

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 God Chose Nobodies Falls Ch. PM 1/14/2024

In 1979, at a reception honoring musician Sir Robert Mayer on his 100th birthday, an elderly British upper class woman named Lady Cooper fell into conversation with another woman who seemed friendly and seemed to already know Lady Cooper well. Lady Cooper's aging and failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest, until she peered more closely at the magnificent diamonds and suddenly realized that she was casually chatting with Queen Elizabeth! Overcome with embarrassment, Lady Cooper curtsied and stammered, "Ma'am, oh, ma'am, I'm sorry ma'am. I didn't recognize you without your crown!"

The queen replied, "[Tonight] was so much Sir Robert's evening, that I decided to leave my crown behind."

Too often we lack this humility in our walk within God's Kingdom. Christ is the true King, and He has come to save us, and to call us to be in His Kingdom.

See your calling; understand the deep lesson and remember it.

1. See that we were nobodies, with nothing to offer God. (v.26)

(v.26), "For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth."

Often when Paul approached the church in Corinth about a difficult topic, Paul would write the reassuring and warm word "*Brothers*." We could read it as brothers and sisters.

Are you ready for the hard part – the potentially offensive part?

Paul was here gearing up to say something true and necessary, but something not likely to be received as complimentary.

"...consider your calling, brothers; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth."

Consider your calling. Contemplate something here.

What were they to contemplate? Their calling. As we studied in the previous passage, God calls through the preaching of the cross, and God defines what is wise and what is foolish. They were called into fellowship with God and with other believers. They were called to be holy. All of that was review.

But what was new here in verse 26 was Paul's push for the Corinthians to consider their status or their condition prior to the call of God upon their lives. What were they in the past, and how did that impact God's choice to call them?

Were they wise? Was that why God had called them? No.

Were they powerful? Was that why God had called them? No.

Were they from good families and good stock? Or maybe a good race or strong ethnic group? Maybe from good parents? Was one of those the reason why God called them? No.

Wait, do you realize what Paul is asking the church in Corinth to admit about itself? Most of the members of the church in Corinth lacked this world's

verification, certification, and all such items of authentication normally found on a resume. The members of the Church in Corinth were not carrying the degrees of well-educated people, were not carrying the influences of powerful people, were not carrying the pedigree of thoroughbred people, were not trained up in the finest of homes and communities! Most of the people in Corinth were not graduates of the ancient equivalent of our Harvard University or our Yale University. The believers in Corinth were not owners of international businesses, were not the prized graduates of the special schools for those next in line to become kings and queens, princes and princesses. The church in Corinth did not have many, if any, high-ranking government officials. Most of the people in the Corinthian church were what? Ordinary! Yes, in terms of education, in terms of personal success, and in terms of personal background, they were unimpressive. They were ordinary! They were lacking the asterisk of a person to watch, a person to track because they were upwardly mobile, being future leaders.

I have been circling round the point for a little while now. Allow me to be more blunt? For the most part, the Corinthian church was a group of nobodies!

Why would Paul point this out to them?

Because they had been getting prideful, and they needed to be humbled.

They were dividing from each other. That sort of divisiveness prevented them from unifying with each other.

Paul was teaching that 1) we cannot take pride in educational degrees and accomplishments of reading books, writing books and getting diplomas, 2) that we cannot take pride in economic accomplishments of building businesses, buying and selling, and growing businesses and becoming financially powerful people 3) that we cannot take pride in social status of being from certain families, certain training, certain backgrounds. Not the wise, not the powerful, not those of noble birth.

They were not chosen because God had a need for the church to have some prominent people. No. What must remain clear is that we have nothing to offer God and His church. God does not need 10 rich and famous authors or sports stars or music stars or Hollywood stars, and 10 famous and influential US Congressman and women, and God does not need 10 billionaires to enter His church in order to fund the work of God's kingdom.

The church around the world today is similar to the church in Corinth. We are a group of nobodies! See that we were nobodies, with nothing to offer God.

2. See that inexplicably, we were the ones called by God. (v.27-28)

(v.27-28) *“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ...”*

Here Paul showed the Corinthians a window into the very work of the Almighty God! God calls people. God chooses people. God takes action to draw people to Himself.

In the case of the church in Corinth, whom did God choose?

Here Paul used a literary technique of contrast to highlight Paul's point of whom God did choose, and whom God did not choose.

God chose

God did not choose.

V. 27 *what is foolish*

is contrasted with *the wise*

v. 27 *what is weak*

is contrasted with *the strong*

v. 28 *what is low,
despised,*

and things that are not is contrasted with *things that are.*

Paul used repetition to make his point. Verse 27 has “____ (*blank*) to shame the ____ (*blank*)” and Paul used that same phrase TWO times, and verse 28 has “____ (*blank*) to bring to nothing ____ (*blank*).”

Two main things are Paul's teaching points here. 1) God rules over all. God is so big that God controls everything. It is not just that God selects whom God will bring to saving faith in Christ Jesus and be eternally saved. It is more. God also is sovereign over every little part and piece of the whole world. To make this clear to the Corinthian Christians was why Paul repeated phrases such as “*God chose*” 3 times in verses 27 and 28 to show how active God was in ancient Corinth, even in sin city. God was active even in sin city, choosing people from there to save for His Kingdom. There is yet more repetition. The phrase “*in the world*” appeared three times in just these 2 verses, 27 and 28. Paul emphasized the point that God is active *in the world*, accomplishing God's wonderful purposes to bring people out of the darkness of the world, and into His everlasting service.

