

1 Corinthians Ch2v1-5 - Mission: Possible

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[0 : 00] So, turn in your Bibles, please, to 1 Corinthians, chapter 2. 1 Corinthians, chapter 2. I'm going to read the first five verses.

This is the Apostle Paul writing to the church in Corinth. And this is what he writes. And it's a word for us today as well.

1 Corinthians 2. And so it was with me, brothers and sisters, when I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness, with great fear and trembling.

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

[1 : 37] Let's pray before we look at this word together. Father, you've given us food to eat today.

You've given us drink. You nourish us. And you sustain us physically. But how much more are we desperately in need for your Spirit?

And so we pray that as we look at these words together and think about them, that it would be a demonstration of your Spirit's power at work amongst us today, so that you would cause us to lean upon you, to trust you, depend upon you, so that you would do an effective and eternal work in the lives of people causing them to trust in you too.

So help us now. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I'm sure you're all familiar with the TV show, The Apprentice.

The host, Mr. Lord Sugar himself, invites 15 or so people to compete against each other in a series of business tasks.

[3 : 07] And the winner gets to receive, in case you're interested, £250,000 and becomes Lord Sugar's apprentice. But I wonder if you've also noticed that the winners of this show are always charming and clever.

They're already very successful in their own little businesses and very wealthy. It seems to be that they are the best and the brightest.

And above all, they have an extraordinary self-confidence in themselves and in their message.

They don't just sell snow to the Eskimos, they can sell rain to the Irish.

Now, in many ways, that just reflects the values of our society and it mirrors our culture. You see, we live in a world where the weak are disregarded and the foolish are despised.

There's only room for the best and the brightest. We want winners and not losers. But when it comes to God's plan and purpose, as we've been thinking about this morning, to create a kingdom from every nation, to love him, well, those values of the world are turned completely upside down.

[4 : 38] Because what we're going to see from the text that we read today is this. And I've just suddenly thought, I always get mixed up how to spell chooses and chose.

So if I've got that wrong anywhere, please forgive me. God chooses weak people, sends them with a foolish message, fills them with extraordinary power, so that lives are changed.

How different that is to the standards of the world. Weak people, with a foolish message, give an extraordinary power, so that lives are changed.

That's what we're thinking about today. So let's take each part in turn. God chooses weak people. Look at chapter 2, verse 1.

So it was with me, says Paul, brothers and sisters, when I came to you, I didn't come with eloquence or human wisdom, as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.

[5 : 46] When I came to your town and city and I preached to you, I was nothing special. In fact, he's saying, I was just like you.

Beginning of verse 1, so it was with me, brothers and sisters, I was just like you. So what were the church like? Well, we're told in the previous section, go back to chapter 1, verse 26.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Think about, for a moment, what you were when you became a Christian. Not many of you were wise by human standards. Some, but not many, were leading professors in the world of academics. Not many of you were influential. A few, but not many were powerful politicians influencing the nation's economy. And not many of you were noble birth. One of two, one or two of you, but not many of you were born with great wealth and status and privilege.

[7 : 01] He's reminding them that, well, they were a bunch of nobodies. And that's really a picture of us. It's a picture of Amy.

As far as the world's elite and the standards go, well, we're nothing. We have an education and we may have a few qualifications and letters after our name, but we're not being chased up to have our thoughts published to the world.

You see, when God looked at us, we weren't standing out in a crowd. We weren't spotted by God on Instagram because we had so many followers.

We were people who had nothing to offer. In the eyes of the world, nothing special. Now, isn't that incredibly humbling? Because we all like to think we are somebody special, or at the very least, that we're somehow better than the person sitting next to me.

So, if we're nothing special, how did we ever become a Christian in the first place? Well, look at verse 27, chapter 1, verse 27.

[8 : 14] We're told that God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify or cancel the things that are.

You see, God didn't choose us because we were special. Maybe you can remember back to your school days, standing in the playground, being lined up, being picked for a particular football team or a game of tag or whatever it was.

Always the sporty and the fastest. They always got chosen first. And then the rest were ignored or rejected. You can go and play on your own, do your own thing.

Well, it's no different today, is it? The world picks the beautiful, the wealthy, the clever. But God doesn't choose by the standards of this world.

