

Boast in the Lord

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Preacher: Colin Horne

[0 : 0 0] And take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and we're reading tonight from verse 26 to the end of the chapter.

1 Corinthians 1, 26. For consider your calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise according to worldly 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, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

[1 : 1 6] Amen. Well, if you know nothing about diamonds, like me, then you might mistake a rough diamond for just a common, ordinary stone.

A rough diamond isn't all that impressive. It's dull. It looks like a pale glass color. And you might mistake that for a common stone, not knowing that it's actually worth thousands of dollars.

But a cut diamond, one that has gone through that process of being shaped and polished and all sorts of other steps, that cut stone brings out the brilliance and the beauty of that diamond.

You can turn that diamond and from the many facets you see, you can look upon and marvel at the beauty of that cut diamond. The higher the quality of the cut, the more that we marvel and that we appreciate the beauty of it.

Well, God's wisdom is like an intricately cut diamond. Many different facets that as we look at it and see it from different angles, we can appreciate and we can marvel at God's wisdom on display.

[2 : 3 2] We've already seen one way that God displays his wisdom here in 1 Corinthians. And there's three more to come. Tonight, we're looking at the second one. So the first wisdom of God put on display being in the word of the cross.

Last week, we saw God's wisdom in that, or you could say we heard it in the message of the cross, a crucified Messiah. Foolish to the world.

But in reality, it is God's wisdom on display. Well, this week, we're going to look at the second display of God's wisdom. And it comes from a bit of an unexpected place.

God's wisdom displayed in us, the church. We are God's wisdom shown to the world. We are God's wisdom shown to the heavenly places.

Listen to Paul in Ephesians 3. He says that the church is God's manifold wisdom, God's multifaceted wisdom, that it might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

[3 : 39] So the people of God are one of the ways that God displays his wisdom. This is what Paul is focusing on in our verses here this evening.

And he begins with a command for us. He says, consider your calling. Or your translation might say, think of what you were when you were called.

Here is that often repeated theme in the book of 1 Corinthians, our calling. You might think that I sound a bit like a broken record. We keep talking about this as we work our way through 1 Corinthians.

Well, yes, we do, because Paul keeps talking about it too. We've had four sermons here in 1 Corinthians. And in three of those sermons, somewhere in our passage, Paul makes reference to our being called or our calling.

It's a significant theme. We can't overlook it. If you are in Christ, you have been called by God. It's that idea of being effectually drawn by him who powerfully works in you.

[4 : 49] It's through this effectual calling that we are regenerated, that we are brought to spiritual life by a God who raises the dead. Just as he raised Christ from the dead, he raises us spiritually from the dead to newness of life.

And from then, we repent of our sins and we believe in Christ for salvation. So we've seen this calling over and over again, just in chapter 1 alone.

We have been summoned to salvation by our God. We've been called. We need now to consider that calling in even more detail. Now to do that, Paul is actually going to make us first think about the past, and then he's also going to make us look forward as well as we think about our salvation.

So to understand our calling, he first says, now let's consider actually you're being chosen. Paul says this many times in the passage, God chose.

God chose what is foolish, verse 27. God chose what is weak. God chose what is low. We might have expected Paul to say, God called what is foolish, but he doesn't.

[5 : 58] He draws this connection between our calling and God's choosing. He's helping us to see that those who are called have been chosen. There's this logical progression.

We call it the order of salvation, that unbreakable chain. And it begins not with God calling you. It begins with God choosing you, with God setting his love on you.

Or to use Paul's words from Romans chapter 8, it begins with God foreknowing you. Romans 8, beginning in verse 29. For those whom he foreknew, or you could say chose, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. So when we consider our calling, we need to start from the beginning.

That's what Paul is doing here in 1 Corinthians. We see God choosing. And then we see what he summons us to.

[7 : 17] We see what he calls us to in verse 30. That's what verse 30 is teaching us. It says, So God calls us, having chosen us in eternity past, he calls us into this saving relationship with Christ Jesus by grace through faith so that our sins are forgiven and our innocence is declared.

He calls us in order that we might then be justified. That's what he's talking about in verse 30. Now we're looking at our justification. So he says, Consider your calling. Then he works backwards in verse 27.

And then he kind of jumps forward in the order of salvation in verse 30. But he's helping us to see the fullness of our salvation. Those he called, he also justifies.

