

## I Corinthians 1:26-2:5 – Being Used By God

A 2<sup>nd</sup> century non-Christian philosopher Celcus said this about Christians. *“Let no cultured person draw near, none wise and none sensible, for all that kind of thing we count evil; but if any man is ignorant, if any man is wanting in sense and culture, if anybody is a fool, let him come boldly [to become a Christian]... We see them in their own houses, wool dresses, cobblers, the worst, the vulgarest, the most uneducated persons... They are like a swarm of bats or ants creeping out of their nest, or frogs holding a symposium around a swamp, or worms convening in mud.”*

My goal, my highest desire of this message is that every member of this church says, “Lord, when I have You, I have all that I need, and I want to be a vessel used by You to make disciples.”

### I. The People God Chooses to Use (1:26-28)

Here is the bottom line of this section of Scripture: God chooses people to accomplish his plans in such a way as to nullify human pride. **Luke 16:15b**, *“For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”*

*“It is a historical fact... that God chooses the foolish and weak. Anyone who wants to follow Christ must begin that way. You must begin by realizing that you will never find out how much God is till you realize how much you are not.”* Mark Dever

William Booth founder of the Salvation Army gave this testimony on his death bed. *“I deserve to be damned; I deserve to be in hell; but God interfered.”*

That phrase “things that are despised” means to be considered as nothing. The phrase “things which are not” translates one of the most contemptible put downs that could be uttered against another human being.

### II. The Glory That God Refuses to Share (1:29)

The reason that God chose not many worldly wise, mighty, or noble is so that no flesh should glory or boast in His presence. These people cannot be used of God unless they die to their own abilities and live in dependence on God. We must not glory before Him, only in Him!

### III. The Enabling God Freely Gives (1:30)

He unites us to Christ; He identifies us with Christ; He baptizes us into Christ and makes us a partaker of His very life. Paul reminds us of 4 things that are ours because we are in Christ.

#### A. Wisdom (Vs. 30a)

True wisdom has nothing to do with one’s IQ; Wisdom is the God enabled ability to see everything from God’s perspective! **Colossians 1:9b**, *“...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom...”* Only those “in Christ” have this capacity. **Colossians 2:3**, *“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* True wisdom comes only from Christ; He has a monopoly on true wisdom.

#### B. Righteousness (Vs. 30b)

Righteousness as it is used here is right standing with God. It is acceptance by God. **Philippians 3:9**, *“and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”.*

#### C. Sanctification (Vs. 30c)

This comes from the same root word as holiness. He is our holiness, our sanctification. The wisdom of Christ and righteousness from Christ works its way out into our life through holiness. **Romans 6:22** says, *“But now, since you have been liberated from sin and become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the end is eternal life!”*

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### D. Redemption (Vs. 30d)

The Greek word used here for redemption was a word used exclusively when someone purchased a slave from the slave market and then set them free.

There is also a future redemption of our bodies. **Romans 8:23**, “*Not only that, but we also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*” A summary of what verse 30 teaches is **Colossians 2:10a**, “*... and you are complete in Him...*”

### IV. The Boasting God Allows (1:31)

Paul says basically the same thing in **Galatians 6:14a**, “*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...*” God calls those the world calls nobodies so those nobodies can be transformed and in Christ have His wisdom, His righteousness, sanctification and redemption, to do His Kingdom work.

### V. The Illustration God Provides (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

Paul’s approach was counter cultural because itinerate teachers gathered a following with their worldly wisdom, eloquence, and education. Paul came as an ambassador, not as a statesman or a salesman. Paul is saying that he wanted nothing to detract from the message of the crucified, resurrected Savior.

Why the fear and trembling? His fear and trembling was over the possibility of striving to proclaim the gospel in his own power or to dilute it with eloquent speech and human wisdom.

Corinth was the center of immorality. In fact a new word had been coined to describe the worst kind of moral degeneracy was “corinthianize”. Nothing could touch and change these people but the power of God.

Some of the reasons we fail to launch out of our comfort zones to share the gospel, to get involved in ministries, is not that we are not skilled, or eloquent or educated enough, but those who have these human gifts have to die to them in order to not trust in them and then choose to continue with Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Verse 2 gives us insight into Paul’s motives for continuing with the central truth of Christ and Him crucified. If faith rested on the wisdom of men they might change intellectually, but they would not have had a heart change, a nature change. Only the clear and undiluted Gospel brings the power of God.

Charles Spurgeon put it this way: “*The power that is in the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls, nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the word of God to give it the power to convert the soul*”

### Conclusion:

We provide the willing vessel without eloquence, without stature in the world, without a great deal of human wisdom, and God provides the supernatural power to change lives and fulfill the ministry He calls us to. The result is that He gets all the glory. This is the mindset that we must have if we are to be a Kingdom focused church.