God rules in three ways 1) by choosing foolish people out of the world. 2) by choosing the people that the world considers weak in order to shame those that the world considers strong. 3) by choosing the insignificant persons and choosing the despised persons, to become God's own people.

In other words, God honored those who were common regular people, and God abolished and ignored those who were considered uncommon or important people.

Why? That question brings us to the second main thing which is Paul's second main teaching point. Purpose. The Why. Why did God choose these people? God had a reason. In fact, Paul wrote that God had 3 reasons. 1) to shame the wise (v.27) 2) to shame the strong (v.27) and 3) to bring to nothing things that are (v.28). Those 3 purposes could be summarized together as one driving purpose of God in taking all of these sovereign actions. There was one main purpose of God. Which brings us to our third point.

3. See no room for boasting; all glory to God alone. (v.29-31)

(v. 29), “...so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

This phrase is a negative purpose clause. It is a statement of what God does not want, a revelation of what God does not allow. It is a purpose of God of what ought not to be. Negative. Do not let this happen.

What is it that we must not let happen? Boasting. No boasting.

Specifically, no boasting of people in the very presence of God Himself.

When God reached into the uneducated, into the poor, and into the unknown people in order to choose His own people, and then God exalted them to places of service within His Kingdom, no one could or should ever take that opportunity to claim credit for himself or herself.

What upholds this is the foundational truth that God alone deserves all the credit and praise and recognition for the people in His Kingdom, His family, and in His service.

We are still in only the first chapter of this letter, and Paul was writing this truth to the Christians living in Corinth, because they needed a reminder.

What do you suppose the Christians in Corinth had been doing, such that they needed this reminder?Boasting! The Christians in Corinth were boasting!

They were freely boasting. Some were boasting in their own wonderful education – I went to such and such a school, you know! I had so and so for a professor, you know! I studied under so and so.

Others were boasting in their accomplishments and boasting in their possessions. I build that company, you know. I built that machine, I built that team, that website, I completed that report, I sold that merchandise, I repaired that, I managed this team to victory, I cooked those meals, I recruited these volunteers, I I.

Still others were boasting in personal social standing. I am Jewish, I am from Jerusalem, I am German, I am Dutch, I am Hispanic, I am Scottish, I am Wisconsin born and raised.

I went to this school. I served in that branch of the military. I am friends with so and so. I am a financial contributor to such and such, which makes me an insider.

Paul saw that the church in Corinth had a common sin of boasting. So here in chapter one, Paul already addressed it. And again Paul will address it in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Do not rehearse your achievements, but in place of doing that, instead of doing that, keep on giving non-stop praise to God.

For your career. For your marriage. For your kids and grandkids. For your writings, for your recipes, for your creative performances, and for your faithfulness in serving, for your everything, give all praise to God alone. Do you know how far

this extends? Paul went on to write later, in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*”

We eat not in order to boast, but rather to give glory to God.

If you quit drinking too much coffee or too many diet sodas, and you think more highly of yourself for doing so, what is the error in that? The error in that is not seeing that it was God who prompted you to make that good change.

We don’t redeem ourselves, we have a Redeemer.

We don’t rescue ourselves, we have a Rescuer.

We don’t sanctify ourselves, we have a Sanctifier.

Now we cover the final two verses of our text today. Verses 30-31, “*...because of [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”*”

How are you saved? By Christ. Did you have a hand in that? No.

God the Father sent His Son Christ Jesus to save you. Because of God you are in Christ Jesus! God the Father is the author of your conversion!

Paul’s phrase “IN CHRIST” is repeated 166 times in his letters. To be IN CHRIST means that we have close friendship with Christ Jesus, and all of His people. Being in Christ is a privilege. But we never stop living unto Christ.

The rest of this passage is Paul reminding the Christians of the central place of Christ Jesus.

Jesus became to us wisdom from God.

Jesus became to us righteousness from God.

Jesus became to us sanctification from God.

Jesus became to us redemption from God.

Jesus helps us know what to do, what to believe, and how to live.

Jesus grants us acceptable standing with Heaven. Jesus declares us right with God.

Jesus provides for all of our improvements and progress as believers.

Jesus paid for us by His redeeming blood, and because of that, we are safe and we belong to God.

Which part of that was caused by your contribution? None of it.

Which is why Paul ends by quoting “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

We make a big fuss in church worship about the Lord Jesus Christ.

We don’t bother giving credit to anyone else.

Conclusion: Application – remember 3 words – He lifted me.

J.S. Bach was a Christian. He became a composer widely renowned for his music in the early 1700s, but he always kept perspective. How did he do that? Here is what Bach said, "All music should have no other end and aim than the

glory of God and the soul's refreshment; where this is not remembered there is no real music but only a devilish hub-bub."

Each time Bach sat down to write new music, he would write at the top of his page: "J.J." "Jesus Juva" which means "Jesus help me."

Paul was saying to the church in Corinth, the same thing that Bach was saying to all musicians. God chose nobodies like us! That is the beginning. But that is not the end. Once God chose us, God continues to use people like us to shame the world. Whenever Bach finished a song, he would write at the bottom of the page, "S.D.G." "Soli Dei gratia" which means "To God alone the praise."

From the start to the end, relying on God.

We need to learn and remember that we remain insignificant and despised people who dedicate our lives to serving God and serving the people around us. When the world wants to turn to us and give us credit for our accomplishments, may we simply say – hey, listen, I need you to understand something about where I was, and where I am, and I can say it in three words - He lifted me.

God delights in us, as we set out to live in harmony with God's Word, and as we glory not in ourselves, but rather as we glory in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:21, to God "...*be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.*"