So we are justified, meaning we're in right standing with God. We're on good terms with God. We are declared righteous in God's sight. Not because of a righteousness of our own, even as we sang, but because of the righteousness of Christ.

Because we are in Christ. So we've started even just looking kind of at different bits and pieces of our passage. But do we see the wonder of our salvation here? All of our salvation from God choosing to God calling to God justifying, putting you in Christ Jesus, bringing you from outside of Christ in.

[8 : 47] It's all of God's grace. It's all because of him. You are now in Christ Jesus. And then Paul continues in verse 30.

And he continues to describe to us how it is that we are in Christ. And he says, he became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification, or your translation might say holiness and redemption.

So this verse is saying that what you lacked, what you most needed, Christ has. What you didn't have, Christ indeed had all that you needed.

You brought nothing to earn your justification. So what did God do so that you would be justified? Or what did God do so that you would be in Christ?

In his wisdom, he credited the righteousness of Christ. He credited, he gave the holiness of Christ. The redemption only found in Christ.

[9 : 53] He credited his righteousness to you. He credited it to your account. He imputed it. He transferred it. He considered you what Christ was.

You needed what Christ has. You and I had no righteousness of our own. We had no holiness of our own. We had nothing to redeem ourselves with.

No ability to purchase our freedom from sin. You needed what Christ has. So in God's choosing of you and calling you to salvation, he gave you everything that you needed for that salvation.

And he gave it to you in Christ. So do we see God's wisdom on display? In Christ. We owe our salvation, not to our own efforts, but to a gracious God who called us.

We are in Christ because of him who called us to himself. So that's the calling that Paul is getting at here. And I know that was a rather lengthy introduction, but now we get into a couple questions to ask of the text tonight.

[10 : 59] Consider your calling. Have you done that? Have you considered your calling? Paul gives us two ways to do that tonight. First by considering who called us, or first by considering who was called, and then by considering why we were called.

So let's look first at who. God chose us as nobodies. We see that in verse 26. For consider your calling, brothers.

Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. Paul doesn't mince words here.

He doesn't coddle the Corinthians. Paul doesn't let them live in kind of their imaginary world of self-importance. He snaps them back to reality, and he does it by way of comparison.

Now we may have heard it said before. Comparison is the thief of joy. There's certainly some truth to that, but here Paul is encouraging comparison.

[12 : 07] That's maybe a little surprising at first. He's encouraging the Corinthians to compare themselves to human standards of success.

He's saying consider your calling using the world's standards. He's not even addressing God's perfect standards that no ordinary human being could meet. He's giving an even lower bar.

He's saying look at yourselves compared to the standards of the world. Because even that standard will serve as a reality check. You're not as successful.

You're not as accomplished as you think. Because remember, that's what the Corinthians were after. They wanted to increase their social standing. And they wanted to increase their place in society.

Their goal was to be respected. Their goal was to be esteemed. And what were they doing to earn that, to get there? They were associating themselves with those church leaders.

[13 : 08] Church leaders weren't even asking for it. They didn't even know perhaps that the church was doing this. But the Corinthians were saying, I follow Apollos. And Apollos, he's an esteemed, influential, respected man in the church.

And so because I follow him, I too should have that kind of standing. I too should gain influence and respect. Because remember, in the Greco-Roman world, your status was tied up in who you knew.

So Paul is just dumping this cold bucket of water onto the Corinthians. Enough of this nonsense about who you follow. Even if worldly standards mattered, and they don't.

But even if we did create some kind of pecking order based on these worldly standards of wisdom and power and strength, even if we did this, many of you are nothing special anyways.

This is ridiculous. Look at yourself. Make an honest assessment. Paul is saying some of you have wealth. Some of you hold positions of power and influence.

[14 : 19] Some of you are esteemed, perhaps, by the world because of those things. God certainly can and does save those of higher standing in society.

But Paul is saying to the Corinthians, most of you aren't that. Most of you aren't the somebodies of the world. Most of you are nobodies in the world's eyes.

How is that for Paul making the Corinthians feel special about themselves? In a world that loves to talk about self-esteem, Paul has nothing that he wants to do with that.

He's saying, Corinthians, you are plain, ordinary people. He didn't get the memo when it comes to this inundation of positive self-talk in our society.

Paul shoots them straight. Nothing all that remarkable about you. Or maybe your translation says here, human standards. According to human standards.

[15 : 16] The word there could even more simply be translated as flesh. That just means when it comes to man's natural way of thinking, when it comes to man's natural way of evaluating, you Corinthians don't measure up even to that.

