

A RETURN TO PLAIN PREACHING

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5 • TV163B

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1 Corinthians 2:1-5

“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. 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: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

My subject this morning is: **“A RETURN TO PLAIN PREACHING.”**

Now, that has been the aim and goal of this television ministry ever since we have been on this station, to return to the preaching of the Gospel in words that men and women, at least in their heads, can understand. They may not believe it; they may not receive it, but at least in their heads they know what we are saying.

This is what Paul is saying in **1 Corinthians verses 2:1 through 5**. I want you to listen while I read the Scripture. If you would like to, open your Bible with me and read **1 Corinthians the 2nd chapter verses 1 through 5**.

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Paul said, *“Brethren; when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.”* He is writing to the church at Corinth. You know a little about the city of Corinth, it was a city of philosophers, a city of so-called wise men, a city of education, and a city of orators.

He says, *“When I came to you preaching the gospel, I didn’t come preaching the Gospel with excellency of speech, intellectualism, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of the Gospel of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”*

“I was with you in weakness, (human weakness). I was with you in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit, (the Holy Spirit), and of power, that your faith should not stand in my wisdom, (in my arguments, in my doctrines or logic), but in the power of God.”

Now, my friends; I believe that the greatest need of the church (or any television ministry), the greatest need of the preachers and people of our day is a return to plain, Bible preaching. Preaching that is true to the Scriptures and preaching that men and women can understand, answering questions that people are asking, not answering questions that nobody cares about, but dealing with the issues that concern the people.

Now, Paul was conscience of this; I can see that he is conscience of this need in his day. In our text he talks about his own preaching. Listen how he describes his own preaching and he is speaking to a city that greatly appreciated enticing words of man’s wisdom, and intellectualism.

He is talking to people who were intrigued with these things. He said, *“When I came to you preaching the Gospel, I did not come with wisdom of words. I did not use worldly wisdom. I did not come with fine oratory. I didn’t come with excellency of speech.”*

“It doesn’t matter if my speech is plain and contemptible. At least you understand what I am saying,” he said. Paul didn’t come with enticing words of man’s wisdom. He didn’t come arguing and debating. Everybody wants to debate and argue.

My friends, preaching, the kind of preaching that God blesses, the kind of preaching that God uses, the kind of preaching we need to hear is the preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is what Paul said; *“I came preaching in the Spirit and in the power of God.”*

My friends, the kind of preaching that God blesses, the kind of preaching that God uses, the kind of preaching we need to hear is the preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is what Paul said; *“I came preaching in the Spirit and in the power of God.”*

And the end of that preaching; notice the last verse, he says; *“That your faith, (your hope), shall not stand in the wisdom of men.”* Some men say, *“I believe this because I was just persuaded that it was true by a certain speaker that I heard. He was so persuasive and he was so convincing.”*

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Paul said, “I don’t want your faith to stand in my persuasion or in my argument; I want your faith to stand in the power of God that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men.”

If one man can talk you into a position, another man can talk you out of that position. If one man can talk you into a religion, then another can come along who is a better speaker or a little smarter and talk you out of that position.

Those people down there in Samaria, when the Samaritan woman heard the Master, she went down into the city and she said, “*Come and see a man that told me everything I have ever done. Is this not the Christ, (is not this the Messiah?)*”

They went running out and heard the Master for themselves. They turned to the woman and they said, “*Now we believe, not because of your words but because we have heard him ourselves.*”

That is what Paul is saying here; “I didn’t come to you with oratory and excellency of speech and enticing words of man’s wisdom, (debate and logic, argument, and intellectualism).” He said, “I came to you in the power of the spirit preaching the Word of God that your faith should not stand in my wisdom or in the arguments of men, nor in the schemes of men but that your faith should stand in the word and in the power of God.”

Paul himself said, “*I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*” It’s a personal, living, intimate, vital, union with Jesus Christ. That’s salvation!

Now, return to plain preaching. I am going to deal today with five questions; I have five questions that I believe need to be answered. I have five questions that I believe that you are concerned about. I have five questions here, dealing with five important issues faced by every one of us. I am talking to myself as well as to you. Let’s try to deal with these issues in such a way, that at least, when we get through today, you won’t have to turn to your neighbor and say, “what did he say; that was pretty, but what did he say?” I think you are going to know what I have said when I finish.

