Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians – Part 6

I. Exposition of Chapter One (continued).

A. **Verse 26 – "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called.*" –** Here, Paul points out to the Corinthian church that when they were called, many of them were not considered wise, mighty and noble according to the world's standards. The word **"mighty"** means; **"*distinguished for rank, authority*, or *influence*"**[1] The word **"noble"** means; **"*well-born, of high rank, honorable"***[2] Dr. Thomas Constable writes;

"Paul turned from the center of the gospel (the Cross) to the Corinthian believers in order to clarify his argument that the gospel he preached contradicted human expectations. God had chosen nobodies rather than the 'beautiful people' of Corinth as the bearers of this gospel. They themselves were evidence that God's foolishness confounds the wise."[3]

1. This doesn't mean that there were none in the Corinthian church who were not wise, mighty or noble, it just means there were few. Dr. Stanley Horton writes;

"A few may have been wise, but only by human standards. Their wisdom was irrelevant in the light of God's wisdom. Crispus, the former synagogue ruler (Acts 18:8), and Gaius (Rom. 16:23) may have been wealthy. Erastus had a good position as the city's director of public works (Rom. 16:23). But their wealth and position were only by human standards and were irrelevant in the light of our position in Christ."[4]

B. **Verse 27 – "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;" –** In the context the **"foolish"** and the **"weak",** from a human perspective, would be the cross of Christ and those who have placed faith in Christ. But through these, God has **"put to shame"** the **"wise"** in this world and the **"mighty" (different Greek word than verse 26).** Here is means; **"*strong, robust*, and *powerful"***[5] The phrase **"put to shame"** means; **"to cause someone to be much ashamed—'to humiliate, to disgrace,...' 'God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to put wise men to shame'"**[6]

C. **Verses 28-29 – "…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."**

1. The **"base things"** means; **"pertaining to being obscure or insignificant, with the possible implication of lacking in noble descent"**[7] Grant Richison adds;

"The words 'base things' means *ignoble, of no family, low born.* This word does not refer to evil but humble persons, people of low pedigree. God chooses nobodies to achieve His purposes."[8]

2. The word **"despised"** means; **"to treat with contempt, look down on, ridicule"**[9] Those who conduct their lives according to the wisdom of this world will despise, look down upon and ridicule the Christian. When this occurs in your life, you can rejoice knowing that following Christ is true wisdom. You have insight and experience in things they know not of. Remember, they are blinded by Satan and cannot see things clearly.
3. **"…the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are…" –** The things that are **"not"** could be better translated as, **"the things that are nothing."** This is referring, once again, to that which the world thinks are nothing – the cross of Christ and those who believe on Him. Verlyn D. Verbrugge explains;

"What does Paul mean by his statement that God chose 'the things that are not—to nullify the things that are'? This phrase denotes the ultimate extension of the contrasts the apostle is making in this

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1 William D. Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1129.
2 Ibid., 1159.
3 Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians* (http://www.soniclight.com: Sonic Light Publication, 2025), 39.
4 Stanley M. Horton, *I & II Corinthians: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1999), 30.
5 Mounce, 1175.
6 Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 309.
7 Ibid., 738.
8 Grant Richison, *Verse by Verse through the Book of 1 Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2007), 1 Co 1:28.
9 James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

section. In the eyes of the powerful and important people of the world, lowly people are as nothing; they are to be used and exploited to serve the interests of the powerful. By God's choosing of these seemingly disposable people as his own, he is showing the true significance of the world's standard of values—the high and mighty are as nothing in his sight. In the final analysis (i.e., in the eschaton), the only thing that counts is whether one belongs to God."[10]

4. **"…that no flesh should glory in His presence." –** The fact that God often uses those who the world deems as weak, foolish, and unimportant means that God alone receives the glory for whatever is accomplished for the Kingdom of God. **(Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; I Peter 5:5).** Dr. Stanley Horton writes;

"From this we see that God's ways, standards, and values are different from the world's. We receive true wisdom only from Him, and when we see the foolishness of human wisdom and realize our inability to save ourselves, we cannot boast before Him, nor can any human being. We can only humble ourselves and recognize His greatness and power."[11]

D. **Verse 30 – "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" –** The phrase, **"But of Him"** is better said **"Because of Him"**, meaning **"Because of God".** Because of the Father's love for us, we are now **"…in Christ Jesus…".** The meaning of this phrase is quite simple, yet profound. It speaks of our union with Christ. Because we are **"In Christ",** anything the world says or thinks about us doesn't matter. We have been joined to Him spiritually which enables and empowers us to go beyond any natural abilities. Dr. Neil Anderson writes;

"Tragically, most Christians *never* come to appreciate who they are in Christ. From the time of birth we are programmed by our environment and the people in our lives. We interpret the meaning of life's experiences through the grid of our personal orientation and react accordingly. For the many who have experienced rejection, abandonment or abuse from earliest childhood, entrenched in their belief systems is an attitude that says, 'I am of no value,' 'I don't measure up,' 'I am unlovable.' Even those of us whose childhood seemed wholesome have been victimized in some way by the enemy's subtle deceptions."[12]

1. **"…who became for us wisdom from God…"** – In contrast to the wisdom of the world, we have access to the wisdom of God because we're united to Christ. Grant Richison writes;

"Wisdom' is the ruling word in the Greek sentence. 'Righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' expand what God's wisdom means—God's system of salvation. Every believer accepts 'wisdom from God' when he becomes a Christian. Christians become Christians by God's wisdom; not by the wisdom of works or merit."[13]

a. In this context, **"wisdom from God"** is describing what Christ has done for us in bringing salvation. It's **"wisdom from God"** that determined Christ would die on the cross for our sins, be buried and rise again on the third day. We'll see more of this in chapter 2.

b. Because of the wisdom from God demonstrated through Christ, we now have received **"righteousness."** This word means; **"*acceptance as righteous, justification, a provision* or *mean for justification."***[14] Ralph Harris adds;

"Christ is our 'righteousness,' which refers specifically to the doctrine of justification by faith and speaks of a law court where the verdict is 'Not guilty.'[15]

c. This is the Righteousness Imputed to the Believer. **Romans 3:21-31 - 4:1-12; II Corinthians 5:21.**

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10 Verlyn D. Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans–Galatians (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III & Garland, David E., vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 272.

11 Stanley M. Horton, *I & II Corinthians: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1999), 31.

12 Neil T. Anderson, *Who I Am in Christ* (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1993), 7.

13 Grant Richison, *Verse by Verse through the Book of 1 Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2007), 1 Co 1:30.

14 Mounce, 1125.

15 Ralph W. Harris, ed., *Romans–Corinthians*, The Complete Biblical Library: Study Bible (WORDsearch, 2009), 275.