You aren't the movers and the shakers of the world. Your names aren't known far and wide. That sounds a little bit like most of us, doesn't it? As far as I know, we don't have any celebrities in our church.

As far as I know, we don't have any social media influencers. We don't have people with great power in society. We don't have people with significant status. For the most part, we're ordinary, common people.

We're not name-dropping anyone in our church. We aren't movers and shakers. We live in northern Indiana. Enough said. Nobody's impressed when they hear, you're from northern Indiana.

That screams ordinary according to human standards. That's us. Nothing to impress. Nothing to wow. Easily overlooked.

[16 : 26] We aren't making headlines anytime soon. Nobody's in the world. And that is totally fine. Because God, in his choosing, in his calling, doesn't care about the world's standards of greatness.

In fact, he actually makes a habit of going against the grain of that. For us who are in Christ here tonight, God chose us.

God calls us. We are proof of that. And doesn't God love to do this? Doesn't God love to set his love on the least likely? Think about the nation of Israel.

When he chose Israel, was his rationale for choosing them because he saw greatness in them? Was there something about Israel that just drew him that he could not help himself but say, I have to choose them because they will win me great honor in the sight of others?

No, it's just the opposite. Deuteronomy 7.7 says, So God chose Israel.

[17 : 43] Not because they were great in number, which also implies great in power, great in influence, great in status. And not because they were great, not even because they were just average.

He chose them because they were the least among the peoples. If anybody was a nobody, it was the nation of Israel. That's the pattern with our God.

That's his M.O. He chooses. He calls. He justifies. He redeems. He brings into the fellowship of his Son, 1 Corinthians 1.9, those that the world would easily write off.

Those that the world would overlook. Pass them by. We'll find greatness in someone else. Well, that's the first way that we can consider our calling. Who God chose.

God chose us as nobodies. Now let's turn to the second way that we can consider our calling. Why God chose us as nobodies. And it's a two-fold purpose.

[18 : 48] God chose us as nobodies to shame and to showcase. He chose us as nobodies to shame the somebodies of the world. And he chose us as nobodies to showcase his glory to the world.

And we see that as we continue reading in verse 27. 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. Even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are. So that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

And then we read again in verse 31. So that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. So the truth is set before us here.

God shames the somebodies. God showcases his glory. He uses nobodies to do that. Can we get an example of that from God's word? How about we look at the disciples?

[19 : 50] Think of the disciples. Twelve entirely ordinary men. Several of them are fishermen. None of them are great orators of their day.

None of them are from the upper class of society. Matthew perhaps was wealthy, but not as one respected in society. He didn't get his wealth in ways that even the world would look at in esteem.

He was a tax collector. He cheated people out of their money. He wasn't going to win the popularity contest even in the world. And yet, it was through these ordinary men that God did extraordinary things.

Through these men that God shamed the somebodies. It was through these men that God showcased his glory. Through these men he confounded the somebodies of the world.

He left them speechless. We see this in Acts chapter 3. A lame beggar is brought to Peter and to John. Peter looks at him.

[20 : 52] And how does he start? In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Not in the name of Peter. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Rise up and walk.

And then this miraculous healing leads to Peter proclaiming the gospel message. The sign authenticating the message of the gospel. Peter says, You killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead.

To this we are witnesses. And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you see and know. And the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Now as Peter and John are speaking to the people, the religious leaders show up. They arrest John and Peter. And they drag them before the religious leaders, the high priests, the religious council.

And what does Peter do? Filled with the Holy Spirit, he preaches to them. And as they hear him, verse 13 says, Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.

[22 : 01] Here are these ordinary men. And they confound the religious leaders. And then verse 14 says, But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

They're left speechless. The disciples, ordinary men, here they are standing before men that are considered special in society. The high priest, the religious council, the high priestly family.

Here they are standing before the somebodies of the world in Jerusalem. The powerful, the influential, the strong. And these common men left the great men speechless.

They're astonished. They have nothing to say in opposition. They're put to shame. And what else do we see? God's glory put on display.

Here was the man who had been healed. He's standing beside the disciples. Clear evidence. God has been at work. And what does Peter say about this man?

[23 : 07] Does he take the credit for it? Does he say, Yeah, I healed this guy. I'm pretty great. I'm a somebody. Maybe I should be on this religious council instead of you guys. No, he doesn't draw any attention to himself.