Here is the first question; let me give you all five questions then I will come back to the first one so that you might be interested enough to stay with me through the whole message. Here are the five questions:

First of all: What creates a real interest in salvation? How does a man get an interest in seeking the Lord? Some of you are interested and some of you may not be. What creates a real interest?

Secondly: What promotes true conviction of sin and the need of forgiveness?

Thirdly: What leads to a genuine faith in Jesus Christ?

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Fourthly: How are the Scriptures opened to our understanding? How can a man understand the Scriptures?

You might say, "That will be a dandy if you can deal with." I think I can.

Fifthly: What is the bedrock motive for a holiness of character, conversation, and conduct? What is the bedrock motive?

You men know what I am talking about when I say "the bedrock;" that is the bottom foundation for a holiness of life. We appeal to people for holiness, holiness, holiness. What is the bedrock foundation?

First of all: What creates a genuine interest in salvation? What will truly lead a man to seek the Lord?

Now, the Scriptures command us to seek the Lord; it says, "*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near.*" We are commanded to seek the Lord. The Scriptures says, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.*"

Our God says, "*You shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.*" Now, some men do seek the Lord, some of you are seeking the Lord but some do not. So, my question is; why do some men seek the Lord and some do not?

What creates this interest in grace? What creates an interest in salvation? What creates an interest in the mercy of God?

First of all: I know this; it is the Holy Spirit who awakens a dead sinner to his needs, who awakens him to an interest in God's grace. The Scripture says; "*You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.*"

So, we will allow that, that source, the Holy Spirit, who makes men alive, who quickens, who regenerates, who gives us an interest in the saving grace of God.

But, there are four words which if they make the proper impact on you and me, it will stimulate an interest in seeking the Lord. There are four words if they make the proper impact. These are powerful words, very powerful words. There are four words; if they make the proper impact on you and me they will turn us to seek the Lord.

Do you know what those four words are? They are life, death, judgment, and eternity. I have a life to live. What is life without peace, rest, and joy? What is life without comfort and hope?

Death; I have a death to die; I am going to die someday. I talked about this last Sunday. I hope you heard that message. I have a death to die and it is real!

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Then, the Scripture says; *“It is appointed unto men once to die and after that judgment. Every man shall give an account of himself to God.”* That is what the Scripture says; *“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”*

The Scripture says, *“The sea gave up the dead which are in it and death and hell will deliver up the dead which were in it and all men (small and great, rich and poor, black and white, old and young), will stand before God and the Books will be opened.”*

Then there is an eternity to spend. I will guarantee you my friend, if those words, ever make an impact on your mind and heart, you will going to go seeking, you are going to want some answers, you are going to seek the Lord.

That’s right; it’s as simple as that and it is plain as that! How dreadful to face death without God, judgment without a mediator, and eternity without any hope. That’s what I am saying; I am saying that when these words make an impact on a man’s heart and mind, he is going to seek some answers.

Now, you may laugh and joke and live foolishly and carnally and give no concern and no thought to eternity. That’s what our Lord said about the rich, young man; *“you are a fool; tonight your soul will be required of you.”*

It’s as simple as that! When we become aware of the seriousness of life, of the certainty of death, of the surety of judgment, and of the length of eternity, we will seek Him who alone has the answers and who has the hope. Seek the Lord! Now, that is the foundation here; what leads a man to seek the Lord?

That man who realizes the importance of these four words, he’s not going to settle for some foolish answers. He is not going to settle; he is not going to commit his soul into the hands of somebody who can’t even keep their own soul; he is going to look for a strong foundation. He is going to look for a more certain foundation and good hope.

Secondly: What promotes a true conviction of sin and the need for forgiveness, conviction of sin?

What really promotes a true conviction of sin, when a man cries like the Publican; what led him to say, *“O God; be merciful to me the sinner?”*

What really promotes a true conviction of sin? What brought the harlot to the feet of Christ and caused her to bathe his feet with tears and dry them with the hairs of her head? What would have made the apostle Peter cry unto the Lord Jesus Christ, *“Lord; depart from me I am a sinful man?”*

First of all: It’s true; the Holy Spirit convinces a man of sin; the Scripture tells us that!

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Our Lord said, *“And he, (the Holy Spirit, the comforter) when he is come he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; I know the Holy Spirit.”*

Secondly: I know it's the law of God which gives us the knowledge of sin, *“by the law is the knowledge of sin.”* Paul said, *“I would not have known sin, had not the law said, thou shalt not covet.”*

Thirdly: It is true that conscience convinces men of sin!

