

"Consider Your Calling"

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[0:00] Thus says the Lord, let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts, boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord.

Let's pray. Lord, we ask that you will give us ears to hear your word this morning. I ask, Lord, that you will help me, Lord, to preach your word faithfully. Help me, Lord, to recede. Holy Spirit, give us all ears to hear and to be enlightened and to be encouraged and to be challenged and to be molded in the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray. Amen.

Amen. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. We're going to be in verse 26 to 31 this morning. We will also be looking at Jeremiah 9, chapter 23 to 24. That's on page 750 of your pew Bible. So there'll be a bit of turn it around this morning. So be ready and be aware.

Let me give you. Have many of you, growing up, being on that dreaded line, where in the playground maybe, or after school, you're picking teams?

Ah, and you know how it goes. Usually two of the best, most athletic people are the captains, and they're picking teams, and you're all lined up. Now, it's a dreaded line. If you've ever been on that line, you know why I say it's a dreaded line.

[1:55] Because what's the fear? I'm going to be the last one standing, and I'm going to be the last one picked. And what's usually the criteria, right?

Whatever sport it is, even when it's not even about sports. Like, what's the criteria, right? If it's sports, the most athletic, the biggest, the biggest person, the fastest are the ones that are picked first.

And you keep going down the line, and you keep going down the line, and you have, at the end, the second half of the picking, the less athletically endowed, let's just say it that way, are the ones picked.

Now, I've been on both sides of those. I didn't get this growth spurt until I was later in middle school, so for a long time, I used to be one of those in the last half of it.

And it's dreaded because, yeah, you don't want, that's not the group you want to be in. You don't want to be numbered among those. You would like to be like the first person picked, wouldn't you?

[2:57] It says something about you and what you can bring to the table, no matter what it is.

That's kind of like what Paul is saying to us in these verses this morning.

And just by way of reminder, last week, we looked at Paul's words regarding the word of the cross in verse 18 to 25. Paul tells us that the gospel proclamation is the word of the cross, and it's about Jesus.

And by way of reminder, we said last week that the cross is at the center of our gospel proclamation. Although it is folly and weakness to the world that is perishing, it is the power of God to those who are being saved.

And Paul is careful and intentional in saying that the cross is the power of God. Of course, to say the cross is the power of God is not shocking to us. It isn't.

It becomes a bit shocking when we start to explain to people what we mean by that. But we've had two millennia now of Christianity, and that has, I think, desensitized us to the shock value of the cross itself.

[4:20] It is no longer the reviled symbol of torture. Even unbelievers, non-Christians, see the cross as a positive symbol.

But it was not so in Paul's day. The cross was an object of revulsion. But such was the wisdom of God that he would make that thing that was an object of shame and revulsion, he would make it the means by which he would conquer sin and death.

Such was the wisdom of God. And Paul continues in his explanation of that argument in our text today in verse 26 to 31 of 1 Corinthians.

Having already said that the gospel of Christ crucified runs counter to the world's values and the world's expectations, he now turns to the recipients of this letter.

In fact, they are the recipients of this gospel message itself. Now he uses them as an example. He says in verse 26, Consider your calling, brothers.

[5 : 32] By the way, we've said brothers. It's not just talking about men here. It's the catch-all word for siblings. Brethren, you might think. So for consider your calling, brothers, Paul says, Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards.

Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. Paul says to the Corinthian church, Just, okay, I'm telling you that the gospel is the power of God.

And it runs counter to the way the world thinks about power and influence and all of those things. Just look at yourself, Paul seems to be saying to them. Consider the matter. Think about it.

Not many of you were wise or powerful or of noble birth according to the world's definition of these things. Now these three descriptors were the ways the world assigns value to people.

It's pretty much true today as well, isn't it? As it was in Paul's day. Not many of you were wise by worldly standards.

[6 : 39] That is, not many of you were what the society would call intellectual. The intellectual elite of our culture. You are not the elite minds of the universities.

