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# The Cross and the Good News
# 2: 1-5

**The cross and the Good News DIG: When the message of the cross is presented, why do some people stumble over it? What was Paul's approach? What does Paul say about himself that reveals his own personality? What is the real proof of the power of the gospel?**

**REFLECT: What goes through your mind when you have an opportunity to talk to an unbeliever about your faith? Do you think that only the people with the gift of evangelism lead people to Messiah? Or is it everybody's responsibility to look for opportunities?**

**Paul uses himself as an illustration of how God uses the weak to confound the strong.**

We need to remember that **Paul** was laying the foundation for dealing with the divisions in the church at **Corinth** (**to see link click Ak – Splits and Division in the Church at Corinth**). In this section he wants to remind them that neither **the Good News** he preached nor the manner in which **he** preached **it** had in any way contributed to the splits and division within them. **He** had come to them as a proclaimer – not to argue, not to discuss, or not to persuade. Since **the Good News** is not a system of philosophy or logic, but a statement of **ADONAI's** revelation in **the Messiah**, the proper approach for its messenger is that of a proclaimer. This is the approach of the evangelist and the missionary who **announce the Good News**.[53]

**Paul reminded the Corinthians of his approach (2:1-2): As for me, brothers, when I arrived among you, it was not with surpassing eloquence or wisdom that I came announcing to you a mystery (2:7), the previously concealed truth about God (2:1). Paul** did not operate like the Sophists, those who were specially-trained Greek teachers who lectured and on the basis of well-formulated logic. In the ancient world, when a speaker would first come to a city, he would advertise a meeting where he would praise it. If he proved successful and

attracted enough people, he would stay there. **Paul** points out that **he** did not come to **them** like such sophists, pandering to popularity. As **he** would later state: **For we are not like a lot of folks who go about huckstering God's message for a fee; on the contrary, we speak out of a sincere heart, as people sent by God (2 Cor 2:17a). His** desire, however, was to declare **Yeshua Messiah** and see **Him** established in the lives of others.[54]

In the ancient world, "mystery" referred to something secret, such as mysterious religious rites that allowed one to ascend beyond everyday life to become a temporary, but select, participant in otherworldly bliss. By contrast **Paul** uses **mystery (2:7)** to refer to **God's** saving purposes in and through **Yeshua Messiah (Matthew 13:11** and **17; Romans 16:25-26)**.[55]




**Paul** had a much more important focus than coming to Corinth with slippery words of persuasion. **He** made a careful **decision** at the beginning of **his** time with **the Corinthians** that it would be **the cross** and **the Good News**, not just at the beginning, but throughout. **For I had decided that while I was with you, I would forget everything except Yeshua the Messiah, and even Him only as someone who had been crucified on a cross as a criminal (2:1-2). He decided** not to tailor the method of **his** presentation to satisfy the expectations of **his** hearers in **Corinth**. **Paul** did not come to **the Corinthians** as a know-it-all, or compose speeches fishing for admiration. On the contrary, **he** was content to be identified as a know-nothing who preached **foolishness**: **Yeshua Messiah crucified**. When **he** announced **the Good News** as **his** sole focus, **the cross** molded **his** entire message and **his** whole approach.[56]

**Paul reminded the Corinthians of his attitude (2:3-4): Paul** was a fairly private person. We don't get many glimpses into the inner workings of **his** heart and mind. Only once in a great while does **he** drop **his** guard and let us look inside

**his** rather complex persona. But here, we have one such instance. **Also, I myself came to you as somebody weak, nervous and shaking all over from fear (2:3).**

If your sense of **Paul** was that of a fearless crusader, a sure-footed man of boldness, utterly confident, unmovable, unshakable, then you are in for a surprise. The fact is, **he** had **his** own set of insecurities. In that regard, **he** wasn't much different than most of us. We are treated here to a very real, earthly, human **Paul** . . . a **Paul** not talked about much in sermons, quite frankly, a **Paul** that many of us have never known.

