

“An Ancient Message for a Modern Society”
Jerry Grey Grace Baptist 3-10 WBC 2-23
1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Message 1

Introduction: Intimidation! The very word causes us to perk up and take notice. I know of no one who likes to feel intimidated. You know the feeling well... some wise old owl or, some important person looks down at you over their glasses and tries to make you feel stupid or less important than they. It is the feeling of being out of place. You feel like hiding or running away.

I have had adults literally put their hands in their faces and hide during awkward confrontations.

- First day of school
- First day on a new job
- First day at college
- New kid in the neighborhood

This feeling happens when you feel that you are at a disadvantage or you don't have the information others have.

Many times this can happen to the most mature Christian when they share their faith. We should never feel this way because we have the life saving message of the gospel and it is powerful.

Illustration: Dr. Gray Allison, the most effective witness I have ever know admitted to being shy and intimidated when he shared his faith.

Tim Tebow and his mother were ridiculed recently when the antiabortion *Focus on The Family* ad aired on the Super

Bowl. This is just one example of millions of attempts to intimidate God's people.

I am glad that we have the text I will be dealing with to show us how to respond to this problem. Paul will show us how to deal with spiritual intimidation. When you feel this way, even as a pastor, do what Paul did.

Context: The city of Corinth was pagan, cultured and "Modern." At least for its time. Corinth was a city filled with the Arts. High-Class folks who sat around philosophizing about the greater truths of life and existence.

Greek thought and philosophy was the topic of street corner conversations. Religion was intellectual and immoral to say the least. The temples of Apollo and Aphrodite (The Ancient Greek goddess of love and beauty) were there. A huge agora or market place was active and popular. The city was filled with shoppers, business people and just plain minglers. Many of the people had slaves for half the city was slaves.

Corinth had artists of all kinds. Painters, sculpturers and the like. The Lachaion (La-kay-aun) way was there. A popular road that brought all through the city. New thoughts and ideas were easily brought into the city for people to try out. These were educated people mind you. They produced goods to sell and shared modern thoughts with each other.

The job that Paul had was difficult. He was bringing the gospel into this situation where the intimidation factor was very high. If this were not intimidating enough we can add his previous situation to the mix. Paul had just left Athens where he was laughed out of town. If what happened to Paul

happened to me, I might have folded. For us to understand our text, we have to see what happened to Paul in Athens.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And I, brethren, **when I came to you**, (from Athens) I did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

NKJV

Acts 17:16- 34

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. 18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this **babbling** want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of **foreign gods**," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? 20 For you are bringing some **strange things** to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." 21

For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some **new thing**.

22 Addressing the Areopagus

Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are **very religious**; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' 29 **Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.** 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to **repent**, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some **mocked**, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 However, **some men joined him** (a few) and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

NKJV

So here is what I want to convey with the message tonight. Paul is called a babbler, they sneered at him. They laughed at him. They thought he brought some new teaching. They thought the resurrection and the cross and calling men to repent was foolish. He did battle with the Stoics, the philosophers, and Epicureans. These were the people that were hip. They were on top of things. They were the teachers of the day who knew all the latest techniques of making people happy and content. They knew all the rules. In 17:21 it says they knew all the **latest ideas**.

On top of all this he dealt with the pressure of the Baptist committees that wanted to fire him because he was not getting the results that he should get. The text tells us that he only had a few converts in Athens. If he were a Baptist preacher some of the folk in the church would say, ***“hey Paul, when you gonna change your methods man. When you gonna change the music? When you gonna try to learn to shorten the sermon so we can get some young people in here who can whine and not tithe. I hear there’s a church growth seminar you could go to to help you learn how to preach and how to use modern techniques to reach people. You could get personal teaching from some church growth guru and pick up the pace man.”***

So Paul leaves Athens with little success and few converts. He goes to Corinth. On the way I’m sure he has a talking-to-himself-time and he must have been intimidated... right. Surely he will change his method... right. He’s gonna change the message ...right. Maybe not use so many harsh words. Maybe water it down a bit. Maybe he could reach out to those who get their feelings hurt a bit. I mean after all, those

folk in Corinth are cultured man. They are educated and God help us they are modern.

