

Not with Persuasive Words

1 Corinthians Series

By Russ Sukhia

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

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Liberty Church, PCA

11301 Liberty Rd.

Owings Mills, MD 21117

Website: libertychurchpca.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/russukhia

1 Corinthians chapter one. Let's begin at verse 26. The apostle Paul writes:

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of

a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.¹

May God's blessing rest upon this portion of his inspired Word.

Let's pray.

Father, this is your holy Word and you know that no man is equipped to declare it, proclaim it as it ought to be proclaimed. And so we ask for your help, we ask for your grace, we ask for your Spirit to take your Word now and apply it to heart. Forgive us our sins as we come. And help us, Lord, to be attentive to your Word and help us to proclaim it with the freedom that your Spirit can give. We ask in Christ's glorious name. Amen.

As we have noted thus far in our study of 1 Corinthians, the Greeks had a very high regard for studied oratory, for rhetorical display. As one scholar put it they were intoxicated with fine words.

You will remember that the Greek word σοφος (sof-os') originally meant a wise man in a good sense. But it came to mean, said New Testament scholar William Barclay, "A man with a clever mind and a cunning tongue, a mental acrobat who with glittering and persuasive rhetoric could make the worse appear to be the better reason."

We pointed out that when the noted Greek orator Adrian, for example, announced through his messenger that he was about to lecture in Rome the Roman Senate would empty and even the crowds would abandon sporting events to hear him.

So there must have been a strong temptation for the apostle Paul as he approached the Greek metropolis of Corinth to attempt to communicate to the Corinthians in the manner to which they had grown accustomed, a temptation to impress them with his learning and his eloquence.

But Paul did not do so.

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:26—2:16.

When I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.²

“I determined,” Paul said, “in this evangelistic opportunity that God has placed before me to stick to the basics.”

I would like us to focus on the first five verses of chapter two this morning. We could outline these thoughts: What Paul did not come to Corinth with firstly. Secondly, what Paul did come to Corinth with. And, third, what end he had in view.

First of all, what Paul did not come to Corinth with. Once again, verse one. “I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom.”³

And verse four. “My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom.”⁴

He didn’t come with excellence of speech or excellence of wisdom he said.

Theologian Hodge says, “As speech, λογος (log’-os), and wisdom, σοφια (sof-ee’-ah), are here distinguished the former, λογος (log’-os), probably refers to the manner or the form of Paul’s preaching and the latter, σοφια (sof-ee’-ah), to the matter of his preaching. It was neither as a rhetorician nor as a philosopher that he appeared among them,” unquote.

“Neither the way I spoke nor the content of my preaching,” Paul says, “was intended to impress or to illicit a response from you by earthly means or by worldly wisdom.”

Remember he had said earlier in chapter one, “Christ sent me to preach the gospel not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect,”⁵ verse 17.

And in 2 Corinthians he says, “Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. I am not untrained in knowledge, though I am untrained in speech,” Paul says 2 Corinthians 11:6.

So here he says, “I didn’t come to you with excellence of speech or of wisdom when I declared to you the testimony of God,” by which he means, I think, the testimony about God. “Nor did I come with persuasive words of human wisdom. My speech and my preaching,” he says in verse four, “my speech,” that is, my speech in private, perhaps, “my speech and my preaching, in particular, was not with enticing words, not with persuasive words, πειθος (pi-thos’) from πειθω (pi’-tho) to persuade.”

² 1 Corinthians 2:1-2.

³ 1 Corinthians 2:1.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:4.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:17.

Paul did not seek to persuade the Corinthians that Jesus... Paul did speak to persuade them... He did intend to persuade them that Jesus was the Messiah. But he says, "I didn't come with persuasive speech of human wisdom."

Yes, his intention was to persuade the people to believe that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah, but not with using, by using clever or persuasive speech of human wisdom, not with oratorical cleverness, not through emotional manipulation or through the careful study of the human psyche.

Now we cannot press Paul's words too far. He was not condemning all oratorical skill. There is a place, as you know, for impassioned public address. The English speaking world, for example, would be poorer without Lincoln's second inaugural address or the speeches of Winston Churchill in which he called upon Britain to withstand the German assault.

"Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth lasts for a thousand years, men shall still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"

His words had power. But Churchill's words had power not just from his command of the English language nor from his wit nor his sense of timing alone, but from the power of the truth which he spoke.