Our Lord tells us about the heathen *“who had not the law; nevertheless, do by nature the things contained in the law. These having not the law, have a conscience that appeases or excuses it,”* from the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and conscience.

My friend; a real, awareness of sin, and the death of sin, and the reality of sin, and the truth of sin, is only learned and realized when we see and become conscience of the holiness of God.

Now, man can look into his own heart and conscience and be convinced, to some extent, to some degree, of the guilt of sin. He can look unto a written law and say, *“Well, this is good, as opposed to that which is evil.”*

He can look at the consequences of deeds and acts around him and say, *“It would have been better if I would have done this instead of that. I was wrong to do this and it would have been better if I had handled it another way.”*

If he wants to understand what sin is, who sin is against and the depths of sin, and the wretchedness of sin, and the depravity of sin, and the length and breadth of sin, he is going to have to see it, not in the light of law or conscience or rules, but in the light of God's holiness.

I am going to show you that in the Scripture: Isaiah; if you will read the **Book of Isaiah chapter 5**, you will find Isaiah who was a religious man, a moral man, a prophet of God, and he was pretty hard on everybody else.

In **Chapter 5** he says, *“Woe is them, woe is them, woe is them, woe is them, (five times), woe is them,”* and condemns people. In **Chapter 6 verse 1** it says, *“When king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.”* Uzziah is speaking; *“I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His train filled the temple. The cherubim's and seraphim's covered their faces and their mouths.”*

“They cried in the presence of God; holy, holy, holy.” Isaiah said, *“When I saw the holiness, (the immaculate, immutable, infinite, holiness of God), I cried, (not woe is them); woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”*

Take Job for example, he was a brilliant man, a man who loved righteousness and hated evil, a man who defended righteousness. He was a man upon whom God Himself bragged to Satan about Job's righteousness, when compared with other men.

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In **Job chapter 42**, God appeared to him out of the whirlwind and spoke to him and rebuked him.

Job said, *“Lord; I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear but now mine eyes seeth thee.”*

What’s Job’s reply? What’s his conclusion? *“Therefore, I hate myself, I abhor myself. I repent in dust and ashes.”*

Daniel, who purposed in his heart, who led a kingdom and who was a man of integrity; said, *“When I saw the Lord, my comeliness, (my beauty, my strength), melted into corruption.”*

The prophet, the beloved apostle John, who lay on the Master’s chest at the Lord’s Table, said on the Isle of Patmos, *“When I heard his voice I turned to see who was speaking.”* He said, *“And I saw him and I fell at his feet as a dead man.”*

Yes sir; that is when a man will come to knowledge of what sin is, the depth, the length, the breadth, the width of it, the depravity of it, the wretchedness of it, the guilt of it, the filth of it, when he sees the holiness of God.

As he sees the holiness of God in direct proportion, he will see the sinfulness of his sin. The less a man knows about God, the less he knows about his sin. David cried, *“My sin is ever before me; against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.”*

Paul wrote in **Romans 3:23**; *“All have sinned and come short of glory of God (not the law of the rules and regulations of men, or the expectations of the preachers in the church);”* but from the glory of God. *“We have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”*

Thirdly: What leads to a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a genuine faith? What leads a man to faith in Christ?

Now, there are some facts that are laid down in the Scriptures, which are unchangeable facts; will you listen to these facts? These are facts; they are unchangeable as the throne of God. They are unchangeable as the Word of God.

First of all: The law of God, the holy law of God must and shall be honored! That’s exactly right! Listen to the Scripture: *“Who shall stand in his presence; he that hath clean hands and a pure heart?”* Listen to the Scripture: *“Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them, (not to admire them or consent to them), but to do them.”*

Listen to this: *“Without holiness, no man will see the Lord.”* Listen to **Matthew 5:20**: Our Lord said, *“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness, the holiness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you are not going to enter the kingdom of God.”*

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How good does a man have to be to enter the kingdom of God? Listen to me; he has to be as perfect as God, as good as God. Now, that's right! God's law will not be compromised, it will not be repealed, and it will not be destroyed.

The edge will not be taken off the law. It is going to be honored by every man who enters heaven. It will be honored perfectly. That's exactly right!

You might say, "How in the world is any human going to enter heaven?" It's only through the righteousness of another. That law is going to be honored by you or by your substitute.

You see; that is why Christ came down here and lived 33 ½ years as a man. He didn't come to destroy the law. He didn't come to dilute the law. He didn't come to take the edge off the law of God. He came to honor it; He came to obey it; *"he came to fulfill it,"* He said.