The public intellectuals who are advancing human thought. Not many of you were wise. Now not many of you were powerful either.

The word here, the word powerful here does not imply actual physical strength. That's not what Paul means. Rather, what he means is, not many of you were powerful in terms of influence.

Not many of you were distinguished in the world. You know, the famous, the rich, the politically influential. Not many of you were in those circles.

And not many of you were of noble birth. Even in a city of new money, like Corinth, it doesn't take long to start building an aristocratic class.

[7 : 39] And he's saying, not many of you were in any of these three descriptors. Well, here's the Corinthian church. This Corinthian church who have come to Christ through the word of the cross that Paul himself preached.

God displayed his power towards them in bringing them to saving faith. But they've abandoned the gospel of Christ, crucified.

They've abandoned it because it is weak and shameful to the world around them. And they're so captivated by their culture's values and their culture's standards that the cross has become an embarrassment to them.

Even though that very cross was the instrument of their salvation. Instead, what is the Corinthian church doing? They're chasing after the kind of clout the world gives.

But Paul is saying to them, What are you doing? What are you doing, Corinthians? Many of you don't even fit the world's estimation of VIPs.

[8 : 55] They're very important peoples. I wonder if you think what Paul says of the Corinthian church could be true of us here today as well.

I think it is. We are suddenly not influential and denotable of society. I don't think I'm denigrating any of you when I say that.

When was the last time the governor gave you a call to seek your advice? When was the last time, when last were you invited to pontificate on the news networks about the issue of the day?

As far as I know, none of us here have university buildings or hospital wings named after us. Yet here you are.

Here you are. Called by God. Chosen by Him to be in His kingdom. And did you note the tense in verse 26 there?

[10 : 01] Not many of you were. That is, at your calling. When the gospel came to you. When you heard the gospel of Jesus Christ unto salvation.

You were not any of these things that Paul describes. But what are you now that you are in Christ? Christ has become wisdom.

Paul will later say. Wisdom given from God. Christ has become wisdom given from God for you. We'll speak more on that later. But here's the things that Paul will have us know first.

We were nobodies. By the world's standards. We were nobodies. In fact, to be a Christian is still to be a nobody. Today.

Even if you had been a somebody. Prior to coming to faith. The moment you place your trust in Christ crucified. You become foolish to the world.

[11:05] I'm sure you've experienced that. Even in your own little spheres. When you came to faith in Christ. Your friends and family. We were not believers. Start to think of you as strange.

They might say. You've changed. You're not fun anymore. They might say. Now three decades ago. The word that we use. Is Jesus freak. Or Bible thumper. Today. You will be called much worse. Than that. I wouldn't even go to the kind of things they might say. You start with the word bigot. And go on. Or believe in the Bible. And believe in Jesus Christ crucified. But the present day church. Is unfortunately too much like the Corinthian church. In that. We want the world's affirmation. And we want the world's adulation. And in looking for those things.

[12:07] From the world. We too easily lay aside. The message of the cross. And now. It's not an outright denial. Or renunciation. Rather.

It's subtle. And because it's subtle. It's even far more dangerous. The church today.

De-emphasizes. The centrality of the cross. Rather.

Things like. Climate justice. Social justice. Become centered. Now those things are not.

Bad in and of themselves. But they're not the gospel. We dissenter. We dissenter the gospel. And we make all these social things.

We put it at the center of our life together. In Christ. We do not talk anymore in the church.

[13:03] Of the sin bearing Christ. And the suffering on the cross. We do not insist anymore in the church. About. We do not insist anymore on holiness.

We do not talk of sin. And the need for repentance. Rather. Like the Corinthian church. We too easily adopt. The values of the world around us. We clamor.

After human personalities. Like the Corinthian church. We say. We follow Apollos. We follow Cephas. We follow Paul. Rather than following the person.

Of Jesus Christ. Our Redeemer and Lord. And you know. The tragedy of pursuing. The world's standards. The tragedy of utilizing.