On the other hand, speaking on hundreds of occasions, studying and practicing his intonations, his gestures, his sentence structure and cadence, Churchill's adversary in Germany was able to rise from obscurity to the highest office in the land based on powerful oratory devoid of truth.

Paul was aware that with skilled oratory one might be able to influence the minds and emotions of an audience into making some sort of public decision for Christ motivated, perhaps, by fear or by a desire to please or even by a sort of herd mentality.

A perfect example of how powerful oratory can stir a congregation to action was recounted by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the Welsh physician who became one of the 20th century's most renowned preachers. He tells of an 18th century Welsh preacher named Robert Roberts who was preaching one day in a very crowded chapel. Roberts was sounding a warning about the sinner who does not heed the signs of impending judgment. And he describes a scene in which vacationers were at the shore. And it was a beautiful day and there was a long rock promontory heading out into the sea and they decided to walk out upon it. The tide was low and they walked out upon these rocks. And there as they went far out into the sea as the rock extended far, they lay down and basked themselves in the sun and the waters began to fill up the rocks around them encircling them, trapping them as they were basking in the sun.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones wrote, “The preacher worked this up graphically to the point at which the vacationers came to themselves and realized their predicament. There was still just enough time for them to listen to the warning voices from the shore and get back on to the beach. Roberts so worked up this illustration with his powerful imagination that when he used his equally powerful voice to represent the shouted warnings of the people on the shore, ‘Get off. Flee. Escape!’ it is recorded and said to be literally true,” said Lloyd-Jones, “that the entire congregation rose to its feet and ran out of that chapel.”

Now don’t get any ideas. I will know you are faking.

Lloyd-Jones says, “What was affecting these people was surely not the truth, but rather the graphic delineation of the scene, the powerful and perhaps over wrought imagination of the preacher. The same thing can be done by films or dramatic plays.”

I have no doubt that we have all experienced something like this. For example, every December as some of you know, I like to visit Bedford Falls, an imaginary town where I stay with George and Mary Bailey my imaginary friends in their big old drafty imaginary house on Sycamore Street. Every year I hear about George’s imaginary problem at the Savings and Loan and every year he considers putting an end to his imaginary life. But he never does because his guardian angel Clarence—who George suspects may be imaginary—convinces George that his imaginary life is really wonderful. He does this by helping George to imagine what things would be like if George’s imaginary life had never been lived.

And here is my point. Such is the power of these words and images on film that every year these imaginary event which happened to imaginary characters in an imaginary place move me and, I suspect, move some of you to very real unimaginary tears, to a genuine emotional response.

The apostle Paul was a man of great intellect. He was a man of in depth understanding of human nature. Paul certainly could have developed as an itinerant preacher moving from town to town a few dozen sermons filled with heart wrenching stories with word picture and eloquent passages designed to inspire and persuade his hearers to make some sort of commitment to Jesus Christ.

But Paul says, “When I came to you I did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom. I did not come with persuasive words of human wisdom.”

Well, so much for what he did not bring to Corinth. Let’s look, secondly at what he did bring to Corinth

He says, “I came with a determination, a settled resolve not to know anything among you except Jesus.”

Jesus was to be the great theme of Paul's preaching, but not Jesus as a great teacher, not Jesus as a wise master worthy to be admired and followed. For then Paul would be bringing a message not unlike the followers of Greek philosophers.

Paul said, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus."⁶ But not just Jesus, "Except Jesus Christ, Jesus the Christ, Jesus the anointed one, Jesus the Messiah, the express image of the Father, the God man, Emmanuel, God with us."

Paul's message was Jesus Christ. That is who he is, the Messiah whose coming was long foretold.

Paul's message did not end there. His message was "Jesus Christ and him crucified."⁷

"I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."⁸

Here is the gospel. Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God and him crucified, giving his life for his sheep. This was Paul's message. Wherever he went, this was Paul's message. Although he knew the cross of Christ was a stumbling block, literally a scandal, a σκανδαλον (skan'-dal-on), in the Greek, a scandal to the Jews. He knew it was a scandal to the Jews. It was nonetheless his message wherever he went.

It may seem extraordinary, writes William Barclay, "But even with Isaiah 53 before their eyes, the Jews never dreamed of a suffering Messiah. The cross to the Jew was and is an insurmountable barrier to belief in Jesus." He meant insurmountable apart from God's Holy Spirit, of course.