He doesn't boast in the healing of the man. He says back in verse 10, Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Who does Peter in that sense boast in? Who does he point the people to and say, He deserves the credit? Not himself, not John, not any of the other ordinary disciples.

He boasts in the Lord. By his work, this man is healed. God glorified through the testimony of a man who is considered a simple fisherman.

[24 : 19] No matter how hard the high and mighty try to silence ordinary followers of Christ to hinder the church, God is at work. His kingdom continues to advance.

It won't be stopped. His church will be built. And he uses nobodies like the disciples, like us, to advance it.

So do you recognize yourself for who you are? Chosen by God. Called by God. And not because you offered something great to him, but because he delighted to set his love on you.

He delighted to display his glory through you, in saving you. And perhaps in the world's eyes, you and I aren't much to talk about.

If we understand who we are, our boasting won't be in ourselves. But we will boast. It'll just be pointed in the right direction. We have reason to boast.

[25 : 22] That is for sure. But not in ourselves. Because what does Paul say back in 1 Corinthians? Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Our boast is in him. Now maybe you're sitting here tonight, and perhaps, according to the world's standards, which ultimately don't matter, but perhaps according to the world's standards, you would be classified as a somebody.

We've been talking about how we're nobodies. But perhaps, the world would look at you and say, you're well off. You're wise. You're powerful. Living in America.

Many of those titles would fit us as people. So what do we do with that? What if you are a somebody, according to the world? Do you have reason to boast?

Jeremiah 9 says, we don't. And guess where Paul is quoting from, when he says, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. Jeremiah 9. Let's get a little context from that passage.

[26 : 25] Beginning in verse 23. Thus says the Lord, let not the wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might.

Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who boasts, boast in this, that he understands and knows me. That I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things, I delight, declares the Lord. So maybe you are a somebody, as the world evaluates standards of greatness or success.

Maybe you're wise. Maybe you're wealthy. Maybe you have influence and authority in this world. Where is your boast? Because just like the nobodies, for the somebodies, the boast is in the same place.

It's in the Lord. Jeremiah 9 says, God doesn't delight in those things that the world would boast in. Or you might say, unlike the world, God is not all that impressed with those things.

[27 : 32] That's fine. You certainly can be a CEO of a successful company, or have a building named after you, or a following on social media.

And you can honor the Lord in those things. It simply comes down to this. Where is your boast? Who do you boast in? Is it in any of those things, or is it in the Lord?

Because if you are wise, or wealthy, or influential, what do you have that wasn't given to you by the Lord? So whether you are a nobody according to the world's standards, or whether you are a somebody, nobody gets off the hook.

Even here in 1 Corinthians, we all have reason to boast in one, and that is in the Lord. And I love how Jeremiah 9 says it. Jeremiah 9 says, in knowing the Lord.

And there's that intimate knowledge of God, that relationship. I boast not just in the Lord, but I boast in knowing Him, and that He knows me. For us who are in Christ, He called us to Himself.

[28 : 40] He chose us in eternity past. He justified us, not based on our righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. And our boast then is in knowing Him, and that He would set His love on us.

So consider your calling. Think rightly about it, and very quickly, you will look away from yourself. In a really strange, ironic way, if we rightly understand ourselves, we'll end up saying something of what the world says about us.

I'm really nothing to look at. I'm really nobody. That's what the world says. I echo that. But I do have someone to point the world to. I do have someone to boast in.

It's just not me. I boast in the Lord. We look at Him. We say, look to Him, not to me. Look at this great God who's done a supernatural work in me. So we have no words of praise for ourselves, but we have endless words of praise for God.

Listen to Psalm 71, verse 23. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You. My soul also, which You have redeemed. And my tongue will talk of Your righteous help all the day long.

[29 : 56] Meaning, I'm going to make known God's righteous help. I'm going to boast of what God has done. Or how about Psalm 44? You are my King, O God.

Ordain salvation for Jacob. Through You we push down our foes. Through Your name we tread down those who rise up against us. For not in my bow do I trust. Or you could say, not in my might.

Not in my sword, nor can my sword save me. But You have saved me from our foes and have put to shame those who hate us. In God we have boasted continually and we will give thanks to Your name forever.

If we consider our calling rightly, we will have no other boast except in the Lord. So what an encouragement that is to us. We're nobodies and God chose us.

We're nobodies that God then uses to shame the world and its wisdom. We're nobodies that God uses to showcase His glory. How that should embolden us just like the disciples in the book of Acts.

