understand. v11 We cannot know what another person is thinking. Only the person himself can know that. In the same way, only the Spirit of God can know what God is thinking. v12 We have not received the spirit of the world. We have received the Holy Spirit from God himself. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand how generous God has been to us. v13 This is what we speak about. We do not use words that people taught us. We use words that the Holy Spirit taught us. We use spiritual words to teach spiritual truths. v14 A person who does not have the Holy Spirit cannot believe the ideas that come from God's Holy Spirit. They sound foolish to him. He cannot understand them. People need the Spirit's help to understand these ideas. v15 Everyone who has the Holy Spirit can make right decisions. But no one can really understand those who have the Spirit. v16 We can never know what is in the Lord's mind. No one can teach him. But we have the mind of Christ.

Verses 10-12 No one can know what another person is thinking. No one can know God's thoughts except God himself. God's Spirit

knows them. And he can lead us to know God. God's people have received God's Spirit. So they can understand his plan to rescue people by the crucifixion of Jesus.

Verse 13 Paul says that his message comes from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit taught Paul what to say.

Verse 14 The person who lives only for the things in the physical world cannot understand spiritual things. He cannot understand spiritual truths. They seem foolish to him. He needs God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will help him to understand God's ideas.

Verse 15 Those without the Holy Spirit cannot understand those with the Holy Spirit. The person with the Holy Spirit belongs the present age. But that person belongs to the future age as well. With the Holy Spirit's help, he can understand how to make decisions about right and wrong actions. He can understand what is wicked. But a person who thinks only about his present life cannot understand anything holy. For example, a greedy person cannot understand how to be generous. The person without the Holy Spirit cannot judge the person who has the Holy Spirit. He will not understand the way that a spiritual person thinks.

Verse 16 Paul says that 'we' have the mind of Christ. So he includes himself with the Christians at Corinth. So they understand Christ's thoughts. But Paul would talk next about the quarrels of the Christians at Corinth. And he would talk about the fact that they were so satisfied with themselves. These things showed that they had not completely understood 'the mind of Christ'. Christ had made himself humble in order to do what God wanted. He was the servant who obeyed God (Philippians 2:1-5).

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This publication is written in EasyEnglish Level B (2800 words).

December 2004

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