Paul knew that the preaching of the cross was a stumbling block to the Jew. Paul knew that the preaching of the cross was foolishness to the Greeks. The Greek philosophers viewed God as far above this world, detached from it, distant, unable to feel.

William Barclay writes, "Celsus, who attacked the Christians with such vigor towards the end of the second century AD wrote, quote, 'God is good and beautiful and happy and is in that which is most beautiful and best. If then he descends to me it involves change for him and change from good to bad, from beautiful to ugly, from happiness to unhappiness, from what is best to what is worse. Who would choose such a change? For mortality it is only natural to be altered and to be changed, but for the immortal it is natural to abide the same forever. God would never accept such a change.'

"To the thinking Greek the incarnation was a total impossibility," Barclay writes. "To people who thought like that it was incredible that had suffered as Jesus had suffered could possibly be the Son of God."

⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:2.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Paul was willing to be viewed as a fool by the Corinthians because he knew that God had determined thought he apparent foolishness of the gospel to save those who believe, 1 Corinthians 1:21.

In fact, he urged us to become fools like him. “If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise,”⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:18.

“Christ sent me,” Paul said, “not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.”

Paul and the other apostles went from place to place proclaiming a very simple message, a message that they knew was scandalous to the Jew and foolish to the Greek.

Jesus of Nazareth is God’s anointed Son. He lived a perfect holy life and then he was executed upon a cross. God raised him from the dead and Jesus was seen alive for 40 days until he ascended to heaven. Through faith in his sacrificial death we can be forgiven and reconciled to God. That, in a nutshell, was the message of the apostles.

Now we don’t have recorded for us in Scripture too many accounts of the preaching of the apostles and what we do have are mere snippets of what was said. But those snippets do give us some insight into their communication. And it seems to have been quite simple and straightforward.

Listen to Peter preaching to the household of Cornelius.

The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.¹⁰

Acts 10.

As you know, the apostles could be deep on occasion. Peter said of some of the writings of Paul, “They are difficult to understand,” 2 Peter 3:16.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:18.

¹⁰ Acts 10:36-43.

But what we know of their preaching is that they made every effort to keep their message simple so as to be understood.

The story is told of a poor woman leaving a service in a prominent church in Edinburgh, Scotland where a learned professor had just spoken. Someone asked this lady on her way out if she had enjoyed the sermon and she said that she had. And then the questioner probed a bit further.

“Were you able to follow him?”

To which he replied, “Far be it for me to presume to understand such a great man as that. Far be it for me to presume to understand such a great man as that.”

Few, if any men of his day equaled Dr. Martin Luther in scholarship. Yet Luther said, “When I preach I regard neither doctors nor magistrates of whom I have above 40 in the congregation. I have all my eyes on the servant maid and the children. And if the learned men are not well pleased with what they hear, well, the door is open.”

Paul came to Corinth with the determination to preach the simple, pure gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Secondly, far from being self confident in his ability as an orator, Paul came to Corinth with something else. Paul came to Corinth with weakness and fear and much trembling. Look at it, verse three.

“I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.”¹¹

Now this was certainly not fear for his own safety nor any sort of embarrassment over the gospel that he came to proclaim. What Paul was experiencing here could be called a trembling anxiety to perform a duty, a trembling anxiety to perform a duty.

He uses the very same phrase “with fear and trembling” to describe the way conscientious slaves should obey their masters.

“Bondservants,” he says, “be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ,”¹² Ephesians 6:5.

You see, Paul’s weakness, his fear and trembling grew out of a concern that he should faithfully discharge the trust that had been given to him. And every true preacher of the gospel has a similar experience every time he enters the pulpit. There is a consciousness of weakness, a consciousness of utter dependence upon God, a fear and a trembling that he might be enabled to do justice to the great themes that he has been called and sent forth to proclaim. There is a consciousness that some of those in the congregation are about a heart beat from hell. There is a consciousness that this may be their very last

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 2:3.

¹² Ephesians 6:5.

opportunity to hear the gospel message. There is a consciousness that this may be his last opportunity to proclaim the gospel.

That is why Richard Baxter said, “I preached as never sure to preach again and as a dying man to dying men.”

Friend, do you experience weakness and fear and trembling when you have an opportunity to speak up for Jesus Christ? Well, you are in good company. The apostle Paul experienced that as well.

