

1 Corinthians 1 pt. 4 (1:26–31) - Read through

We left off in 1:25

“...the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

This is not conceding that any foolishness or weakness exists in God’s nature - it is not so - our God, Jehovah, is all knowing, all powerful - the one who speaks creation into existence through his divine utterance.

Paul is pointing out that those who consider the gospel as foolishness or as weakness (those who are perishing) have no clue! In their arrogance they have become divorced from eternal reality. They have found themselves in the position where they believe they are uniquely qualified to comment on things of an eternal nature based on their limited knowledge and experience.

[Isa 29:14-18 NKJV] 14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise [men] shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent [men] shall be hidden." 15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?" 16 Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, "He did not make me"? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

[Isa 45:9 NKJV] 9 "Woe to him who strives with his Maker! [Let] the potsherd [strive] with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork [say], 'He has no hands'?"

*This behavior is not new, or necessarily enlightened - as observed by the prophet Isaiah it has been a common characteristic of mankind for millennia - questioning God's wisdom.

What a disastrous state to be in, convinced of our own brilliance while shunning the wisdom of our almighty creator - to our eternal detriment. Lord help us to cling to your wisdom.

Paul continues in verse 26 with a practical example of what is considered foolishness by those outside of God's wisdom

v. 26 - according to the flesh - denotes human nature

Paul says, "look around, not many of you are uniquely qualified according to the tradition of human nature to be particularly powerful ambassadors for the kingdom." AND WE ALL SAY AMEN!

not many wise - especially educated, learned, cultured, degreed - etc. Although we have seen a great deal of credentialing in an attempt to qualify men and women for such work.

not many mighty - especially able, powerful, mighty, strong; mighty in wealth and influence, etc.

not many noble - well born, of a noble family

are called! - this is the kicker and adds the crucial context that we need here.

not many wise, might, noble according to the flesh are called into God's service! Why!? Paul will spend the next several verses commenting on that.

Why doesn't God call the uniquely qualified people to His service. Wouldn't it be a lot more successful if we were outfitted with only pastors and leaders who were super educated, holding numerous degrees, with a tremendous amount of political influence? I'm sure you can call to mind something that looks a lot like that. To our collective shame the church at large has spent a great deal of time and vast resources seeking to do just that thing - equipping men for the vocation of pastoring and paying little attention to equipping men to be servants by the Holy Spirit.

What is the alternative then? What does God's model for ministry look like? Who does God bring into His service?

v. 27-28 - God has chosen - God picks, not man! Not a committee, not a board, God picks and what does he pick?

the foolish things of the world - in the worlds eyes we are considered fools, the gospel is considered foolishness (ref. v.18)

the weak things - only by realizing how weak we truly are can we begin to follow after Christ

the base things - **of no family**, a man of base birth, a man of no name or reputation; often used by secular writers, also in the secondary sense **ignoble, cowardly, mean, base.**

things which are despised - contemptible, least esteemed, set at nought

things which are nought - people say of this “it cannot be, you are a fool for believing that”

[2Co 12:10 NKJV] 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Once we arrive at that place we realize how much we don't know.

By way of confession: there have been times in my life that I have been abundantly confident in my station, career, education, finances, etc. I tell you today, as I draw nearer to Christ, I learn more and more everyday how much I don't know, how waining my own strength is - emotionally, physically, mentally.

[Jas 1:9-11 NKJV] 9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, 10 but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. 11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

*we all fade

[Psa 49:6-8 NKJV] 6 Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, 7 None [of them] can by any means redeem [his] brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him-- 8 For the redemption of their souls [is] costly, And it shall cease forever—

No matter how smart we get, how much influence we wield, how many resources we can bring to bare - there are things that escape our influence by might or wisdom.

So God uses the seemingly foolish and weak, base things of this world to put to shame those things which are viewed as wise and mighty. God's wisdom and might are over all creation - it is His to rule over.

v. 29 - answers the why of it all that we questioned earlier? Why would God choose to use such as these? Such as us?

We are a beautiful let down,
Painfully uncool,
The church of the dropouts

The losers, the sinners, the failures and the fools
Oh what a beautiful let down
Are we salt in the wound
Let us sing one true tune - John Foreman

WHY?-THAT NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY IN HIS PRESENCE.

We just read from Psalm 49: None [of them] can by any means redeem [his] brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him-- 8 For the redemption of their souls [is] costly,

We can't afford it man! Nothing in me, apart from Christ, can stand up to the righteousness of our Holy God and bargain a way into eternity, on my own behalf - much less that of anyone else.

[Isa 64:6 NKJV] 6 But we are all like an unclean [thing], And all our righteousnesses [are] like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Nobody on planet earth has the right to stand before God and rattle off their resume or credentials to impress God or to present themselves as qualified for salvation - except Jesus Christ, who took on the form of a servant!

[Phi 3:4-8 NKJV] 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin,

a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

*thought he at one time considered himself uniquely qualified to stand before God - his entire mindset was changed

[Rom 8:33-34 NKJV] 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? [It is] God who justifies. 34 Who [is] he who condemns? [It is] Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

*one man and one man alone can stand before God in holiness, and he intercedes on our behalf.

v. 30 - of Him (from Him) - you are in Christ - Paul is in fact writing to believers who are Christ's dear treasure.

The idea Paul has drawn out for them isn't one of self-loathing and hopelessness but that as Christ is, so are we, having put on the righteousness of Christ we stand guiltless before our Heavenly Father and that is the only credential that matters in our interaction with Him.

v. 31 - glory in the Lord - you want to brag about something? brag about God's goodness and love towards us in our shabbiest state. God's love came to us not because we are ultra qualified and holy, but because HE is abundantly qualified to redeem us, and HE is abundantly holy - AND He making us like Him by His Spirit and by His word. Are you ready to abandon your wisdom for Christ's wisdom? The Spirit bids you to do so. Find your credentials, your worth, your righteousness in Christ.