

The unfolding of your words gives light.

## The Temple of God

### An Exposition of 1 Corinthians

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<sup>26</sup>For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble<sup>a</sup>; <sup>27</sup>but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise<sup>b</sup>, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong<sup>c</sup>; <sup>28</sup>and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen<sup>d</sup>, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are<sup>e</sup>, <sup>29</sup>so that no man may boast before God<sup>f</sup>. <sup>30</sup>But by His

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<sup>a</sup> 1:26 **For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.** This calling is the one referred to in verse 24: those whom God has irresistibly drawn to faith and repentance. Among that group you do not find very many of our world's most educated, influential or famous people.

There were influential and/or wealthy people in the church at Corinth (Phoebe, Chloe, Crispus, Titius Justus...). Careful Bible students are quick to note that Paul said "not *many*" rather than "not any." God saves people from all backgrounds, but He does not need their education, influence or pedigree to do His work. This is similar to an exchange Jesus had with His disciples about rich men:

And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard *this*, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking at *them* Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:23-26

<sup>b</sup> 1:27 **but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.** In the previous verses (18-25) Paul described those who "are perishing." Now he describes those who "are being saved." This work of God in choosing the "foolish" is less a belittling of the powerful than it is a display His own power. The "wise" in this context are the academics who feel they do not need God. Many of the most brilliant, wealthy and talented people in American history spoke words that revealed that they were powerful but perishing:

The fact that a believer is happier than a skeptic is no more to the point than the fact that a drunken man is happier than a sober one. — George Bernard Shaw

I believe in God, only I spell it Nature. — Frank Lloyd Wright

I don't believe in God. My god is patriotism. Teach a man to be a good citizen and you have solved the problem of life. — Andrew Carnegie

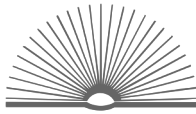
Lighthouses are more helpful than churches. — Benjamin Franklin

<sup>c</sup> 1:27 **and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.** Of course we are not necessarily speaking of physical weakness here. The word translated "weak" is used in the New Testament to describe both physical illness and spiritual vulnerability (as Paul does extensively in chapters 8-9).

<sup>d</sup> 1:28 **and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen.** The word "base" describes a low social standing. God saves outcasts. This illustrates a common Bible theme that reverses the social order. In God's kingdom the weak become strong and the outcasts are welcomed. Israel on the victorious side of the Red Sea and Hannah the new mother of Samuel sang this song of the redeemed. Persecuted believers stood confidently before kings and the crucified Savior conquered the grave.

<sup>e</sup> 1:28 **the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are.** This is a statement defending the truth that God is absolutely sovereign over His creation. Who can make something out of nothing? The same one who can make something into nothing.

<sup>f</sup> 1:29 **so that no man may boast before God.** This leaves all men without one plea of merit before God.



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doing you are in Christ Jesus<sup>a</sup>, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption<sup>b</sup>, <sup>31</sup>so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD<sup>c</sup>.”<sup>a</sup>

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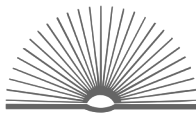
<sup>a</sup> 1:30 **But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus.** This is another way of saying, salvation is of the Lord.” The new birth is not a choice of the one born but the will of the Father. James explained it this way:

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. James 1:17-18

<sup>b</sup> 1:30 **who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.** If you are a believer Christ is your life (Colossians 3:4). He became sin so you could become His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). You have no wisdom that is yours. Likewise righteousness, sanctification and redemption have no root in you. Your identity and boasting are in Christ.

<sup>c</sup> 1:31 **LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.** What would it look like to boast somewhere else? It would be to deny the Lord and embrace our own merits. As the prophet Jeremiah said:

Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord. Jeremiah 9:23-24



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<sup>a</sup> 1:26-31 We are the kind of people who naturally boast in ourselves. It started in the Garden of Eden. When you boast in yourself you envy people who have what the world craves. You stay away from those who have not attained to your standards of beauty. You are ungrateful for what you have.

Repentance and faith can only germinate in hearts humbled by the Holy Spirit under the influence of the gospel. Paul's call here is to a life that is upside-down from the life of the natural man. Here is what changes in someone who boasts in the Lord instead of himself:

1. You pity beautiful, articulate, powerful people. You pity them because it is so hard for them to humble themselves before God.
2. You associate with the lowly. This is not embracing mediocrity but letting God choose your friends.
3. You delight only in what you have been given. You do this when you realize that you have nothing that you did not receive.