Paul came to Corinth with a determination to proclaim Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul came to Corinth with weakness and fear and much trembling and Paul came to Corinth with a gospel message that was attested by the demonstration of the Spirit and power, verse four.

“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”¹³

Paul’s preaching, as simple and direct as it was, Paul’s preaching, unadorned as it was with excellence of speech or of wisdom, without any persuasive words of man’s wisdom, nonetheless, had something that the greatest of the world’s orators could never have. His preaching was accompanied by the very power of God. It was attested by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. God used Paul’s words, in other words. God empowered Paul’s words, breathed upon the gospel, made new creatures out of spiritual dead Greeks.

You may remember that Jesus had appeared to Paul in a vision early in Paul’s ministry in Corinth. And Jesus said to Paul, “Do not be afraid, but speak and do not keep silent for I am with you and no one will attack you to hurt you for I have many people in this city.”¹⁴

Jesus said, “I have many people in this city of Corinth. Paul, you keep preaching. Don’t stop. I have many people here.”

But at the time Jesus spoke to Paul in this vision some of those people were fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners. Paul writes to them, “Such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God,”¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:11.

God used the simple, unembellished gospel that Paul preached to bring to life dead Corinthians, to quicken them, to regenerate them, to make them new creatures. He used the foolishness of the cross to wake the dead. They were born again of incorruptible seed through the Word of God which lives and abides forever, 1 Peter 1:23.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 2:4.

¹⁴ Acts 18:8-9.

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Now you will note that Paul's ministry was verified not by conversions alone. Paul's ministry was verified by signs and wonders. And when he defends his apostleship in 2 Corinthians 12 he reminds the Corinthians that God affirmed his apostleship with the signs of an apostle which were accompanied among them in signs and deeds, signs and wonders and mighty deeds, he said.

But Paul is speaking here of the results of the simple message of the cross in the lives of the Corinthians. When Paul came to Corinth he didn't bring with him excellence of speech or of wisdom. He didn't bring persuasive words of human wisdom, rather he came with a determination to proclaim Christ and him crucified. He came with weakness and fear and much trembling. He came with a gospel message which was affirmed by God, attested by the demonstration of the Spirit and power of God.

Now, thirdly, why? Why did Paul do it this way? What was the end he had in view?

Verse five.

“That your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. That your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”¹⁶

If the Corinthians had been persuaded by enticing words or by mere human argumentation or eloquence, their faith would be in the wisdom of men rather than the power of God. Their faith would be built upon sand rather than upon the rock.

You will note that because we are emotional creatures it is possible for powerful speakers to manipulate us, to cajole us or deceive us into making commitments that were not, in fact, informed by careful thought and thorough understanding, commitments that did not result from the Holy Spirit applying God's truth to our hearts and minds, but commitments that resulted, instead, from the clever manipulation of an influential person.

Such manipulation can be seen in the political arena. Such manipulation can be seen in marketing. It can be seen in cults. But the apostles were adamant that it should have no place in the preaching of the gospel.

This is why, I believe, although the apostles of Christ and the Lord Jesus himself called women to repentance and faith, they did not urge them at the end of their preaching to raise their hands or stand up or walk forward to publicly commit their lives to Christ.

It is quite possible with a heart wrenching appeal and a sufficient number of stanzas of *Just as I am* or *Jesus I Come* to induce some people to actually get up and walk forward. But the apostles were seeking not a response, but a regeneration, not a movement of the legs, but a movement of the Spirit, not a raising of the hands, but a raising of the dead.

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:5.

They trusted in God to use his word in hearts and they trusted that God's Word would bear fruit in God's time.

"I planted," Paul says, "Apollos watered. God gave the increase."¹⁷

The apostles didn't want the faith of their hearers to be in the wisdom of men whether that was Paul or Peter or Apollos or any other, but rather in the power of God working through the message of the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Now let me drive home a few truths, just two, as we leave this passage.

First of all, Paul determined to preach Christ and the cross because this is the message that God uses to save sinners. That is why Paul determined not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ had him crucified. That is the message he was called forth to preach. That is the message he was sent to preach. That is the message that God uses to save lost sinners.

Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?¹⁸

Romans 10.

It is this, you see, that makes the preaching of the gospel such a high and holy calling. The very thought of which led Paul to exclaim in the midst of his letter to the Ephesians, "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."¹⁹

And it is this glory of the gospel that makes it so tragic when pastors and churches and whole denominations abandon the preaching of it in the favor of psychology or morality or philosophy or social responsibility.

