"To GOD be the GLORY!"

(God specializes in transforming "Nobodies" & "Nothings")

I Corinthians 1:26-31

1-29-2023

Introduction:

God can take someone the world views as a "<u>nobody</u>" and make a somebody out of him! ... He can take something the world views as "<u>nothing</u>" and make something out of it!

Why?

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

I. To <u>display</u> His <u>wisdom</u> & <u>power</u>(v.24-26)

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

II. To <u>shame</u> the wisdom of this <u>world</u>(v.27-28)

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

III. To <u>strip</u> man of his <u>proud boasting</u>(v.29)

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

IV. To <u>glorify</u> His Son -- Jesus Christ(v.30)

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

V. To <u>fulfill</u> His <u>Word</u>(v.31)

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I Corinthians 1:26-31

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Introduction:

The Corinthians' main problem was "I" trouble. "I am this; I can do that; I am better than you are" etc.

They were "*puffed up*" with pride (I Cor. 4:6, 18-19; 5:2).

In these first three chapters, Paul deflates their pride and elevates, magnifies, and exalts God.

Note the previous context:

In verses 17-25, the Apostle Paul portrayed the message of God ("*the preaching of the cross*" - v. 18) as being weak in men's eyes, but mighty in God's eyes.

Now in verses 26-31, he portrays the people of God as being weak in the world's eyes, but blessed in God's eyes.

Continuing with the intention to deflate the Corinthians' vain pride and to humble those who glory in men, Paul shows the type of people God saves and uses for His glory.

God not only has a message the unsaved, perishing world regards as "*foolish*" (v. 18, 21, 23, 25), but He also has messengers they mighty view as foolish.

God not only has a gospel the godless, unconverted, lost, pagan world would disregard, but He has a people that often don't add up to much in the world's estimation.

God is not desperately "looking for millionaires or famous athletes or entertainers or statesmen" as if He needed their money, fame, fortune, or talent to get His work done!

The Lord specializes in converting simple folk, common people, the under-privileged, the down-and-outers, the project kids, and other looked-down-upon

groups.

Some might say: "That's because they are the only ones dumb enough to believe the Bible."

No, actually, they are the only ones humble enough to believe!

Jesus said, "*I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes.*" (Mt. 11:25).

God delights in taking a Sarah who could not bear children and making her the mother of one of the largest races on earth (Gen. 18:14, 32:12)

God delights in taking a humble slave like Joseph and elevating him second to Pharaoh over Egypt (Gen. 41:38-44).

God delights in enlisting 300 soldiers of Gideon to fight and conquer 120,000 Mideanites (Jud. 7:2, 7, 12; 8:10) (NOTE: 400 to 1 odds).

God delights in utilizing a Samson to destroy 1,000 wicked Philistines with a jawbone of a donkey (Jud. 15:16).

God delights in using a red-headed, freckle-faced, baby-faced (I Sam. 17:42) shepherd boy named David to wipe out a 9'9" fully armored Philistine named Goliath (I Sam. 17).

God delights in providing adequate food for a poor widow of Zarephath who only had a few drops of oil and a handful of grain (I Ki. 17:9ff).

God delights in using three Hebrew youths to show up King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan. 3).

God delights in using as His mouthpiece a John the Baptist, "who had no formal education, no training in a trade or profession, no money, no military rank, no political position, no social pedigree, no impressive appearance (or diet!)" (MacArthur, p. 51). Yet Jesus said, "*Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist*" (Mt. 11:11).

God delights in taking a boy's lunch consisting of two sardines and five bite-size biscuits to feed 5,000 men besides women and children (Mt. 14:17-19).

"Little is much when God is in it." -- Conversely, much is little, if God is not in it!

God delights in taking unlearned, ignorant, dumb fishermen from Galilee and turning them into the most bold and influential mortals ever to spread the Gospel message (Acts 4:13).

**God can take someone the world views as a "<u>nobody</u>" and make a somebody out of him! ... He can take something the world views as "<u>nothing</u>" and make something out of it!*

Why?

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

I. To <u>display</u> His <u>wisdom</u> & <u>power</u>(v.24-26)

V. 26

"Your calling" *(klesin)* - speaking of God's calling to salvation (an efficacious calling here). God calls people to salvation via the Gospel (v. 23-24).

