

The Uniqueness of God's Subversive Message (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

- Paul has been supporting his argument for unity and no divisions in the church (1:10-17) by contrasting the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God.
 - The wisdom of the world is self-serving, divisive and driven by status, ego, power, and nobility, yet unable to save anyone (v. 21)
 - The wisdom of God appears weak and foolish (v. 23: "*Christ crucified*"), yet it manifests God's power and wisdom (v. 24) as He deliberately chooses the humble in life (like most of the Corinthians) so that "*no man may boast before God*" (v. 29).

In this section, Paul shows how unique God's subversive, revolutionary message is in three ways:

1. It's unique in **WHAT** is proclaimed (2:1-2)

The content of the gospel message is one-of-a-kind and must be carefully proclaimed. It cannot be contaminated with human opinion or wisdom.

- **God's message doesn't need any worldly additives** (v. 1) like rhetorical excellent or style or strategies of manipulation.
 - People can change by human charismatic persuasiveness on a human level
 - People cannot experience heart change with the simple foolish-sounding gospel of Christ (v. 1: "*the testimony of God*")
- **God's message only needs Christ's accomplishment** (v. 2). Paul had a personal resolve ("*I determined*") and preoccupation ("*to know nothing among you except...*") to proclaim the the gospel, God's only available remedy ("*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*"). At the cross, God's truth, love, mercy, justice, wrath, forgiveness, righteousness, and honor were demonstrated.

2. It's unique in **HOW** it is proclaimed (2:3-4)

The gospel has a unique capacity in two ways:

- **God's message is not dependent upon human strength** (v. 3-4a): Paul was shaken when he came to Corinth (Acts 18) whether physically, emotionally or mentally (v. 3: "*in weakness and in fear and in much trembling*"). Paul didn't

lean upon the powers of human persuasion that were popular in the Greco-Roman world.

- **God's message is dependent upon supernatural strength** (v. 4b): The power of persuasion and conversion is in ministry of the Holy Spirit who convicts hearts, awakens dead souls and converts sinners

3. It's unique in **WHY** it is proclaimed (2:5)

The gospel is designed to provide a unique credit to its ability to save.

- **We proclaim our message to avoid human conversions** (*"so that your faith does not rest on the wisdom of men"*): We need to check our heart motives and methods to make sure we are not believing in our charisma, tactics, or powers of persuasion, but rather motivated by the Holy Spirit (the *"power"* and heart persuader).
- **We proclaim our message to allow divine conversions** (*"but on the power of God"*): The *"power"* is in the message (Rom. 1:16) and the Holy Spirit (John 3:8). This *"power"* is released primarily through available, willing witnesses who proclaim God's heart-transforming message.