

NOT MANY WISE MEN AFTER THE FLESH ARE CALLED

TEXT: I CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

INTRODUCTION:

1. In our text, the apostle Paul points out that the Gospel did not depend for its success on human wisdom. In I Corinthians 1:19, Paul says, “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.”
2. In fact, God has shown His power by choosing “the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1:27).
3. The Countess of Huntingdon said she thanked God for the letter *m* in the word “many” (1:26). She said that if God had said, “not any,” she would have been left out because she was a wealthy noblewoman.
4. Dr. Henry Morris said, “Paul did not say ‘Not any,’ of course, but ‘Not many.’ God always has raised up a few brilliant or powerful men (such as Paul himself) who have devoted their abilities and influence to the Lord and His Word, but these have always been the exception...For the most part, the rich and famous of this world, the wise and powerful, have always looked down on the followers of Christ and the Scriptures. This seems increasingly true today, and many believers have been led to compromise as a result. Rather than being discouraged by the intellectual snobbery of educated and powerful unbelievers, however, we should rejoice in this further proof of the prophetic inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.”
5. Dr. Morris himself was a brilliant man, with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, a master's degree in hydraulics, and a Ph.D in hydraulic engineering.
6. Dr. Morris taught at several universities, and while teaching at Virginia Tech, he co-authored an advanced text on engineering hydraulics that was used in dozens of universities worldwide. Under his leadership his department rose to become one of the largest civil engineering programs in the nation.

7. Dr. Morris's greatest accomplishments, however, were the dozens of books and pamphlets he wrote defending creationism and refuting evolution. In 1961, Morris co-authored *The Genesis Flood* with John Whitcomb, an excellent systematic scientific explanation for creationism. The book was very influential on the creationist movement, and the noted evolutionist, Stephen Jay Gould, called it "the founding document of the creationist movement."
8. So our text does not say, "not any wise men after the flesh, not any mighty, not any noble, are called," but "not many..." The city treasurer in Corinth was Erastus, a Christian referred to by Paul in Romans 16:23.
9. And there was Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7), as well as Martin Luther, William Shakespeare, Sir Isaac Newton, George Washington, General Gordon, Queen Victoria, Count Zinzendorf, and other "wise" and "noble" Christians over the years.
10. Some have argued that Shakespeare was not a Christian, but having read most of his plays, I think he was. The preamble to Shakespeare's last will and testament: "In the name of God...I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting..."
11. But in any event, throughout history, the vast majority of Christians have been from the more humble ranks of life.

I. GOD DOES NOT CHOOSE THE WAY MAN CHOOSES

1. God calls ordinary people. If you and I did the choosing, we would probably choose the wealthy, the most influential, the highly-educated, and the most prominent.
2. But God does not work like that. And this is often incomprehensible to man.
3. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1:27). There are many examples of this in Scripture.

4. I mentioned last week how God instructed the Israelites to march around the walls of Jericho.
5. God reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 to defeat the Midianites.
6. Judges 7:2 says, "And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."
7. God used an ox goad in the hands of Shamgar to defeat 600 Philistines.
8. And with the jawbone of an ass, God enabled Samson to defeat a thousand Philistines.
9. David killed Goliath with a slingshot.
10. God doesn't do things the way man does. God's ways are much different than man's ways. Isaiah 55:8 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."
11. Consider Israel's election. The LORD did not choose Israel because they were anything special (Deut. 7:6-8).

II. GOD DELIBERATELY CONFOUNDS THE WISE (1:27, 28).

1. God raises up humble people who are of no esteem in the eyes of the world, and then He uses them to glorify Himself.
2. Our Lord said in Matthew 11:25, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."
3. God's plan of saving souls through preaching the Gospel seems foolish to the worldly-wise (1:18, 23).

4. It seems to “simple” to the “wise.” “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (I Cor. 1:27).
5. John Bunyan was a poor tinker, a man who travels from place to place mending metal utensils, like pots and pans. His father was also a poor tinker. John Bunyan’s wife was also from a very poor family.
6. Bunyan wrote, “We came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both.”
7. John Bunyan was arrested and imprisoned for twelve years because he preached the Gospel without obtaining a license from the Church of England. (Bunyan was a Baptist.)
8. But while in prison, Bunyan wrote nine books, including the greatest book in the English language (after the King James Bible) – *Pilgrim’s Progress*.
9. “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...” (1:27).

III. GOD MUST GET ALL THE GLORY, NOT MAN (1:29-31).

1. Had God chosen just the wealthy and the powerful, it would have given men an opportunity to boast. But the Bible says, “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1:29).
2. The flesh likes to boast. It likes to be recognized. It likes to get all the glory. In I Corinthians 5:2, Paul says, “And ye are puffed up.”
3. But by choosing the weak things God had the greater opportunity to manifest His own power and grace.
4. Jeremiah 9:23, 24 says, “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him

that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”

5. Everything we need is found in Christ (1:29, 30). “But of Him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus” (1:30). The idea here is that our union with Christ is not of our own doing. It is the work of God Himself. There is nothing for man to boast about.
6. First Corinthians chapters 1 and 2 deal extensively with wisdom. The word “wisdom” is found 16 times in these two chapters. The seventeenth time is I Corinthians 3:19, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.”
7. First Corinthians 1:30 says, “Christ Jesus...is made unto us wisdom.” And not only wisdom, but “righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1:30).

*Jesus Christ is made to me,
All I need, all I need,
He alone is all my plea,
He is all I need.*

*Wisdom, righteousness and power,
Holiness this very hour
My redemption full and free,
He is all I need.*

8. First Corinthians 1:30 reminds us that righteousness precedes sanctification (holiness). Sanctification, like justification, is to be appropriated by faith alone.

9. A.T. Pierson contrasted Paul's epistle to the Romans with his first epistle to the Corinthians.

- Romans: Justified in Christ Jesus by His blood.
- I Corinthians: Sanctified in Christ Jesus by His Spirit.

10. The word "redemption" in verse 30 refers here to our complete and final deliverance from all the consequences of sin.

11. In other words, "Christ Jesus is made unto us (complete) redemption."

12. Paul is referring here to the day when our Lord's redemptive work on the cross will become fully manifest, even the redemption of the body itself.

13. Ephesians 4:30 says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (cf. Rom. 8:21-23; Eph. 1:14).

CONCLUSION:

1. There is a wonderful connection between "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1:30).
2. Matthew Henry said, "Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is also made sanctification. He never discharges from the guilt of sin, without delivering from the power of it."
3. Spurgeon said, "We want to be purified as well as pardoned. Justification without sanctification would not be salvation at all. It would call the leper clean, and leave him to die of his disease; it would forgive the rebellion and allow the rebel to remain an enemy to his king."