

# **Boasting In The Lord!**

Our Text: **1 Corinthians 1:26–2:5** *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.*

In fact, in A.D. 178 the philosopher Celsus mockingly wrote of Christians: **“Let no cultured person draw near, none wise and none sensible, for all that kind of thing we count evil; but if any man is ignorant, if any man is wanting in sense and culture, if anybody is a fool, let him come boldly [to become a Christian]. . . . We see them in their own houses, wool dresses, cobblers, the worst, the vulgarest, the most uneducated persons.... They are like a swarm of bats or ants creeping out of their nest, or frogs holding a symposium around a swamp, or worms convening in mud.”**

But if we haven't noticed it yet . . .

- God is not looking for people with a bunch of letters in front of their name to save and to do His work.
- Nor is He looking for millionaires or famous athletes or entertainers or statesmen.
- His salvation is open to them just as surely as to others, but only on the same basis of faith.
- The very things that put them ahead in the world may actually put them behind with God.
- It is the feeling of inadequacy that makes people aware that they have need, and often draws them to the gospel.

Jesus prayed about this on one occasion:

**Matthew 11:25** *At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.*

- This prayer was spoken publicly as a part of His preaching to the crowds.
- He was addressing His hearers as much as His Father when He prayed these words.
- He wanted them to know that God wanted only their faith and nothing else.

- He was also warning that “the wise and intelligent” were at a disadvantage as far as spiritual life and understanding are concerned.
- It is not that they could not accept and believe, but that pride in and dependence on their accomplishments and abilities could keep them from the kingdom.
- Weakness and insufficiency are usually the heart of the people to whom God’s strength is made manifest.

We are often tempted to think that it would be wonderful if such-and-such a great athlete — or brilliant scientist, popular entertainer, or world leader — would become a Christian. But Jesus did not think this way when He chose His disciples. Some were probably well known in their local circles and perhaps a few of them were well off financially. But He did not choose them for their wealth or influence, and in His training of them He did not try to capitalize on any such things. None of them had anything so great that he was not ready to leave it to follow Jesus.

God’s wisdom is a kind of paradox:

- In human thinking, strength is strength, weakness is weakness, and intelligence is intelligence.
- But in God’s economy some of the seemingly strongest things are the weakest, some of the seemingly weakest things are the strongest, and some of the seemingly wisest things are the most foolish.
- The paradox is not by accident but by God’s design.

I like how John MacArthur Jr. put it, ***“A simple, uneducated, untalented, and clumsy believer who has trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior and who faithfully and humbly follows His Lord is immeasurably wiser than the brilliant Ph.D. who scoffs at the gospel. The simple believer knows forgiveness, love, grace, life, hope, God’s Word — God Himself. He can see eternity. The unbelieving Ph.D., on the other hand, knows nothing beyond his books, his own mind, and his own experience. He sees nothing beyond this life, and he cannot be considered anything but foolish.”***

With this in mind, let’s dive into our text here . . .

### **God Has Chosen!**

**1 Corinthians 1:26-28** *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,*

Maybe Paul was thinking of the people that attended the Corinthian church as he wrote verse 26 . . . He reminded them that there weren’t very many famous, wealthy, highly educated, powerful, or influential people there. In fact, it is likely that, when they

became Christians, they **LOST** a great deal of the prestige, influence, and income. But notice he then tells them, “**See your calling, brethren.**”

**THE IMPORTANT THIS WAS NOT WHO THEY WERE, BUT TO WHOM THEY BELONG!!!**

Here’s the paraphrase, “***You know what sort of persons you were when God called you out of darkness. You know that He did not accept you as His child because you were brilliant or wealthy or intelligent or powerful. If you were any of these things, you were saved in spite of them not because of them. If anything they were stumbling blocks that hindered you, obstacles between you and God’s grace.***”

The simplicity of the gospel and the humility of faithful believers is incomprehensible to the world; it seems to be absolute foolishness . . . **BUT GOD PLANNED IT THAT WAY!!!**

***1 Corinthians 1:27-28 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,***

- The world measures greatness by many standards.
- At the top are intelligence, wealth, prestige, and position.
- But these things God has determined to put at the bottom.
- **God reveals the greatness of His power by demonstrating that it is the world’s nobodies that are His somebodies!**

Just think about it . . . According to God, the greatest man who ever lived, apart from Jesus Himself, was **John the Baptist:**

- He had no formal education
- No training in a trade or profession
- No money
- No military rank
- No political position
- No social pedigree
- No prestige
- No impressive appearance or oratory.

Yet Jesus said:

***Matthew 11:11 “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.***

John the Baptizer fit none of the world’s standards **BUT HE FIT ALL OF GOD’S STANDARDS AND THATS ALL THAT MATTERS!!!**

Why does God choose to do it this way?