The world's methods. Is highlighted. There in verse 27 and 28. Paul tells us that God has intentionally. Proposed.

[14:02] To expose. The world's method. The world's wisdom. And the world's power and prestige. God has. Intentionally proposed.

To expose all of that. As futile. Through what? Through what means? Through the word of the cross. Through. And not only through the word of the cross.

Even through the people. That he calls to himself. Through the proclamation. Of that gospel. Look there in verse 27. God chose what is foolish.

In the world. 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. The things that are. God chose us.

[14:59] God chose us. If in fact. You've been called. And have by faith entrusted yourself. Body and soul. To Jesus Christ. God chose the likes of you.

To shame the world. Now. The meaning of shame here. Is not merely a subjective. Feeling. Of embarrassment. Now. That's not what Paul has in mind here. It's as one commentator put it. By shame here. God. God is vindicated. Over his enemies. It's vindication. That we have. That Paul has in mind. God has vindicated.

His enemies. Through. His choosing you. To follow him. The things that the world. Does not. Amount.

The world. The world thinks. Amount to anything. We are the lowly. And despised in the world. Yet. We are the ones. Who are being saved.

[15:57] Through the word of the cross. We are the powerless. And persecuted. In the world. But we are those whom Christ. Made co-inheritors.

With him. In his kingdom. The world is passing away. It is perishing. But we. Are the ones. Who are conquered. By the blood of the lamb.

And by the word of our testimony. God uses us. The nobodies. To shame. The notables. Of the world.

And it might not seem. Completely apparent. To you yet. That is in fact. What God has done. Because you look around. And you feel like. I don't feel vindicated. I'm still being persecuted. It might not seem apparent. That that is what God has done. But it will one day. Be undeniably clear.

[16:57] To all living soul. And on that day. On that day. The true VIPs. According to God's standard.

Not according to world standards now. The true VIPs. According to God's standard. Will be made apparent. That is. That is you and I. Those who put our trust in Jesus Christ.

We. Are the ones. Who are of noble birth. Not by blood. But by. But by faith in Christ Jesus. We've been adopted.

As sons and daughters of the king. And on that day. When it becomes apparent. Those who take pride. In the world's wisdom. Will see the uselessness.

And the futility. Of their ways. Now. Paul wants us to see. That God has done it this way.

Intentionally. So that no human being.

[17:55] No flesh. Might boast. In the presence of God. Herein lies. The wisdom of God. Can you imagine for a second.

Whatever it would be like. If we have room to boast. Imagine someone saying in heaven. Well. I got in because I donated thousands of dollars.

To the church. You know. And so they had to let me in. Or imagine someone saying. Well you know. I am the foremost theologian. In the New Testament.

And so. You know. I got. You know. I was let in. Or imagine someone saying. Well you know. Our family. We've always been influential.

In our denomination. Generations upon generations. You know. We were the known. We were the known. We're the. We're like the royalty. And so. Yes.

[18:52] Of course we're going to be in heaven. Imagine if that were the case. Now. You even know that when people speak like that in the world. It does seem unjust.

Or unfair to you. To one degree or another. When people pull those kinds of. You know. Claims. After all. There is no equality of opportunity.

In any of the world's systems. No matter how much we try. And we do try. But there is no really. Equality of opportunity. No matter how much we try.

But it's not so with God. This is the glory of God. In the gospel. The glory of God. In the gospel. Is that it is freely. Freely available to all.

Both low born. And I born. Both influential. And obscure. The gospel is freely available. And when we get to heaven.

[19:54] What we all will be saying. No matter what our status is. While on earth. What we will all be saying. In heaven. Is that. Our basis for being there.

Will be because of the deeds. Of the man. Jesus Christ. It is by his merits. Accounted to us. That we have entrance.

To God's kingdom. There will be no human boasting. In the flesh. On that day. And this has always been God's plan. This is how God operates.

To remember the Virgin Mary's words. As she carried along by the Holy Spirit. In praise of God's saving act.