The church (*ekklesia)* is the whole company of "called out ones."

"Not many" - He does not say "not any" but rather "not many" -- because few of the proud, intelligencia, humanistic, worldly philosophers end up getting saved.

Reason: They are too stuck on their own egotistical ideas and world views. They think they are too smart for God and Bible Christianity (Rom. 1:21-22 - *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,")*.

"Not many wise men" - It is uncommon today to see a secular university professor become a born-again Christian. It is rare in our day to find a Ph.D. who is serious about digging into God's Word.

"Wise men after the flesh" - Paul purposely qualifies who he is referring to, because he does not want to confuse Godly "wise men" with fleshly, worldly, carnal "wise" men.

There is a wisdom which is from <u>above</u> and a wisdom from below (Ja. 3:15-16). God refers to the wisdom that is <u>not</u> from above as being "*earthly, sensual, devilish*" (Ja. 3:15).

"Mighty" - Those who are powerful or influential among the world. It is sparse to find saved, sanctified, surrendered and serving, men and women who are influential in the political world, commercial world, financial world, etc.

"Noble" - lit. "good birth, well born" I.e. to be born into a family of notoriety

(EX: to be born into a royal family, or a family of a king or queen).

When was the last time you heard of a prince or princess or king or queen's child turning their country right-side-up for Christ?

God is not impressed with man's knowledge ("*wise*"), influence ("*mighty*"), or rank ("*noble*").

Paul's description of many Corinthians certainly was not a flattering one (I Cor. 6:9-11).

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

II. To shame the wisdom of this world(v.27-28)

V. 27

"God hath chosen" - God is sovereign; He has deliberately chosen not to do things man's way.

Take, for example, the humble birth of Christ:
--a lineage of sinners (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth)
--a poor family (Mary & Joseph)
--a little insignificant town, Bethlehem, and then Nazareth
"Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem" (cp. Micah 3:5)
"*Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" (Jn. 1:4b)
--a humble beginning on earth
"*no room in the inn*" (Lk. 2:7)
"*stable...manger*" (Lk. 2:12)
--a humble life and ministry

"Foolish things of the world" - not foolish things, but foolish things by the world's standards

No doubt one reason why God uses neuter nouns (hence the word "*things*"), is because He not only is referring to the men God utilizes, but also the means God utilizes (He uses a plan of salvation or a Gospel that men view as foolish, weak, base, despised, nothing-- and with it puts to shame those who are perishing - cp. v. 19).

"Confound" - to put to shame. The lost world is put to shame, as they see how their rehab. programs, psychiatric expertise, social reform programs, etc., fail to do what the Gospel of Christ does.

"The wise of this world cannot understand how God changes sinners into saints" (Wiersbe, p. 571), losers into winners, "gutterballs into strikes," delinquent teenagers into successful citizens, broken homes into model families.

"The weak things"- The people who are without human power

God blesses those of little strength with golden opportunities. Jesus said to the church of Philadelphia, "*I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*" (Rev. 3:8)

The lost world admires social status, fame, fortune, and power. But none of these things impress God.

Don't ever despise (belittle) a person who does not have much in their world! Don't be partial to those whom the world elevates (Ja. 2:1ff).

V. 28

***"Base"* =** lowly, humble. I.e. not of noble birth. Those viewed as insignificant.

"Despised" - That which has a reputation of being considered "nothing." (Note: the perfect tense of this participle "indicates that that which was once despised will continue to be despised" - Grosheide, cited by Reinecker, p. 389).

Things have changed, but sinful mankind's values of what is desirable and good have not.

* Should churches move to the suburbs when neighborhoods change?

God delights to choose those called fools to put to shame those who the world thinks are wise; He delights to choose the weak to embarrass the strong with victory.

He delights to choose the lowlies and the nothings to bring to nothing the those who are "it" in this world.

God chooses the ***"base"*** (those without family or heritage), the ***"despised"*** (men in low condition, whom the rich and noble look upon with contempt), and the ***"things which are not"*** (those who are entirely overlooked as though they had no existence). (C. Hodge, p. 25-26).

If God were to root for a sports team, He no doubt would pull for the underdog.