[31 : 06] To speak the truth. To proclaim the good news of the gospel. To proclaim the message that the world says is folly. The word of the cross. A crucified Messiah. We have God's wisdom shown in the message.

We have God's wisdom shown even in us. We are a living, breathing example of God's marvelous works. Not our works, but His.

So do you believe that God is doing this kingdom work today? Shaming the wisdom of the world. Showcasing His glory.

Doing it through ordinary people like us. It can be easy to look around and to say, boy, it doesn't seem like God is doing this marvelous work.

It doesn't seem like God is showcasing His glory. Those who oppose God seem to go on in their way unopposed by God. Is He really showcasing His glory?

[32 : 08] I hear that word showcase and I can't help but think of the game show The Price is Right. At the end of that game show, it's called The Showcase. You've got those two contestants and they both get to bid on this prize package of incredible vacation destinations and new cars and random exercise equipment.

And the curtain is closed. And there's this anticipation that builds. And the curtain bursts open. And what's the people's response to what they see?

They're shouting for joy. They're jumping up and down. Their mouths are gaping. They've got their hands over their mouths. They can't believe what they've seen. It makes sense that they would call The Showcase the showcase.

Now consider that the world is on this show. The world is on the showcase. And the curtain is closed. And then the curtain's opened. And standing there behind the curtain is us.

Just smiling. Waving. Just ordinary looking people to the world's eyes. What's the world's reaction to that? Probably not jumping up and down for joy.

[33 : 15] Probably saying, I'll pass on this showcase and let the other guy bid on it. Right? But that's what the world sees. The world sees foolishness. The world says, nothing special here.

But how far from the truth that is. The world says, really, you? God chose you? And somehow this showcases His glory?

And we gladly say, yes! Look at how weak we are. Look at how helpless we are. Look at how needy we are. God takes what is weak in the world's eyes and He shows His strength.

God takes what is foolish in the world's eyes and He uses it to show Himself wise. Isn't that true of us? In saving us?

In sustaining us? God is showing forth His wisdom, His strength, His might. We are glad to be put forward as examples.

[34 : 14] Not examples of how great we are, but of how great God is. It's just as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11.30, If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

And then he goes on in chapter 12 and he says, He'll boast all the more gladly of His weaknesses. Really? Gladly? Why would you boast gladly of your weaknesses?

Then he tells us, so that the power of Christ may rest on Him. Our boast is in the Lord. Even when the world looks at us, sees foolishness.

Even when the world fails to see God's glory on display. Because one day, the world will see it. One day, every eye will see God's glory in all of its brilliance, in all of its fullness.

One day, those who trusted in themselves, in their own wisdom, their own power, those who refused to submit to God and bow the knee to Him in humble obedience, they will be brought to utter shame.

[35 : 26] Every wrong will be made right. The record will be set straight. The world will be put to shame and God's glory will be seen. It will be undeniable then.

Men may make little of God now. Men may scoff at the thought of Him, spurn the message of the cross. They may chuckle at the people of God. They may boast in themselves.

They may say, look at my power, look at my might, look at my riches. I have no need for God. And you are a fool if you think that you do. But on the day of Christ's return, all of that boasting in oneself will be fully and finally brought to nothing.

One day, the world will say wow, but not in giddy excitement like a contestant on a game show. The world will say wow as they tremble with fear when God's glory is realized in all of its fullness when they see that God is a consuming fire.

Are you ready for that day? Are you still looking at God's people, looking at God's message of the cross and saying eh, not much to see here.

[36 : 47] Not that great. Not that glorious. Are you still finding reason to boast in yourself? One day you will stand before God to give an account.

And on that day, what good will your status in this world or your wealth or your power be? What good will they do you? You boast in them now. You think highly of yourself now.

There will come a day of reckoning before God. And God will say I delight in none of those things. So turn away from those things. Turn to Christ even this very evening.

See the wisdom of God in the message of the cross, the crucified Messiah. See the wisdom of God even in the people of God who are sitting around you tonight and trust in the one who can save you from your sins.

He alone is worthy of your boast. Not one of us rich or poor, powerful or weak, wise or foolish according to the world's standards.

[37 : 50] Not one of us has reason to boast in ourselves. So brothers and sisters, consider your calling. And with glad hearts, let's boast all the more in our weaknesses for then God shows forth his strength to his glory.

Amen. A doxology from Romans chapter 16. Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ.

Amen.