Announced to her by Angel Gabriel. She said this. In the Magnificent. In Luke 1. He has shown strength. With his arm. That is God has shown strength.

[20:54] With his arm. He has scattered. The proud. In the thoughts. Of their hearts. He has brought down the mighty. From their thrones. And exalted.

Those of humble estate. That is how God operates. And that is what Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah. Also says.

In the Old Testament reading. We had this morning. Chapter 9. Verse 23 and 24. Thus says the Lord. Let not the wise man. Boast in his wisdom.

Let not the mighty man. Boast in his might. Let not the rich man. Boast in his riches. But let him who boasts. Boast in this.

That he understands and knows me. That I am the Lord. Who practices steadfast love. Justice. And righteousness. In the earth. For in these things I delight. Declares the Lord.

[21:51] Now. It is this very Old Testament verse. That Paul quotes. In verse 31. In 1 Corinthians. When he says. As it is written. Let the one who boasts.

Boast. In the Lord. Now. There is room for boasting. In the Christian life. There is room for boasting. In the Christian life. If the object.

Of our boasting. Is God himself. After all. If we think about it. And we are honest with ourselves. It is God who deserves.

All the praise. For it is because of him. Paul tells us. In verse 30. It is because of him. And from him. That you are in Christ Jesus.

Who became to us. Wisdom from God. Righteousness. And sanctification. And redemption. You know. It is ironic. That.

[22:48] We sometimes. Take what God has given us. In Christ. The free gifts. Is given us in Christ. The lavish gifts. Is given us in Christ. We take those things. And we start to think.

That we have earned it. Even as Christians. In the church. We start to think. That we have earned it. And how easy. Is it. For us to take pride.

In our. In our ability. To judge rightly. To discern. The truth of God's word. From the falsehood. Of the devil. The flesh. And the world. As if it is not.

By the power. Of the Holy Spirit. Which is the gift of God. That enables us. To do that. In the first place. We sometimes. Can start to think. That we are in fact. Special people.

In our own stead. And God is lucky. To have us. In his kingdom. In our own. In our own. In our own. How foolish is it. To think that.

[23:46] We are what we are. In Christ. By our own efforts. And isn't this. The folly. That often. Leads us. To falling back.

To the patterns. Of the world. I think. The Corinthian church. Had forgotten. To consider. Their calling. Like Paul is inviting them to do.

They've forgotten to do that. And therefore. They've begun. To glory. In worldly aims. They've begun to glory. In worldly values. And the same is true for us.

When we lose sight of Christ. When we lose sight of the gospel. When that happens. The church of Christ. Becomes no different. From the world. And that's why verse 30.

Is a necessary. And constant reminder. For us as Christians. Because of him. Because of God. You are in Christ Jesus.

[24:44] Who became to us. Wisdom. From God. Righteousness. And sanctification. And redemption. Paul means to tell us there.

That because of God's election of you. It is God who chose. And because of his grace towards you. You are in Christ Jesus.

And because of this union with Christ. He. That is. Christ. Has become wisdom to you. From God. Herein.

Lies. The vindication of God. In us. Through Christ. Christ. We who were nobodies. Have now been taken. Into the wisdom of God.

The wisdom of God. That shames. Human wisdom. We've been taken into that. Paul is speaking here. In terms of salvation. This.

[25:44] For him. This for Paul. Is the wisdom of God. And maybe you are preoccupied. With status. Like the Corinthian church.

Was. Paul. Will have us know. That true status. True status. Before God. Lies only. In being found in Christ.

If you are not in Christ. You are nobody to God. You are nobody. No matter what the world thinks of you. No matter how much you are celebrated. No matter how notoriety.

And influence you have. If you are not in Christ. Before God. You are nobody. And no matter how the world derides you. And. And make fun of you.

No matter how obscure you are. In terms of. In terms of culture. And human history. If you are in Christ.

[26:50] You are somebody. In fact. You are not just anybody. You are treated. Like. His son. You are covered. In his son's robes.