When **Paul** passed through the gate of their city, **he** didn't march like a conqueror; rather, he quietly tip-toed in under the pain of death. When he confessed that he came to **the Corinthians** in **weakness, fear and trembling, he** was being amazingly honest. And **he** had good reason for doing so. Prior to **his** setting foot in the wicked wasteland called **Corinth**, **Paul** was beaten to within an inch of **his** life and imprisoned in **Philippi** (see the commentary on **Acts Bz – Paul and Silas in Prison**). **He** was run out of town in **Berea** (see the commentary on **Acts Ca – Synagogue Responses Vary to Paul's Visit**). And they laughed **him** out of **Athens** (see the commentary on **Acts Cb – An Unknown God in Athens**). As was true throughout **Paul's** ministry, whatever **he** accomplished – from leading people to faith in **Messiah**, to starting and establishing new churches, to mentoring people like **Timothy** and **Titus**, to writing much of the B'rit Chadashah – **he** did not do one **his** own human power, but **the power of the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**.[57]

In the **Corinthian** correspondence, **Paul** often reminds the church that **God** works through **weakness (1:24-25). And neither the delivery nor the content of my message relied on compelling words of "wisdom" but on a demonstration of the power of the Spirit (2:4).** For many of **the Corinthians**, at least, **Paul** was not that impressive a person. And in this regard, **his** manner of communication has been compared in various degrees to **Moshe (Exodus 4:10)**, **Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5),** and **Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:6)**. To a very high degree, **Paul** embodies **Yeshua's** own direction: **But when they bring you to trial, do not worry about what to say or how to say it; when the time comes, you will be given what you should say (Matthew 10:19)**. The major point emphasized by **Paul** is that it was **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, and not **Paul's words** or abilities which were responsible for bringing **the Corinthians** to salvation.[58]

**Finally, Paul reminded the Corinthians of his aim (2:5):** The contrast between

the paganism of **Corinth** and **the power of God** could not have been more obvious. **So that your trust might not rest on human "wisdom" but on God's power (2:5).** If **human "wisdom"** is used to win a person to **Messiah** then his faith stands on **human "wisdom,"** but if a man is brought to faith through **the power of God**, then his faith rests upon that.[59]

*Dear Wonderful Heavenly **Father**, We love and praise **You** for it is such a comfort to know that **You** are always with **Your children (Hebrews 13:5)** to give us **Your wisdom** (**James 1:5**) and to help, guide and to strengthen **us**. Praise **You** that **You** infuse us with **Your Spirit**. **You** took **Paul** who came to **the Corinthians** in **weakness, fear and trembling** and used **him** mightily to spread **Your** message of salvation. **You** know everything that is going to happen – even before it happens **(Psalms 139:4)**. **Would God not have discovered it? For He knows the secrets of the heart (Psalms 44:21).***

*The time is short to work to serve you and bring many to repent from old selfish ways and to turn to follow **You** with hearts full of love. Please use me mightily just as you used **Paul**. Just as **Paul** depended on **You** to give **him** wisdom on what to say and do, I need **Your** wisdom also. I praise **You** that you are never too busy to graciously help each of **Your children**. Soon life on earth will be over and we will all live in for eternity where our hearts have loved. I am so glad to know that **Yeshua** is in heaven preparing an eternal home **(John 14:1-3)** for **His Bride** – the **Church**. Though heaven will be a perfect eternal home full of joy, my heart longs for family and friends who do not yet know you as their **Lord**.*

*Though I cannot preach to as many as **Paul** did, yet by prayer, I too can touch hearts. **Paul** talked in person, yet when I pray for those in countries around the world, I too can serve **You** and touch hearts for **You** for all eternity. Thank **You** for **Your** listening to prayers to those in the countries on my heart; to bring them to repent and to bow the knee to **You** in love and so be able to rejoice with you in **Your** eternal home. Praise **You** that **You** hear prayers for those in other countries to be bold in sharing about **Your** love and to be protected from harm. **You** are wonderful! Amen*

There is the story of a man who had been a troublemaker and a drunk, but who was won to **Messiah** and saved. The people that he knew made fun of him by saying, "Surely a sensible fellow like you cannot believe in the miracles that the Bible talks about. You cannot, for example, believe that this **Jesus** of yours turned water into wine." "Whether **He** turned water into wine or not, I do not know," said the man, "

but in my own house I have seen **Him** turn beer into furniture.” No one can argue against the proof of a changed life.[60]