

1 Corinthians 2:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

Analysis

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Paul contrasts peithois sophias logois (πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις, "persuasive words of wisdom")—the studied rhetorical techniques of Sophists—with apodeixei pneumatos kai dynameōs (ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, "demonstration of Spirit and power"). The term apodeixis (ἀπόδειξις) means "proof" or "showing forth," suggesting observable evidence rather than logical argumentation.

This "demonstration" likely included both miracle signs (Acts 18:8, 19:11-12; 2 Corinthians 12:12) and transformed lives—the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). Paul employs a legal metaphor: while human advocates use rhetoric to sway juries, the Spirit provides irrefutable evidence that convinces hearts. Romans 15:18-19 confirms Paul's ministry pattern: "what Christ has accomplished... by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit."

Historical Context

Greek rhetoric schools (especially Second Sophistic movement) trained students in peithō (persuasion) through elaborate speech techniques. Corinthian culture highly valued such oratorical skill. Mystery religions also promised "wisdom" to initiates through secret teachings. Paul deliberately eschews both approaches, instead pointing to the Spirit's objective work as validation. His letters reveal

sophisticated argumentation, but his oral preaching apparently prioritized simplicity that allowed divine power to be unmistakable.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How can contemporary preaching ensure dependence on Spirit-power rather than communication technique, without excusing poor preparation?
2. What constitutes "demonstration of the Spirit and power" in contexts where miraculous signs may be less frequent?
3. Where might your faith rest more on a teacher's persuasiveness than on the Spirit's conviction?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ὁ λόγοις μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν
And G3588 speech my And G3588 preaching my was not in
G2532 G3056 G3450 G2532 G2782 G3450 G3756 G1722

πειθοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει
enticing of man's wisdom speech but in demonstration
G3981 G442 G4678 G3056 G235 G1722 G585

πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως
of the Spirit And of power
G4151 G2532 G1411

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 4:20 (Word): For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (Spirit): For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

1 Corinthians 1:17 (Word): For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

1 Corinthians 2:1 (Parallel theme): And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

Romans 15:19 (Spirit): Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

2 Peter 1:16 (Parallel theme): For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

1 Corinthians 2:13 (Spirit): Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Colossians 2:4 (Word): And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

2 Peter 2:18 (Word): For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

Galatians 1:10 (Parallel theme): For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.