

When Presentation Supersedes Doctrine, Part 2 - 1 Corinthians 2:3-5 – April 13th, 2014

- Today's teaching will be part two of a new series we began last week titled, "When Presentation Supersedes Doctrine."
- Actually, you could sort of title part two of this series, "When Personality Supersedes Doctrine."
- This because the preacher's presentation and the preacher's personality have the propensity to be the greatest enemy of the Word of God.

- Now I am keenly aware that my saying this can be perceived as somewhat provocative, especially since I'm the preacher who is saying it.
- However, the fact remains that it's incumbent upon any preacher of the Gospel, and teacher of the Word, to be cognizant of this dynamic.
- Let me explain, any pastor who has been entrusted with the profound privilege of preaching and teaching has to stay out of God's way.

- In other words, he absolutely must be constantly be aware of how easy it is for his personality, and or his presentation to steal the spotlight.
- If and when this happens, the consequences that will always ensue cannot be underestimated, and this for no less than two main reasons.
- First, what happens to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and second, what happens to the church of Jesus Christ, which we saw in, verses 1-2.

1. It comes at the expense of the Gospel (Verses 1-2)

- The reason Paul didn't come with eloquence or superior wisdom was he resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

2. It empties out the power of the Gospel (Verses 3-5)

- (3) I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. (4) My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, (5) so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.
- v3 Paul says instead of coming to them with eloquence and superior wisdom, he came to them in weakness and fear with much trembling.
 - v4 He says his speech and preaching of his own volition were not with wise and persuasive words but a demonstration of the Spirit's power.
 - v5 He tells us why, it's for their sake, such that their faith would not rest on, or become dependent upon man's wisdom, but on God's power.

- Here's why, were it dependent upon man's wisdom, then all it would take for them to falter is another man who's wisdom was even wiser.
- Perhaps better said, were their faith to rest on, or be built upon any man, it would be just a matter of time before it would end up collapsing.
- It's for this reason the Apostle Paul is pointing them to the Holy Spirit's power, so as to keep them from resting on the preacher's strength.

Charles Spurgeon - "If men believed because of the preacher's grand speech, their faith would be good for nothing. If one man can convert you, another can unconvert you. God's power is needed; no minister can give us faith."

- Here in lies the problem as it relates to personality and presentation, coming at the expense of, and emptying out the power of the Gospel.
- More specifically, it's the strength of the flesh, which is in direct opposition to the power of the Gospel, such that it can empty out its power.
- This is why the Apostle Paul would delineate between human strength, and God's power, in the previous chapter when he rebukes them.

- This rebuke was a much-needed rebuke by virtue of how the church in Corinth had become so divided by their "personality cult mentality."
- So much so that some were saying that they follow Paul, others say Apollos another Cephas, and still another say they follow only Christ.
- So serious were the implications of them doing this, Paul deemed it necessary by the Holy Spirit to confront them head on concerning this.

1 Corinthians 1:17 NIV For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

- What Paul is saying here is those whose personality is strong can in effect diminish and even demean the Gospel of Jesus Christ's power.
- I suppose you could say that this is textbook flesh vs. Spirit and strength vs. power, which is what we're seeing in our study of 1 Samuel 17.
- Namely, the strength of Goliath vs. the power of God vis-à-vis a young teenage boy by the name of David, who has a sling shot and rocks.

- Point being is absent the power of God the strength of the flesh can seemingly prevail, which would've happened had it not been for David.
- So too is this true for the church in Corinth, and for the church today, such that, man's wisdom and strength can prevail over God's power.
- Here's how I get there, strength and power are not synonymous in terms and as such we need to understand the difference between them.

- In order to do this we'll look at Merriam-Webster's definition of strength and power and in so doing we'll see the difference between the two.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary says, "Strength is the quality or state of being strong, whereas power is the ability to act or produce an effect."
- Here's where I'm going with this, the wisdom and strength of man can empty out the Gospel's power and ability to act or produce an effect.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for a moment before we close, as I turn a corner from what man's strong personality does, to why man does this.
- In other words, why do those with strong and charismatic personalities operate in the energy of the flesh, and not in the power of the Spirit?
- At the risk of an oversimplification, I would suggest that a mask of strength in the flesh is to cover up the deficiencies of power in the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 2:5 NIV (5) You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.

Adam Clarke – "A fine appearance and a fine voice cover many weaknesses and defects, and strongly and forcibly recommend what is spoken, though not remarkable for depth of thought or solidity of reasoning."

- Here's the bottom line in closing, a church, or Christian in a church that operates in the energy and strength of the flesh is very vulnerable.
- Whereas conversely, a church, or Christian in a church that operates in the power and might of the Spirit is very secure and not vulnerable.
- So much so, that when, not if, the storms of life hit, like a tree with it's roots deep in the soil of solid and sound doctrine will not topple over.