"He was born under the law. He was made under the law. He was made of a woman to fulfill the law for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Christ is our righteousness. He is the fulfillment of the law. He honored God's law. *"By one man's disobedience we became sinners. By another man's obedience we became righteous."*

If you and I go to heaven tonight, if we die tonight and go to heaven, we will walk into heaven's gates with a perfect righteousness, with a perfect holiness, and with a perfect record. They won't be ours; it will be our substitute's, our Lord's, our Saviour's, his record, his obedience, his merit, his righteousness. Do you see what I am saying? It is his holiness. That's a fact!

Here's another fact: The justice of God is going to be satisfied. The Scripture says *"God will in no wise clear the guilty."* God is not going to clear the guilty. He is not going to look at the guilty and say, "Well; I am going to let you off; *"the guilty soul that sinneth is going to die; every soul that sinneth will die. The soul that sinneth shall die. Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."*

God's justice is going to be honored. Then, what you are saying is "that we are all going to die." We are or our sacrifice is. We are or our substitute is. We are or are sin-offering is. Yes, somebody is going to die for your sin, you are or Christ is.

You can't bring a basket of flowers to God and say, "accept these for my sin-offering." He says; *"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, there's no remission."* That is what the Scripture says.

God says, *"It's the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. The soul that sinneth shall die."* That is why Christ died. *"He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was laid upon him. By his stripes we are healed."*

Here's another fact: **1 Timothy 2:5** says, *"There's one God and one mediator between God and men and that's the man Christ Jesus."* That's what God said. There's only one high priest,

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only one mediator, and only one intercessor. Christ said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the father but by me.”*

When these truths are burned into your soul and I stated them as clear as I can state them; that is plain, Bible preaching. God’s law will be honored. God’s justice will be satisfied.

There is but one Mediator, one high priest, one righteousness, one holiness, and one sin-offering: *“By one offering Jesus Christ perfected forever them that are sanctified.”* Then, you will have an interest in Christ and you will close with Christ and you will embrace Christ.

Fourthly: How are the Scriptures opened to a man’s understanding?

Now, I know that understanding comes by revelation; God reveals them by his spirit. I know that understanding can only be taught of God. The Scripture says, *“No man cometh unto me, the Saviour saith, except my father draw him and they shall all be taught of God; he that hath learned of the father cometh unto me.”*

I know that God uses preachers and teachers. The Ethiopian Eunuch said, *“How can I understand except some man show me?”* But, the key to the Scriptures, the key to understanding the Scriptures is Jesus Christ.

Listen to this: **Acts 10:43** says, *“To him give all the prophets witness,”* to Christ. **John 5:39** says, *“You search the Scriptures; in them you think you have life; they are they which testify of me.”*

Listen to **Luke 24:27**: *“And beginning at Moses, that is Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”*

“These are the words that I spake unto you, Christ said, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, in the Psalms, concerning me, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding that they may understand the Scriptures.”

What was the key He used to open their understanding that they may understand the Scriptures? Christ Himself; He said, *“these are written concerning me.”*

In the Old Testament Christ is that rock, Christ is our Passover, Christ is Abel’s lamb, Christ is the tabernacle, Christ is the priesthood, Christ is the sin-offering, and Christ is the atonement. That’s the key my friend; you have the key when you have Christ.

The Bible is not just a book of poetry or the book of Proverbs or a book of history or the book of science or the book of beautiful love stories; it is the book of redemption, how God can be just and justify the ungodly, how God can save sinners not at the expense of his holiness, not at the expense of his justice, not at the expense of any attribute but in keeping with every holy attribute.

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Last of all: What is the bedrock motive for holiness of life?

First of all: I know that by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.

I know that God's laws and commandments are an influence for godliness of character. I know that influence and reputation have a decided affect upon our behavior, but the bedrock motive for obedience is love, love for Christ, love for one another, love for all men, love for the Gospel witness, love for the Word of God, love for the church, and love for your neighbor.

They came to our master one day and said, "*Master; which is the greatest commandment?*" Our Lord said, "*The greatest commandment is that thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. On these two hang all the law and the prophets.*"

Galatians 5:14 says, "*For all the law's fulfilled in this word; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*"

Pledge cards won't do it, rules and regulations won't do it, discipline committees won't do it, and appeals won't do it. Love is the bedrock motive for any act of kindness, grace, mercy, forgiveness, alms, or anything else!