I think sometimes of the churches that I grew up in as a child. My mind goes back to them, some of them less than an hour's drive from where we are now. And I think of all the people who sat there with me listening to the message of morality, the enticing words of human wisdom, made perfect sense.

Live a good life. Be a good person. Follow the example of Jesus.

Those words were enticing. It was human wisdom. And I think about the souls of the people that sat beside me and I wonder where they are now.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:6.

¹⁸ Romans 10:13-14.

¹⁹ Ephesians 3:8.

Now how many churches in our own area, how many churches in our own nation this very day, this very hour are telling people to be good and telling people to do good and telling people to love their fellow man, telling people to meet the needs of their fellow man without declaring that the greatest needs of our fellow man and the greatest needs of each of us, the greatest need of each of us is to be reconciled to a holy God, a holy God whose judgment is sure and certain and soon.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said in an address to Westminster Seminary students in 1969, “I have no hesitation in asserting that what was largely responsible for emptying the churches in Great Britain was the social gospel preaching and the institutional church. The people rightly argued this way. It is the business of Church was really just to preach a form of political and social reform and pacifism, then the Church was not really necessary. For all that could be done through political agencies. So they left the churches and they went and did it, or tried to do it, through their political parties. That was perfectly logical, but its effect upon the churches was most harmful.”

You see, true pastors are called to preach not political or social reform, not morality, but the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the message that is empowered of God. That is the message that brings life to dead sinners.

Lloyd-Jones sums it up, “I would say without any hesitation that the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is true preaching and as it is the greatest and most urgent need in the Church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also.”

And, secondly, this gospel message, this message of Christ and his cross, his gracious sacrificial death for sinners such as you and I and the power that this message carries with it, is not something that we just experience once when we are justified. It is the message upon which we stand, the message on which we rely. Every morning, every day, every night I am a sinner saved by Christ. So I can pray. I am a sinner saved by Christ so I can forgive. I am a sinner saved by Christ so I can rejoice. I am a sinner saved by Christ so I have have peace [?]. I am a sinner saved by Christ so I can have comfort in grief.

We don't just come to life through the gospel of Christ. We live in the gospel of Christ.

Now, perhaps you have never experienced the power that Paul speaks of in our passage. Perhaps you have never really been born again, born from above. You know, Jesus told a religious man, “Unless a man be born again, unless he is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Perhaps you even made a decision at some point in your life. Maybe you raised your hand. Maybe you walked forward at an evangelistic meeting. Maybe you prayed with a Christian. Maybe you prayed with a pastor. But perhaps since then you have wondered: Did I really know what I was doing? Or was I just caught up in the moment?

Friend, listen. Jesus said, “Many are deceived on this very point.”

Many who think they are his will discover in the last day that they are not. “Depart from me,” he will say to them, “I never knew you.”²⁰

We are told to be diligent to make our calling and election sure. We are told to examine ourselves to see whether we be in the faith.

So, friend, I ask you. Have you recognized yourself to be a sinner? Do you even now recognize yourself to be a sinner? And do you realize that God is a holy God who must and will punish sin? Do you see your sin as the heinous thing that it is? Do you see it as vile? Have you turned from it? Have you said, “God, I don’t want to sin. I want Christ in my life to help me to overcome sin. I don’t want to be kept under sin’s power anymore. God forgive me. Forgive me. Save me. I believe that Jesus lived that sinless life that the Bible talks about, that he went to that cross and died as a substitute. I believe that. I want him as my Savior. Lord, come into my heart. Forgive me. Save me”?

Friend, if you say that to God and you mean that in your heart, he promises on the authority of his Word, I can tell you, Jesus said, “He who believes in me has everlasting life.” You come to him that way, empty handed, like a little child trusting in his finished work. You will have this precious gift of everlasting life and all the joy that accompanies it.

“God forbid that I should glory,” Paul said, “save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified unto me and I unto the world.”²¹

Let’s pray.

Oh, Father, it may be that there is someone here still dead in sin. Please, Lord, have mercy upon that soul. As you opened our hearts, open that heart, draw him or her to saving faith even this day. Be glorified through your Word, Father, [?]. We pray that, Father, you would give the increase. Father, those of us who know you, we love you. May we glory in the cross? God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. All this we ask in our Savior’s wonderful name. Amen.

²⁰ Matthew 7:21.

²¹ Galatians 6:14.