[9 : 22] God isn't influenced about anything about our exterior or anything good we do or anything bad that we do.

God is driven by his grace because he loves us. Verse 27, God chose the foolish, the weak, the lowly, the despised.

God chose nobodies just like us. You see, he seeks a people who know they are not qualified. People like Amy who have come to see that, well, Amy knows that she has nothing to offer God except for her failure and her brokenness.

One author puts it like this. Here we go.

[10 : 25] In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do.

God chooses weak people. So why? But why does God choose those who are weak? Now I've gone and messed up a bit here.

Oh dear. Never mind. Why does God choose those who are weak? Well, look at verse 29. So that no one may boast before him.

If ever I could say I'm a Christian or Amy, you could say I'm a Christian because because I because I obeyed because I went to Sheffield because well we have reason for boasting, don't we?

It's something I've done that qualifies me. No, we're only qualified because of Christ. Verse 30. It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus who's become for us wisdom from God that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

[11 : 51] Christ took your unrighteousness, Amy and gave you his righteousness so that you are acceptable to God. He took your unholiness and gave you his holiness so that you are treated as blameless.

He's redeemed us from a life of slavery, setting us free so that we can live a new life to please him. All this has been given to us freely because God loves us.

None of us on our own qualify. He makes us his people righteous, holy and redeemed. He qualifies you, Amy.

He qualifies us for the task. Verse 31. Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.

Amy, as you go, always remember that you are weak and your boasting is in Christ because he qualifies you to do what you could never do on your own.

[13:07] So, God chooses weak people. Second, God sends with a foolish message.

Paul's message was very simple, wasn't it? He explains it like this, chapter 2, verse 2. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Imagine, he was sent with a message about a person called Jesus who was put to death as a criminal. That's the message.

And the problem is people don't always like it. For some, it's a nonsense. Look at chapter 1, verse 18. Do you see it there?

Chapter 1, verse 18. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. Professor Richard Dawkins, who's a leading scientist and atheist, said this, you cannot be an intelligent scientific thinker and still hold to religious beliefs.

[14:25] Don't know if you agree with that, but what he's saying is you can't be an educated person, an intelligent person, and still believe in the cross of Jesus Christ.

You see, for many, the cross is foolish. We don't need anyone to save us. We save ourselves. Salvation for humanity is found in the wisdom that we have and that we can learn.

And Amy is being sent to Sheffield with a foolish message. A message that some people will think is completely daft, and some of your friends will think you're daft.

But listen to what God says. Verse 18. Let's read it all. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it's the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, the intelligence of the intelligent, I will frustrate. The very thing that the world counts as foolish and nonsense, God says, I will show the world that this is actually the means of salvation.

[15:49] The world's wisdom says, we can go it alone, we don't need God, we don't need a cross, but God in his wisdom used the very thing that was foolish to save the world.

Look at the end of verse 21, chapter 1, end of verse 21. God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

You see, the wisdom of the world has achieved great things. We can do amazing things. We can send rockets to the moon. India did that recently to see if there was ice.

I don't know what they'll do with the ice if they find ice there, but maybe there is. We can write books and plays and I've even discovered you can write sermons using the use of artificial intelligence.

This sermon wasn't AI, don't worry. We can slow down and cure degenerative diseases and prolong life. We've done amazing things through our wisdom, but the world is still broken.

[17:07] The human heart is still selfish and it's still sinful beyond our ability to fix or cure or heal. And God's answer to this is the good news of Jesus Christ crucified.

A loving God who comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ to reach us where we're at. Verse 22, we're still in chapter 1.

Jews demand signs or if you like religious people, well they want miracles and all the razzmatazz and wonderful things. Greeks look for wisdom, for knock down arguments and philosophy.

But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to religious folk and foolishness to those who are not religious.

amy, your task, your calling is to bring people to the foolishness of the cross, to see the broken body of Jesus beaten, crushed and naked, to see nails driven into his hands and feet, ripping and tearing flesh, to see crown of thorns crushed into his skull, blood blinding his eyes and dripping down his side, hearing the agony and the pain, the grasping for breath as life edges away.

