

1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5 The Gospel vs. Human Wisdom

In 1:18 through 2:5 Paul brings a crashing end to human self-sufficiency by three arguments. 1) The gospel is not a form of human wisdom, 2) Those who receive the gospel are usually not very wise in the eyes of humanity and, 3) Paul's example was one of human weakness united with spiritual power.

God uses those who are lowly in the world's eyes - 1:26-31

Verse 26

Paul reminds them that there were few in their assembly who came from the higher intellectual and influential levels of their society. Jeremiah 9:23-24, quoted in verse 31 of this passage is the background for this section.

Chosen – God's plan is to use the foolish and weak to bring about his purposes. The Calvinistic idea of unconditional election is not at all in the context of these verses.

Verses 27-29

Foolish ... wise, weak...strong - The contrast is between God's way of doing things and the world's way. The result is that the world will be shamed.

Base – This means low born as opposed to noble.

Despised – Something of no account, not esteemed.

Things that are not – Things that are nothing, non-entities in the eyes of the world.

Things that are – Those things and individuals that the world values highly.

That no man should boast before God – The glory belongs to God alone. How totally inappropriate for the believers at Corinth to boast in God's messengers. They were viewing spiritual gifts and human abilities from the world's perspective instead of from God's perspective.

Verse 30

By His doing – Salvation is all of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are placed in Christ the moment we believe and we become a part of His body. This plan, salvation by faith alone in Christ alone is the *wisdom from God*.

Righteousness – This focuses on our right standing before God, our justification (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Sanctification – Being set apart to God. It can be a synonym for justification, that is, being set apart once for all to God, but it usually means the process whereby we become progressively more holy.

Redemption – This particular word for redemption (apolutrosis) means "a release effected by the payment of a ransom." This may be a picture of our glorification.

Paul's point is that our salvation in all phases is because we are in Christ Jesus and has nothing to do with our human ability. All that we are and all that we do is because of God's grace.

Verse 31

This quotation from Jeremiah 9:24 summarizes Paul's point. We should focus on what God has done for us instead of emphasizing His servants and what they have done.

Paul is an example of God's wisdom – 2:1-5

Verse 1

Contrary to the rhetoric and philosophy that the Greeks so highly exalted, Paul came proclaiming the testimony of God.

Verse 2

His message was very clear and simple; the Person and work of Jesus. The crucifixion is a metaphor for the redemptive work of Christ.

Verse 3

Weakness...fear...trembling – Paul may have been discouraged by his previous ministry in Athens (Acts 17:18, 32-33) or perhaps the evil and moral wickedness of Corinth (Acts 18:9-10).

Verse 4

Paul's preaching was a demonstration, not a performance. It did not depend on the wisdom of the preacher but the power of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:5). See Luke 4:14, Acts 1:8, 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

Verse 5

Your faith – Paul wanted their faith to rest in the power of God and not in the messenger that God had sent. Their faith had a supernatural foundation not a natural foundation.