

First Corinthians 1:18-31

**The message of the apostle Paul—1:18-25**

- 1) A contrast between the two responses to the gospel message—1:18
  - a) On the one hand—it is viewed as *foolishness to those who are perishing*,
  - b) But on the other hand—to *us who are being rescued it is the power of God*.
- 2) An OT quote—1:19 (cf. Isaiah 29:14)
- 3) Four rhetorical questions concerning human experts—1:20
- 4) A comparison of types of wisdom—1:21-25
  - a) God's wisdom and pleasure—1:21
  - b) Three options—1:22-23 (cf. Matthew 12:38-39; John 4:48)
  - c) God's effective call to salvation—1:24
  - d) The final comparison—1:25
    - i) The lowest demonstration of God's wisdom and strength exceeds man's highest.

**The motive of God—1:26-31**

- 1) God's effective call viewed **negatively**—1:26 (cf. Jeremiah 9:23; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:10 LXX)
  - a) The wise—*not many wise according to the flesh*—few highly educated, experts
  - b) The influential —*not many mighty*—few wealthy, powerful, people in authority
  - c) The somethings—*not many born into privilege*—few high-status people
- 2) God's election viewed **positively**—1:27-28 *but God has selected for Himself ...* (3 x)  
(compare parallels to the 3 categories in 1:26)
  - a) The unwise—1:27a *the foolish of the world*—considered foolish or stupid (moron)
    - i) Why does God do this? *to shame/dishonor the wise*
  - b) The non-influential —1:27b *the weak things of the world*—considered inadequate, helpless
    - i) Why does God do this? *to shame/dishonor the strong*
  - c) The nothings—1:28
    - i) Who are they?
      - (1) <sup>28</sup> *and the insignificant of the world*—considered common; unimportant, literally “of no family”
      - (2) *and the despised*—considered to be of no value, rejected
      - (3) *and the things that are not*,—considered as non-existent in “important” circles
    - ii) Why does God do this? *to nullify/deprive the things that are*
- 3) Why does God do this?—1:29-31
  - a) Answer # 1—1:29 (cf. Ephesians 2:9)
  - b) God's doing regarding our self-identity and self-definition—1:30 <sup>30</sup> *But of Him you<sup>pl</sup> are in Christ Jesus, who became to us ...*
    - i) *wisdom from God*—wise from God's perspective, not man's
    - ii) The fruit of God's wisdom
      - (1) *and righteousness*—acceptable to God's standard
      - (2) *and being set apart*—dedicated for God's purpose
      - (3) *and redemption*—paid God's price to liberate us from slavery to sin to serve God and His people
  - c) Answer # 2—1:31 (cf. Jeremiah 9:24)

**Take-home truth:** Everyone (regardless of ability, influence, or position) stands empty before God. God's grace can reach anyone.