[18:49] Watch at the cross as crowds jeer and taunt and spit and laugh. the cross of Christ is a picture of weakness, it's a bloody mess, foolish, stupid, pathetic, but look at verse 24, to those whom God has called, whether Jews or Greeks or from wherever they come from, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Amy, we're sending you to proclaim a foolish message that has the power to save anyone. So tell the good news of the cross.

Let the women see that Christ has died for all of their sin, past, present and future. Show them that they can be forgiven and no longer have to live with fear, guilt or shame.

declare that they are loved and treasured by God, that they can be beautiful daughters of Father God who is not just great but good and personal and gracious.

Teach them nothing less and nothing more than this simple message of Jesus Christ and him crucified. again as one writer put it on the cross the one person who ever truly qualified allowed himself to be disqualified so that you and I who are naturally disqualified can qualify free of charge. [20 : 43] so why does God use such a foolish message? Well to humble the proud. Look at verse 25.

For the foolishness of God is wiser than the human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. You see God is not seeking those who rely on their own wisdom or their own strength.

The saying we all know it God helps those who help themselves. It's not a Bible verse. It's false teaching. If we are to experience God's work in us and his salvation we come in humility. We admit that my wisdom my wisdom from myself is foolish and my strength is complete weakness. Amy preach the cross to others but preach the cross to yourself every day. It will keep you humble. So weak people with a foolish message equipped with extraordinary power. [22 : 04] Paul came in weakness didn't he? He was sent with a foolish message. But look in verses chapter 2 verses 3 and 4 he was equipped by God's power.

Do you see it there verse 3? I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. Did you write those words Amy?

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

The people God uses are weak. The message we have is foolish. But it's the means by which God works. Amy if you're to lead someone to Christ it's not because of your ability it's a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

If Carigaline or Christ Church Central were to plant a church it's not our greatness it's a demonstration of the Spirit's power. If any good were to come from us or from our church it's all down to the power of God working through a simple people with a simple message.

[23 : 22] It doesn't happen by our wisdom or our persuasive words. It's not our method or our technology our slick presentation the dynamic speaker the strength of our faith or the length of our prayers.

It's all down to God's power. Later on in the letter Paul speaks of God's power like this. He says God's power raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and he will also raise us also.

That is the power at work in Amy and through Amy and in us and through us. It's supernatural. It's extraordinary.

And so as we go we depend on God. Look at verse 5. We need the Spirit's power, verse 5, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power.

power. We don't want people trusting in Carigoline Baptist Church. We don't want followers of Johnny Grant or any program.

[24 : 39] We want people who will follow Jesus and people who will proclaim the cross. You see, if we depend on our strength, we make followers of us.

People will become dependent on you if you are the strength. Their faith will be in you. In Johnny Grant we trust. No, don't trust me and don't trust yourself.

When we are weak, we depend on God and people become followers of him. People will become dependent on him.

Their faith will be in Jesus. So Amy, depend on God and you will experience the Spirit's power. Which brings us right the way through to the end. God chooses weak people, sending them with a foolish message, giving them extraordinary power so that lives are changed.

[25 : 53] This is how the church in Corinth came into being. It's how Carragaline came into being. It's how Christ Church Central came into being. This is the way God works.

It's the way of ministry for all of God's people. God chooses weak people like you and me. He sends us with a foolish message, equips us with extraordinary power so that lives are changed for God's glory.

Let's pray together. Let's pray. Let's pray. as we pray, I'm going to read a couple of lines from an old hymn.

amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We rest on thee, our shield and our defender. We go not forth alone against the foe, strong in thy strength, safe in thy keeping tender. We rest on thee, and in thy name we go. we go in faith, our own great weakness feeling, and needing more each day thy grace to know.

[27 : 28] Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing, we rest on thee, and in thy name we go.

Father, thank you that you have reached people like us as weak as we are. Thank you for the wonderful message of Jesus Christ.

Thank you that you have given us your spirit's power so that we might go as your people so that others are changed for their good and for your glory.

And it's in Jesus' name we all pray. Amen. We are going to sing together.

Let your kingdom come, let your will be done so that everyone might know your name. As we conclude this chapter 20 chapter 20 chapter 20 chapter 20 Hebrews chapter 21 chapter 20 Charlie Andrew