

Series: The Wisdom, Wonder, and Witness of the Gospel

Consider Your Calling # 2

1 Corinthians 1: 26-31

In our previous study Paul dealt with the presentation of the Gospel: literally described as the foolishness of preaching. He discussed the struggles many faced in hearing and accepting the Gospel as truth. For some it was a stumbling block and others considered it outright foolishness. The world has its own ideas for acceptance to God and varied approaches to Him. Paul revealed salvation wasn't in the ways or works of men, but through faith in the Gospel of Christ.

As he continues to address this vital topic, Paul now addresses those who are called of God, those who respond to the preaching of the Gospel by faith. From a human perspective, what type of people would God seek? Which people would be most likely to respond to the Gospel? Surely this group would include the strong, the noble, the wise, and the wealthy. Wouldn't God seek those who are self-confident and successful? Most would think God would desire those who are popular, energetic, outgoing, and beautiful.

Paul shares with the Corinthians that God's approach and calling are not bound to the desired attributes and expectations of men. His approach is actually contrary to what men would think. He seeks those the world would overlook and avoid. God is seeking those who do not possess the accepted attributes of the world. Let's take a few moments to consider the [affirmations](#) Paul shares as we think on the thought: [Consider Your Calling](#).

I. The Criteria in God's Calling (26-28) – Paul discusses the criteria associated with the call of God. He speaks of:

A. Those who are Indifferent (26) – [For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.](#) As we discussed in the introduction, these would be on the short list of those sought after by most in the world today. Corporations, government agencies, non-profits, and even many churches seek those who possess these characteristics. Paul reveals that God doesn't call many who are wise after the flesh (or with worldly wisdom,) many who are mighty, or many who are noble. This may seem difficult to understand, but many times those who possess these qualities are not interested in the ways of God. They are depending on themselves and their own abilities.

- John Phillips describes these as: Sophisticated, Self-sufficient, and Society people. Sadly few of these are called of God. They have learned to depend on their own wisdom, abilities, or status in life rather than to respond by faith to the Gospel.

- I want to point out that Paul says not “many” of these are called. He doesn’t say, not “any” of these are called. He doesn’t imply these can’t or won’t be saved, but of those who are, not many are of this category.

B. Those who are Invited (27-28) – Here Paul reveals those whom God has chosen to extend the Gospel call. These are often overlooked and rejected by the world, but they are more inclined to hear the Gospel and respond to it by faith. We discover God chooses:

- **The Foolish** (27) – *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.* These are often looked down upon by those who are considered learned and educated, but they are chosen of God. These may not possess the wisdom of this world, but they possess a greater wisdom of God. These are not depending on the wisdom of men or society, but have put their faith in the Lord. Eternity will reveal these possessed more wisdom than the great thinkers revered by philosophers and educators. Often the wise feel too intelligent or proud to submit to the authority of a God they cannot see, but those considered foolish have humbled themselves in faith.
- **The Feeble** (27) – *God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.* Society often embraces and celebrates the strong and mighty. Those who are weak are often belittled and ostracized. These usually possess less wealth, position, and influence. They are viewed as insignificant to society, and even dispensable for the greater good of the cause. These are often the common class of people: the mill worker, the unhealthy, the poor, the sick or vulnerable, the immature or aged within society. Although rejected by most, these are in a position to look to God and receive the abundance He gives. Those who live in pride and human ability reject the Lord and see no need for Him. God chooses and uses the weak to confound the wise. We must come before the Lord in submissive humility to be accepted of Him.
- **The Forsaken** (28) – *And base things of the world...to bring to nought things that are.* Paul now speaks of the base things of the world being used to bring down the high and mighty. These are characterized as being lower class, those at the bottom of the social ladder. These have hit rock bottom and are without hope. This would include: the lowly, the vile, the immoral, the depraved, and the sinful of this world. Again, these have come to the place where they have nothing left. They have reached the end of themselves and are forced to look to God.

We may not like to admit it, but if we aren’t careful we too look down on these. However, as we study Scripture, these are the ones God used in mighty ways. In fact, each of us was at that point prior to the Lord meeting our need. It is simply by His grace that we were lifted out of our depravity! God can’t use a man who sees no need for faith or God. We can’t be saved until we sense our sinful nature and realize the need for Christ.

➤ **The Failures (28)** – [and things which are despised...to bring to nought things that are](#). Society looks at many as complete failures. Since they do not fit their mold, having obtained the same social, financial, or intellectual status, these are despised and rejected. They are viewed as those who have nothing of value to contribute, complete and utter failures.

I am glad God doesn't see us as the world does. We may be despised by the world. They may see little value in our existence, but God saw worth in us. In fact, He was willing to send His only begotten Son to die in our place. God chooses and uses the failures in this life to bring about His divine purposes and reveal His glory!