## **Why God Has Chosen!**

**1 Corinthians 1:29–31** *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.”*

The first and primary reason is so no **man** will ever have a reason to, “**glory in His presence.**” . . . **Boast or Brag.**

**Ephesians 2:8–10** *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

But there are 4 things mentioned in verse 30 that every believer has obtained because of the salvation given by Christ. I will just steal this from Jon MacArthur:

- **We receive God’s wisdom**
  - **We receive God’s righteousness**
  - **We receive God’s sanctification**
  - **We receive God’s redemption**
- First, believers are given God’s **wisdom**. We are not only are *saved* by God’s wisdom rather than our own but are *given* God’s wisdom to replace our own. The truly wise of this world are those whose wisdom is not of this world but is from the Lord. Christians can say, without pride or self-boasting, that we have become wise in Jesus Christ.
- Second, believers receive God’s **righteousness**. We are made right with God and we participate in His righteousness, His rightness. Rightness means to be as something or someone *should* be—right as opposed to wrong, good as opposed to evil, sinless as opposed to sinful. God is totally righteous because He is totally as He should be. He cannot vary from His rightness. When we trust His Son, He shares His Son’s righteousness with us.
- Third, believers receive God’s **sanctification**. In Christ we are set apart, made holy. We are declared righteous in Christ and are made holy in Christ. When we receive Christ’s nature we receive His incorruptible seed, the seed which is not, and cannot be, habitually corrupted by sin. With the flesh still present, we can slip into sin, but only intermittently. As we spiritually mature the frequency of sin decreases.
- Fourth, believers receive God’s **redemption**. To redeem means to buy back. God by Christ has purchased us from the power of sin.

So if we are going to boast . . . **LET’S BOAST ABOUT THESE 4 THINGS!!!**

***Galatians 6:14*** But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Let's continue . . .

### **God's Word, Not Our Words!**

***1 Corinthians 2:1-2*** 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.

As we have just noted, the gospel of God's wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption cannot be obtained through human wisdom . . .  
**BECAUSE OF THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE PRESENTING IT THROUGH BY MEANS OF HUMAN WISDOM!!!**

Paul did not come to Corinth as a philosopher **BUT AS A WITNESS!!!**

- A person can only testify to what they themselves have seen, heard, or experienced.
- A witness in a courtroom is to report only what they know objectively and factually.
- They are not to speculate, guess, or deduce.
- Paul was a witness only to God's revelation.
- God's revelation was everything.
- Human wisdom was nothing.
- **SO LET'S LEAVE OURSELVES OUT OF THE GOSPEL!!!**

Hear men clear, I am not saying that we cannot use an analogy or share some aspects of our testimony . . . **BUT SINCE THE GOSPEL IS NOT ABOUT US, HOW ABOUT WE LEAVE US, (OUR FEELINGS, OUR THOUGHTS, OUR IDEAS), OUT OF IT!!!**

***"We should not come to church to hear the pastor's opinions about politics, psychology, economics, or even religion. We should come to hear a word from the Lord through the pastor. God's Word edifies and unifies; human opinions confuse and divide."***

***2 Corinthians 4:2*** But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

***1 Timothy 4:13*** Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

***2 Timothy 4:1-5*** I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The sad part is that many congregations, however, do not want their pastors to preach only the Word. They *“will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires”*.

As one commentator has observed, ***“In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism, and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like the flies in Egypt. The demand creates the supply. The hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found.”***

Therefore . . . ***“We should not come to church to hear the pastor’s opinions about politics, psychology, economics, or even religion. We should come to hear a word from the Lord through the pastor. God’s Word edifies and unifies; human opinions confuse and divide.”***

### ***It’s Not Me . . . It’s All God!***

***1 Corinthians 2:3–5*** *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.*

Paul used the phrase ***“fear and trembling”*** in several other passages, each of which have to do with deep concern over an important, urgent issue:

***2 Corinthians 7:15*** *And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.*

***Ephesians 6:5*** *Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;*

***Philippians 2:12*** *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*

If we remember, Paul came to Corinth after:

- Being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi
- Run out of Thessalonica and Berea
- And scoffed and mocked in Athens
  
- He came knowing that to be “Corinthianized” meant to be morally corrupt in the extreme.
- He was not fearful for his own life.
- And, Paul would not change his message.
- He was just fearful and trembling that the gospel somehow find root.
- He was fearful only of its being rejected, and of the terrible consequences of that rejection.

So let's be clear, Paul had great natural abilities . . . **BUT HE DID NOT RELY ON THEM!!! BECAUSE EVEN THE WORDS AND WISDOM OF AN APOSTLE COULD NOT SAVE A SINGLE PERSON IF THEY WERE DIVORCED FROM THE WISDOM THAT COMES ONLY THROUGH CHRIST JESUS!!!**

We must watch out that we never become a disciple of the pastor or any other leader . . . **BUT ONLY A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST!!!**

John Stott has well written, ***“It seems that the only preaching God honors through which His wisdom and power are expressed is the preaching of a man who is willing in himself to be both the weakling and the fool.”***

Charles Spurgeon said it like this, ***“The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls, nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul.”***

- The church should not have divisions based on philosophy.
- We are to be united around God’s wisdom, not human wisdom.
- We are one in Jesus Christ and should be one in His Word and power.
- And we should be in fellowship with those who are His.
- **AMEN?!**

Let’s pray . . .