

## **"I Was With You In Weakness ..."**

*"... and I brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech nor of wisdom, proclaiming unto the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:1-3).*

In his earlier appeal to these brethren he has shown them that worldly wisdom leads none to Christ; that few men of rank as the world counts them; were numbered among brethren and yet, for all the wisdom the world offers, God made foolish man's wisdom. Paul offers his "disclaimer": *"I did not come with excellency of speech nor of wisdom."*

We are not to understand that condemnation of proper speech is intended by Paul. Paul does not say that he blundered and stammered (although some of his detractors did so accuse him, saying *"his speech was of no account"* (2 Cor. 10:10); for we are persuaded such was not true. The people at Lystra attributed him to be a god; certainly because of his healing the lame man, but also because he was the principal speaker (Acts 14:11f). Great throngs of folk came to hear him, certainly because of his message, but we do not envision him to have been a "cripple" in expressing himself. Paul only means here that his entrance into Corinth did not rest exclusively upon his oratorical abilities nor human logic; he came proclaiming the testimony of God; testimony God revealed to him to speak, and as he stoutly declared, his speech was with the demonstration of the Spirit and power (1 Cor. 2:4).

It was Paul's determination to know nothing save Christ Jesus and Him crucified. Here is a synecdoche, a figure of speech in which Paul names one thing to include the whole for *"Christ crucified"* includes His resurrection. One learns from this letter that Paul had spoken of many subjects to these brethren; all part of the gospel he preached, all part of *"Christ crucified;"* for just as certain as he had known nothing save Christ Jesus and Him crucified when he was with them; his attitude had not changed since that time and this letter to them included Christ Jesus and His crucified, yet look at the subjects he touched upon: stewardship (4); withdrawal (5); lawsuits among brethren (6); marriage (7); meats offered to idols (8, 10), preachers' right to be supported (9); spiritual gifts, defining them, regulating them; showing their cessation (12, 13, 14); the covering and Lord's supper (11); His resurrection (15); and, aid to needy Jerusalem saints (16). Yet it is grouped under the heading of *"Christ Jesus, and him crucified."*

*"And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling."* What part does this play in his preaching of *"Christ Jesus and him crucified"*? First, it could very well describe Paul's mental attitude when he came to Corinth. When he received the Macedonian call and traveled to Philippi, the account of treatment Paul received in these cities show that persecution was the "norm" for him. Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. So, when Paul crossed over into Achaia, persecutions was something he expected to encounter. A child that has been badly abused will naturally draw back when one lifts an arm toward him, even if that arm is extended to console. Paul was waiting for the persecution to begin in Corinth as it had in other cities, cutting short his work with them. How consoling must have been God's vision when he told Paul, *"Fear not Paul. No man shall set on them to harm thee. Speak and hold not thy peace"* (Acts 18). But then, Paul's reference to being with them in weakness and fear and trembling would attest his courage. He was determined to preach Christ Jesus at all costs and although it might bring the anticipated persecution, he was going to preach it any way! How our pulpits need to be occupied today with men the likes of Paul!

Jim McDonald