I also got news for ya... they were also lost and going to hell.

Dr Vines says... *“Paul came to Corinth not as a sight seer or philosopher but as a soul-winner”*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

NKJV

I guess Paul learnt this at the seeker sensitive church growth class.

“Three Keys to Delivering the Ancient Message to the Modern Audience”

I. Trust The Message: Verse 1

Deliver the message in faith. After Paul experienced “Failure” in Athens he came to Corinth with the same message. When we do not achieve “our” goals or man’s goals we often think the message has a flaw. Paul trusted the message.

Greek words:

- **υπεροχη**– Excellency or authority or lofty. Prominence or superior.

- σοφια– wisdom, cleverness. Aristotle wrote the “Art of Rhetoric.”
- καταγγελλων– to preach or herald. To proclaim.
- μυστηριον– the mystery of God. The counsel of God. What concerns His saving work and ultimate purposes in history.

Translation: *“I did not come to you from Athens to impress you with my preaching skills, philosophical ideas or clever modern teaching techniques or even some old wife’s tales or oratory excellence; I came to Corinth with the saving message of God’s plan of salvation so that the counsel of God might be revealed to you I simply trusted the message of God that He gave me to preach and left the results to Him.”*

Now that’s exegeting the scriptures!!!!

- Paul brought what God gave him. Paul trusted the message. Preacher... trust the message... trust the message...trust the message.

Romans 1:16

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation”
NKJV

- Faith comes by hearing the “message”
- In The letter to the Colossians Paul asked for prayer so that there might be an open door for the message.
- To the church in Thessalonica Paul said the message rang out.

- Pray for us brother so that the message may spread rapidly (2 Thess 3:1).
- 1 Tim 4:14 Paul reminds Timothy that it was through the message that his calling to preach was given. In 2 Tim 4:17 Paul says that in his dark moments that that it was the Lord that stood by his side in his trial so that he could have strength to deliver the message.
- Titus 1:19 Hold firmly to the message.
- Peter tells us that the Jews missed their Messiah because they disobeyed the message. 1 Peter 2:8

1 John 1:5

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

NIV

1 John 2:7

7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.

NIV

- The Savior Himself said Go into all the word and preach the gospel.

Illustration: Have you ever wondered why preachers are to trust and deliver just the message?

1. Theological reason- It's His plan of salvation. We are not allowed to change His plan.
2. Practical reason- not everybody is creative. If creativity in preaching saved people then we would not need the message.

- Every messenger is different. Each preacher must be himself. Not your old pastor or old ss teacher.
- We are not entertainers.
- All preachers are not great orators.

This does not mean that a messenger is not to perfect his technique or try to use all the homiletical tools at his disposal. We are to be continually learning to be great communicators and be as eloquent as possible but all of this void of the Holy Spirit's power is only wood, hay and stubble.

- The message is sufficient. If not, our work will never be efficacious.
- If the testimony/mystery of God is learned through "revelation" then eloquence, intelligence and education are useless if not surrendered to His process.
- We are never to share in our own ability.

II. Know The Message: verse 2

- Deliver the essence of the message.
- Unfortunately men change the message because they do not trust it. They don't trust it because they never knew it.

Here is the message: Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.

- What else can you add to this that makes it a better message? God in His sovereignty has chosen the plan we are to follow to be saved. **Who are we to say that the cross and resurrection don't work anymore?**

Quote: Jerry Grey... “never preach a message about the cross with bows and ribbons on it” The death, burial and resurrection are the centrality of all we believe.

A church that hides the cross in the church is not a church.

