

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide
1 Corinthians 1:26-31

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing about the divisions within the church and how God's way of thinking is not like the world's way. In these verses, Paul is appealing to the Corinthians to reject the world's standards of wealth and boasting. While we can spend a lifetime accumulating knowledge and wealth from the world, it is useless without a personal relationship with Christ. Understanding and living out the gospel message will transcend us above the world's values!



In vv. 26-29, Paul writes, “Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish 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, things that are not, to abolish things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.” In other words, no amount of human effort or intellect can be a substitute for, or gloss over, Christ's work on the cross. This is our call to faith!

The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, “Paul's threefold repetition (*chose*) is rhetorical antistrophe (repeating a phrase at the end of a line...). Paul here develops the three examples from v. 26—the wise, the powerful and the honored aristocrats.” Also, we can see similar sentiment in verse 29 to that of Jeremiah 9:23. This sets up Paul's quoting Jeremiah 9:24 in verse 31.

In vv. 30-31, Paul writes, “In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” Salvation is accomplished from a crucified Christ, which is revealed to humble believers, those with faith like a child, (Luke 18:17) rather than the proud, wealthy and those that cling to the world's standard of value.

Questions to Consider

1. In verse 27, Paul writes of God choosing “...things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.” What does this mean? Why is this important?
2. Is there any way that we can *earn* our salvation? If not, what must we do?
3. How can we encourage and support one another to put our faith in Christ, rather than the ways of the world?