

April 27, 2025

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 1:16-17

Romans 12:1-2

Philippians 3:1-11

Colossians 1:15-20

Hebrews 1:1-4

“Paul was a man who had the equivalent of two Ph.D.s in theology by the time he was 21 years of age, a man who wrote with great insight on the whole scope of theology. Nevertheless, he said that the focal point of his teaching, preaching, and ministry among the Corinthians was simply ‘Jesus Christ and Him crucified.’

- RC Sproul



Exalting Christ and Advancing the Gospel

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

BIG IDEA: Because of the power of the gospel that gives believers a new identity and new perspective, we may have a Christ-centered approach in all that we do.

OUTLINE

1. Worldly Approach to Life and Ministry

2. Christ-Centered Approach to Life and Ministry

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These "Sermon Discussion Questions" are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. What values does the world promote as values we should pursue? What does it look like in your life when you approach it with our world's values?
2. What would it look like to have a Christ-centered approach to all of life?
3. What are some parts of your life that the Holy Spirit brought to your mind from this passage that you might need to change or alter?
4. Take time this week to pray individually and pray with a group for the ministries in our church that use our newly renovated buildings. There is a Prayer Guide that the church gave out on Sunday, April 27.

"Paul was saying that in all of his teaching, in all of his preaching, in all of his missionary activity, the central point of importance was the cross. In effect, this teacher was saying to his students, "You might forget other things that I teach you, but don't ever forget the cross, because it was on the cross, through the cross, and by the cross that our Savior performed His work of redemption and gathered His people for eternity."

- RC Sproul

"Understanding "the power and the wisdom of God" in the cross (1 Cor.1:18-31) requires enlightenment by God's Spirit (2:6-16). The Spirit does not take his pupils beyond the cross, but ever more deeply into it."

- Knox Chamblin

Praise Jesus. This week, praise God for our redemption through faith in Jesus Christ. Also, exalt His name for the new life and perspective we have because of the person and work of Christ.

Repentance through Jesus. Ask the Spirit to show you how you need to repent for the ways that you have lived by the values of our world instead of the values taught by Christ and found in the Bible.

Consecration to Jesus. Take time to ask for the Spirit to remind you to abide in Christ this week and to pursue holiness by the power of the Spirit. Ask the Spirit to give you a heart and desire to pray for your focus in life to be on Christ and for you to have the strength to follow Christ.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“First Corinthians is addressed to people who desire spiritual maturity. Some seek maturity through displays of wisdom and eloquence, some through a complete break with the circumstances of their pre-Christian lives, and some in the exercise of personal freedom. But as Paul reminds us, the gospel is not, “I am wise, I am pure, I am free.” Rather, the gospel boasts in nothing but “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (2:2). To the human mind it seems foolish to hope that we could be saved through the cross of Christ, with its associations of weakness and shame. But it is at the cross that God’s wisdom, power, and glory are fully revealed—along with the true nature of self-sacrificial love. Because love never ends (13:8) and because we long to see God’s power over all things displayed forever (15:28), we must never lose sight of the cross. True maturity will take us deeper into the gospel of Christ crucified, but never beyond it.”

-ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. How would it change your lives if you wore sunglasses all the time? What about a blindfold? (Talk with your children about how this week's passage deals with how we view our lives and what or who we are to direct our focus in life.)

2. What did Paul describe as the things he purposefully did not do when he came to Corinth? (In verse 1, he mentioned "lofty speech or wisdom". In the city of Corinth at this time in history, there were a lot of discussions by non-Christian philosophers who tried to impress people with their knowledge and speech. Paul was not implying that we should not learn new things to gain knowledge or try to learn how to speak effectively. He wanted the Corinthians and us to know that our goal for our learning and speaking is to point people to Christ and to bring Him glory.)

3. What did he purposefully set out to do in Corinth? (Paul said in verse 2 that he would only focus on Christ in his life with them and his teaching. He was not saying that he would only learn and teach about Christ's crucifixion. He used the phrase "and Him crucified" to identify the One to whom he referred. He also brought that up because to follow a Savior who willingly was crucified did not make sense to those focused on worldly wisdom. To be crucified meant that you were the worst of criminals.)

4. What are some ways that you and your family can focus on Christ above all other things? How would an intentional focus on Christ and His redemptive work change things for your family?

6. Use the Prayer Guide that was given out to pray as a family for our newly renovated buildings and the ministries that will take place in those buildings. I would encourage you to ask your children to pray for their Sunday school teachers, Summit volunteers, Nursery staff, and other leaders of the Children's Ministry and Nursery Ministry.