Of righteousness. So that when. God. The father. Sees you. Who the world thinks is nobody. He sees. His son. Jesus Christ. And then he lavished you.

With the same benefits. As if he is. That he would lavish. On his son. And. Paul. Paul wants us to understand this.

He wants us to see. That this is really. What we have. In Christ. This is the wisdom. Of God. Paul goes on to elaborate. This wisdom. Of God. In three aspects.

Three aspects. Of salvation. He tells us. That God's wisdom. Is displayed. In his righteousness.

God's wisdom. Is displayed. In sanctification. God's wisdom.

[27 : 49] Is displayed. In redemption. Now. The first one. Righteousness. Is. Is. Another word for that. Is justification. That's our legal standing.

Before God. In Christ. We are no longer. Condemned. We're no longer. Guilty. Before God.

Remember what.

Romans says. There is now no condemnation. For us. We are in Christ Jesus. Why? Because Jesus Christ. Bore upon his body. The penalty.

Of your sin. And in turn. He gave us. His perfect righteousness. He who knew no sin. Became sin for us.

So that in him. We might become. The righteousness of God. Christ. Has accomplished. That on the cross. Through his once and for all.

[28 : 47] Atoning sacrifice. And so that. Now. You. The wisdom of Christ. Is displayed. In. In his righteousness. Towards you.

In his. In his saving work. In justifying you. In justifying you. But the work of salvation. Doesn't just end there. In justification. You're not just declared.

Righteous. But God works in us. He continues to work in us. Through the Holy Spirit. To make us. More and more. Like Jesus Christ. So.

So that not only. Have we been justified. But God now. Empowers us. Through his spirit. To live holy lives. Now this process. Of sanctification.

Is ongoing. It's ongoing. Throughout our life. In this world. On this side of eternity. The Holy Spirit. Continues to work in us.

[29 : 42] To sanctify us. To make us more and more. Like Jesus Christ. And that process.

Sometimes. Can be painful. For we trust.

In him to continue the work. Knowing. That we have this sure promise. From God. Our Redeemer. That the work. Will be completed. On that day.

When he comes back. To take us to himself. Having ransomed us. Presenting us. Holy and blameless. To the Father. That is what's implied then.

In the last aspect. Of salvation. Redemption. On that day. You presented. Holy and blameless. This. Is the wisdom of God.

It is salvation. Righteousness. Sanctification. And redemption. Through Jesus Christ. It is the only thing.

[30 : 38] That marks you. As belonging to God. It is the only thing. I want to repeat that. That marks you. As belonging to God. God. And it is the only thing.

You ought to trust in. And put your faith in. And I want to say this morning. If you have not yet. Come to faith in Christ. If you don't know.

What it actually means. To have this. To be justified by him. To entrust yourself to him. I want to tell you this morning. That the offer of salvation is free.

It's free to all. There is no criteria. You don't have to. You don't have to jump through any hoop. You don't have to clear any hurdle. You don't have to give.

A certain amount. You don't have to be numbered. Among the importance. And the VIPs. Not here in this church at least.

[31 : 38] You just have to come. And believe. In this free offer of the gospel. Place your life. And trust yourself to Jesus Christ. And his finished work for you on the cross.

That's all you need to do. And the free offer of salvation is here now. Now is the hour.

Now is the time. You need bring nothing. Except your sin. And simply cling. To the cross of Christ. And I want to say again.

If you are in Christ. If you do have. Have trusted yourself to him. For you have forgotten. How and why God in his kindness.

Has brought you into his kingdom. Perhaps. You have started to become accustomed. To boasting. In your own righteousness. And in your good works. I want you to remember.

[32 : 38] The words of this hymn. And make it your prayer. Forbid it Lord. That I should boast.
Save.

In the cross of Christ. My God. All the vain things. That charm me most. I sacrifice them.
To his blood. And may that be. Our continued prayer. As the people of God. Brothers and sisters in
Christ. That we will trust in nothing else.
That we will trust in no one else. Save in the cross of Christ. Our God. Amen.