- Paul said... “I was “**determined**” or I was resolved to bring the same message to you that God gave me... even if my success was not what others may think it should be.”

Paul was determined that it was ordained that he preach the cross. **κρίνω**—determined: To judge, ordain, esteem, determine or sentence, think.

Vines: The gospel is the theme above all themes. Paul exclusively declares the message of the cross of Jesus Christ, knowing that it is the only message that can bring conversion to the sinner. It is the only message that has the dynamic power of God to change human lives, to take men out of their sins and into salvation, and remove them from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. It is the only message that can bring comfort to those who suffer. In a world of tragedy, bereavement, and sorrow, we need to deliver the gospel message in order to comfort the hearts of men. As Christians, we must preach Christ crucified. The cross is not an after thought in God’s mind, but the goal from all eternity. The message of Christ crucified on a cross does not make good men better, it makes dead men alive.

Galatians 6:14

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

NKJV

Trust The Message, Know The Message...

III. Demonstrate The Message: Verse 3-4

Paul uses three words to encourage those who struggle in sharing the message.

Greek:

- Weakness: Disease, feebleness, and sickness
- Fear: Phobia, fear, terror
- Trembling: Tromas or trauma

Here is the spiritual irony... The healing, life saving message of the cross is demonstrated as we deliver the message through diseased, sinful flesh.

2 Corinthians 4:7

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

KJV

How can this be? How do we deliver the ancient, Holy, message through sinful, weak flesh? **It is simple...** do it through the demonstration of the Spirit's power.

- The word for “demonstration” here means **“The most righteous proof.”**
- Paul did not come to dazzle, impress, entice, trick or manipulate. He came to deliver the ancient message in the demonstration of the Spirit's power.
- It is obvious when the power of God is on the preacher.
- It is obvious when the power of God is on the congregation.

- I see it when I preach. I feel it when God is moving. I see it when the Holy Spirit moves.
- It is also obvious when it's not there as well.

It is obvious when the congregation senses the Holy Spirit. They respond. There are days when I simply feel a special measure of grace I do not have to keep the congregation's attention... the Holy Spirit does it for me. God moves you and he moves me, and he moves us out of the way and he works. It is also obvious when the Holy Spirit is demonstrated on a life. People get holy. They get spirit let. They give up their habits of the flesh like gossip, negative talk, complaining, lying, backbiting, and all such sin. The ability of the Holy Spirit is seen and not the messenger.

Quote: “When God is on a man in the pulpit, he is also on his life.”

When you come to church don't ask what's wrong with the preacher. Don't ask what's wrong with the choir or my SS teacher... ask yourself... What's wrong with me?”

Are you demonstrating the Spirit's power?

Conclusion: Verse 5

Verse 5 tells us the reason why we are to trust the message, know the message and demonstrate the message....

So that... lost people will turn to the life saving power of God and not trust in the wisdom of man (The foolishness of preaching).

Church growth gurus, methods of men, and enticing words will never save men.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

*3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*

KJV

Do you know why we have inactive people at WBC. Because I trust the message, know the message, and demonstrate it in the pulpit. The backslider will get right or get gone. They can't take it. The message convicts the soul. When the Holy Spirit anoints the message the conviction comes. You either get right or stay away.

Illustration: *Doctor RG Lee, former pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, tells about the time he went to the church early one Sunday morning and felt as if a warm blanket had been wrapped around him and someone's finger were gently caressing him. He told one of his deacons, there's going to be a great day at Bellevue today. Doctor Lee preached a brief sermon and when he gave the invitation, his large congregation was stirred like a forest by an invisible wind. People began to pour down the aisles. Young people came forward, committing themselves to the Lord. A young lawyer walked up and said, I've hated a man in this church for 10 years but now I'm going to ask for his forgiveness this afternoon. At 12:45 in the afternoon, 126 people who had made decisions for the Lord Jesus were lined up in the sanctuary. That's the demonstration of the power in the spirit.*