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

III. To <u>strip</u> man of his <u>proud boasting</u>(v.29)

"That no flesh should glory in His presence" - God pulls down all pomp, pride, and arrogance, with the result that no mortal, frail, finite, carnal man or woman would have grounds for bragging or boasting in front of Him.

When we glory in men (like the Corinthians were doing), we rob God of the glory He alone deserves.

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

IV. To <u>glorify</u> His Son -- Jesus Christ(v.30)

"Of <u>Him</u>" - Your salvation is solely due to God; you are not converted because you are wiser, better, or more diligent than others (C. Hodge, p. 26).

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus" - It is out of the sovereign plan of God the Father that you have a refuge, salvation, and relationship in Christ.

No one would be in Christ outside of God taking the initiative and drawing us to Christ (Jn. 6:44).

Who gets the credit that you are "*in Christ Jesus?*" God does.

God's plan of salvation is one of <u>grace</u>, not works (Ti. 3:5; Eph. 2:8); He by His grace has "*blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places <u>in Christ</u>*" (Eph. 3:3).

Thanks be to God that Christ is our:

1) Wisdom(spiritual intelligence)
2) Righteousness(spiritual sinlessness)
3) Sanctification (spiritual separateness)
4) Redemption (spiritual freedom)

"Wisdom" - spiritual perception and insight which produces skillful living.

You are "plugged into" true wisdom when Christ is your Savior. You are illuminated (Heb. 10:32) or enlightened (Eph. 1:18; Heb. 6:4) via your union to Christ.

If my wisdom comes from Christ, what do I have to brag about?

In Christ "*dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*" (Col. 2:9).

In Him are "*hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (Col. 2:3)

"*No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him*" (Jn. 1:18).

The greatest wisdom is to know God, and you cannot know Him without knowing the Son.

"Righteousness" - You are right (just) in the sight of God because of your relationship to Christ.

We are "justified" (or "just as if we had never sinned" - Rom. 5:1) because of our connection to the perfect One - Jesus Christ.

II Cor. 5:21 - "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*"

If you were saved by your righteous acts and character (Rom. 3:28), you would have grounds for boasting. But since it is because of Christ's righteousness, He gets the credit.

"Sanctification" - The day you were married to Jesus Christ, was the day He set you apart from the world to belong only to Him.

Your positional holiness (set-apartness) is not manufactured by your efforts to scrub your life clean, but by His imputed purity that was given to you via your oneness with Him.

--We don't make ourselves saints, He has made us saints.

--Saints are not born, they are born again!

"Redemption" - To purchase in order to free or liberate from bondage; to buy back so as to release us from sin, Satan, and suffering.

The price paid to free us was <u>not</u> a price we paid or could pay; it was a price Jesus paid with His own blood.

Gal. 3:13 - "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*"

I Pet. 1:18 - "*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, form your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.*"

Rev. 5:9 - "*And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.*"

"Redemption" not only refers to our present deliverance from sin but also to the future <u>rapture</u> which is called the "*day of redemption*" (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14, 4:30; Heb. 9:12).

Because Christ is our "*righteousness*",
we have victory over the <u>penalty</u> of sin.
Because He is our "*sanctification,*"
we can have daily victory over the <u>power</u> of sin,
And because He is our "*redemption,*"
one day we have total victory over the very <u>presence</u> of sin!

All the glory should to go Jesus, not us. "*He must increase...*" Cp. I Cor. 4:7.

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

V. To <u>fulfill</u> His <u>Word</u>(v.31)

When it comes to salvation, we can brag; but <u>not</u> on ourselves. We can only brag on the Lord, because He did it, not us!

Paul said in Gal. 6:14, "*May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

"*Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the*

mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

How often do you sincerely brag about the Lord? When was the last time you publicly praised Him for what He has done to accomplish your salvation?

Conclusion:
Be willing to be nothing in the world's eyes, so that God can make you something.

The Touch of the Master's Hand

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile.
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar, a dollar. Then two! Only two?
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"

"Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
Going for three…" But no,
From the room, far back, a grey-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loosened strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet,
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,

Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.
"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once; three thousand, twice,
And going and gone," said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand.
What changed its worth?" Swift came the reply:
"The touch of the Master's hand."
And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd
Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine,
A game — and he travels on.
He is "going" once, and "going" twice,
He's "going" and almost "gone."
But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that is wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.