

## Why Did God Choose the "Foolish Things of the World to Shame the Wise"?

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

BQ72111

The following is an excerpt from  
*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

**For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God. (1 Corinthians 1:26—29)**

Paul possibly went over the membership of the Corinthian church in his mind as he wrote verse 26. He reminded them that they had very few who were famous, wealthy, highly educated, powerful, or influential when they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is likely that, when they became Christians, they lost a great deal of the prestige, influence, and income they did have. **Consider your calling, brethren**, he says. Paul always uses the term *calling* to refer to the saving call of God, the effectual call that results in redemption. "You know what sort of persons you were when God called you out of darkness. You know that He did not accept you as His child because you were brilliant or wealthy or intelligent or powerful. If you were any of these things," he says, "you were saved in spite of them not because of them. If anything they were stumbling blocks that hindered you, obstacles between you and God's grace." He implies that they should be *glad* that **not many were wise according to the flesh or mighty or noble**. Such things often keep people from the sense of need that leads to salvation. If more of them had been **wise, mighty, or noble**, it is likely that fewer of them would have been saved.

God is not looking for Phi Beta Kappas to save and to do His work. Nor is He looking for millionaires or famous athletes or entertainers or statesmen. His salvation is open to them just as surely as to others, but only on the same basis of faith. The very things that put them ahead in the world may actually put them behind with God. It is the feeling of inadequacy that makes people aware that they have need, and often draws them to the gospel.

Jesus prayed on one occasion, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes" (Matt. 11:25). As the context makes clear, this prayer was spoken publicly as a part of His preaching to the crowds. He was addressing His hearers as much as His Father when He prayed these words. He wanted them to know that God wanted only their faith and nothing else. He was also warning that "the wise and intelligent" were at a disadvantage as far as spiritual life and understanding are concerned. It is not that they could not accept and believe, but that pride in and dependence on their accomplishments and abilities could keep them from the kingdom. Weakness and insufficiency are the climate in which God's strength is made manifest.

God's wisdom is a kind of paradox. In human thinking, strength is strength, weakness is weakness, and intelligence is intelligence. But in God's economy some of the seemingly strongest things are the weakest, some of the seemingly weakest things are the strongest, and some of the seemingly wisest things are the most foolish. The paradox is not by accident but by God's design.

A simple, uneducated, untalented, and clumsy believer who has trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior and who faithfully and humbly follows His Lord is immeasurably wiser than the brilliant Ph.D. who scoffs at the gospel. The simple believer knows forgiveness, love, grace, life, hope, God's Word—God Himself He can see eternity. The unbelieving Ph.D., on the other hand, knows nothing beyond his books, his own mind, and his own experience. He sees nothing beyond this life, and he cannot be considered anything but foolish.

We are often tempted to think that it would be wonderful if such—and—such a great athlete—or brilliant scientist, popular entertainer, or world leader—would become a Christian. But Jesus did not think this way when He chose His disciples. Some were probably well known in their local circles and perhaps a few of them were well off financially. But He did not choose them for their wealth or influence, and in His training of them He did not try to capitalize on any such things. None of them had anything so great that he was not ready to leave it to follow Christ.

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