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 12:1-2

Philippians 3:7-10

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Philippians 3:7-10

Romans 12:1-2

Colossians 1:15-20

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

1. In verse 2, Paul says he decided to know “nothing... except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” What does it mean to keep Christ at the center of your life? What would that look like in your daily routines, relationships, and goals?

2. Our world often values things like popularity, appearance, success, or being impressive. How do those values influence your life? How do they differ from what Paul says is most important?

3. In verses 3–5, Paul talks about his weakness and fear. Why do you think he wanted the Corinthians to see that his power and message came from God, not from himself? How can that help you when you feel weak or insecure about your faith?

4. What are some ways people today (even in churches) try to make the gospel more attractive or impressive? How can that actually distract from the true message of Jesus?

5. Think about the renovated church buildings being dedicated this week. Why is it important that everything we do in those spaces—Sunday school, youth group, worship, service—should keep Christ at the center?

6. Read Romans 12:1–2 and Philippians 3:7–10. How do these verses challenge you to live with a Christ-centered focus? What’s one area of your life where you feel called to shift your focus away from the world and toward Jesus?

FOR SEEKERS AND NEW BELIEVERS

1. Read verse 2 again.

Question: According to Paul, what should always be the main content and focus of our preaching and teaching?

2. Eloquence, wisdom, persuasion, and reasoning are all good things in and of themselves. Paul himself always used good sound reasoning in his writing and preaching.

Question: But how can these things be misused? How can these things detract from the gospel?

3. Why do both preachers and listeners alike sometimes feel tempted to add anything to the gospel to try to make it more powerful or attractive?

4. What are some possible examples today of how churches and preachers rely on tactics and devices that can be manipulative and often divert attention from Christ and his gospel?

5. According to Paul in verse 5, what is the danger of someone's faith resting on clever reasoning or other audience-pleasing devices?

6. Paul says, "I came to you in weakness and fear" (verse 3). Paul literally was weak physically. But more importantly, he came with the right posture of "fear." Describe the difference between "fear" of what other people think, versus a "fear of the Lord," and fear that recognizes how much is at stake in our preaching.

The Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People



The Ancient of Days, William Blake, 1794.

About the artwork and artist.

The Ancient of Days, found in prophecies of Daniel, is the subject of William Blake's engraving in which he shows us the Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People, the sermon series title for Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Ancient of Days is the cover art for Blake's Poem Europe: a Prophecy (1794). The Ancient of Days is a name for God the Father, whom the prophet Daniel spoke of in Daniel 7, where he saw Jesus, the Son of Man, "given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

Blake's poem "Europe", depicts a world filled with suffering based on the political climate of Europe and politics in England in the 1790s. It is appropriate in light of the suffering of God's people described in Ezra and Nehemiah. The artwork by Blake serves to remind and encourage God's people to know that He is still active and on the move with His plan of redemption despite their surroundings and circumstances. William Blake (1757-1827) was committed to connecting the prophecies and visions of the God of the Bible with the events in his country; the poet, printmaker, and painter was unrecognized and died impoverished. Despite their circumstances, William and his devoted wife Catherine, whom he taught to read and write, enjoyed a happy marriage and life together.

Today, William Blake is considered one of the greatest poets in the English language and one of the most original visual artists of his day.

Barker, (2004) (Barker, William Blake 1757-1827, 2004)

Introduction to Nehemiah

From January to May 2024, we heard sermons from the Book of Ezra. The introduction to Ezra, recorded sermons, and discipleship resources can be found on our church website at this address; <https://www.fpcrome.org/pdd-ezra/>

Ezra and Nehemiah were, for centuries, received as one book narrating the return of God's exiled people to their land, as under Persian rule they were allowed to resettle and rebuild Jerusalem. These two books cover three different waves of returning exiles, from 538 to 433 BC. But they tell one story: the restoration of God's covenant people according to his Word—which they are now called afresh to obey.

This restoration required, first of all, the rebuilding of the temple and the reinstitution of ceremonial worship. The first leader, Zerubbabel, led the initial wave of exiles back to Jerusalem to accomplish this goal (Ezra 1–6). The second wave came more than half a century later, led by Ezra, who rebuilt not the temple but the people, teaching them—and calling them to obey—the law of Moses (Ezra 7–10).

Thirteen years after Ezra arrived, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem. He first led the people to rebuild the wall (Nehemiah 1–6). Then, along with Ezra, he sought to restore the people (Nehemiah 7–13) as God's holy nation, followers of his Word.

The restoration was not complete, however. These books picture God's people regathered but struggling; they are poor subjects of a foreign king; their city is devastated; enemies oppress from without; sin threatens from within. We see the faithful hand of God mercifully preserving his people according to his promises. We also see the dire need for the perfect fulfillment of God's promises in the salvation accomplished by his Son. (For further background, see the ESV Study Bible.)