➤ **The Forbidden (28)** – [and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are](#). These are those that are completely invisible to society. Most would not even recognize their existence. They have been rejected by society and forbidden a place within the world's system. These are the lonely and despondent. Most would argue the world would be better off if these were eradicated from society, seeing no value in them at all.

Again, God doesn't look upon men as we do. He comes to the lonely and rejected. He reveals Himself to the lost and hopeless. He offers peace, hope, and joy. These are often so overwhelmed when they realize they are loved that they jump at the chance of a relationship with a loving God. God chooses – to use the forbidden to trump those who see no value in them!

II. The Commendation of God's Calling (29-31) – After dealing with those whom God calls, Paul offers praise and adoration for the call of God. Each of us should rejoice in the call of God. Consider:

A. The Perception (29) – [That no flesh should glory in his presence](#). This statement is not surprising, but it needed to be said. After dealing extensively with the criteria of God's calling, Paul reveals God chose the foolish, the weak, the base, and the despised so that no flesh could glory in His presence. This flies in the face of human arrogance and ambition, but it is true nonetheless. None have any reason to boast before God. He has not chosen us based on our abilities, our worth, or our merit. He has chosen us because He is gracious and longsuffering. God determined long before the fall of humanity to provide a means of reconciliation and salvation through Christ.

B. The Position (30a) – [But of him are ye in Christ Jesus](#). This is the defining aspect of men. This alone will bear weight throughout eternity. The wealthy, noble, and strong may enjoy a life of ease and luxury here, but that alone will not translate into eternal life. Those considered foolish and weak, denied and rejected by society may not enjoy much pleasure in this life, but their salvation

in Christ will bring eternal joy and satisfaction. The status men obtain in this life is temporal at best, but those who are in Christ have received something that can never be taken away!

- Many continue to seek after the pleasures and material comforts of this world, but those things are temporal and fleeting. They are bound by the dictates of society and financial markets. The believer has been placed within the body of Christ, an heir to a glorious inheritance, and promised eternal life before the King of glory! Many believers are downtrodden in this life, but eternity will reveal the abundance of a relationship with Christ. This relationship isn't bought, earned, or handed down, but obtained through faith in Christ alone!

C. The Provision (30b) – *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* Often those who are in Christ are belittled and condemned by the world, but this world doesn't realize all the believer possesses. Christ affords riches money cannot buy and the world cannot offer. Those in Christ enjoy great provision in Him.

➤ Again considering the thoughts of John Phillips, he describes this provision as such:

1. Wisdom, to transform our minds ([1:30b](#))
2. Righteousness, to transform our morals ([1:30c](#))
3. Sanctification, to transform our motives ([1:30d](#))
4. Redemption, to transform our members ([1:30e](#))ⁱ

D. The Profession (31) – *That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.* In summary, Paul draws wisdom from the prophet of old, Jeremiah. *Jer.9:23-24 – 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:* ^[24] *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.* The Corinthians sought to boast in the wisdom and accomplishments of men. Many unbelievers refused to acknowledge God or their need for Him. Paul reminds all that God alone is worthy of glory and praise. Their relationship with Him was not motivated by their wisdom, abilities, or accomplishments. God chose to extend His loving favor to those He would and man has no reason for boasting.

- I have shared this before, but it is fitting here as well. I remember being at recess as a child. We would line up prior to a particular game and the teacher would select two captains to pick their prospective teams. Lacking in athletic ability, I was often chosen near the end, after all the other “desirable” players had been selected. Apparently the captains saw little value in my contributions. Things were much different with the Lord. He too was well aware of my inadequacy,

and yet He loved me and offered a gracious pardon. I was chosen of the Lord as a recipient of grace. I have since gotten over being rejected by my peers at recess, but I have never gotten over the Lord's great love for me. He alone is my reason for boasting. All that I am, and all I will ever be, I owe to Him. What a loving, gracious Savior is mine!

Conclusion: [For ye see your calling, brethren.](#) Have you considered your calling lately? Isn't the call of God miraculous and wonderful? We had nothing of value to offer, and yet He came to where we were and loved us in the condition we were in. He chose us from among the mass of humanity and offered salvation. That is nothing short of a miracle. He alone is our reason for boasting. He provided all we needed, even though we had no way of obtaining it. The saved are secure in Christ the Lord.

Have you heard the call of God? If so you ought to rejoice. He isn't obligated to anyone and yet He chooses to extend the invitation. If you have heard the call, how did you respond? If God has called, He desires you to respond to the call in salvation. If you have yet to respond, I urge you to step out by faith and receive His gracious offer of salvation!

ⁱ John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring 1 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary.