

First Corinthians 1st. 26th

"For ye see your calling, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called!" —

In the epistles to the Corinthians, & especially in the first, the design of the Apostle evidently was to ^{establish his} ~~prove~~ his right to the character of an Apostle called to the work by Christ himself to reprove the disorders & schisms which ^{then} prevailed in the ^{Church at Corinth} Corinthian Church and disprove the slanderous allegations and ^{heretical} false doctrines alleged and inculcated by false teachers.

That these allegations, ^{and doctrines,} equally false and preposterous, were, we learn chiefly from the Apostle's mastery refutation of them. From this it would appear that these Heresarchs taught, and the Corinthians believed that however pure was the morality of the gospel, however sublime its doctrines

and salutary its precepts as taught by the
Apostle Paul yet it stood in need of the
embellishments of Rhetoric and ^{the} aids
of Philosophy in order to its being accept-
able and ^{of course} consequently beneficial to the
wise, the mighty and the noble. —

say more - But at least of these false
Apostles had asserted that the ^{Paul} Apostle
was in an error respecting some important
doctrines such as the resurrection of the
body and the necessity of abstaining from
leascentiousness practices such as intemperance
~~and she could not be~~ ^{and goes leascentiousness} and that there
~~and debauchery~~ ^{and} ~~intemperate~~ ^{intemperate} intemperate
that the Apostle, however sound his
theology might be, did not possess the
inheritance the talents the eloquence nor the
address requisite to give him the influ-
ence which he ~~claimed~~ ^{among the public and pious}
~~which he alleged~~ ^{persecuted Christians at Corinth} in the church ~~at~~
at Corinth. —

An reply to all this the Apostle urges an appeal
to facts - He proves his being a called apostle
from having done the works of an apostle

The truth of his doctrine by its salutary effects and the propriety of his manner of teaching by from the command of ^{Christ} God "who" says he "sent me to preach the gospel not with wisdom of ~~speech~~ ^{words} lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. — And here he appeals directly to the experience of the Corinthians themselves — challenges them to bring their own knowledge of facts to bear on the subject — to institute a comparison between the effects produced by the foolishness of preaching as these false teachers and apostate Corinthians contemptuously called it and the learned disquisitions and elegant harangues of the most subtle and acute Philosophers — shews that though the world in all its boasted wisdom did not (and from the length and fairness of the experiment it may doubtless be concluded that it could not) know God it had pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe — Of this fact the calling of those to whom he was writing was indubitable evidence — "Ye see your calling brethren

that not many wise men after the flesh
not many mighty not many noble — are
called — ~~or called~~ ~~ye~~. The last clause
is supplied by the translators — with how much
propriety will appear perhaps in the sequel
"Ye see your calling brethren" — or imper-
atively — "consider your calling brethren"

The word calling is used to express the
invitation which through ^{the} preaching of
the word God gives to men to come and
partake of the blessings which flow from
Christ through the gospel. — It is here
taken in its most extended sense — ~~not only~~
to designate, ^{not only} the invitation but ^{also} the ~~character~~
effects of that invitation on those who had
accepted it ~~on~~ the character of the
heralds by whom it was given and
perhaps the previous character of those
to whom it was given. I say perhaps
for though there can be no doubt but
that this last is included in the meaning
of the term generally — yet it is I think
not quite so certain that any such
sense was by the apostle designed to be
attached to it in the passage under consideration.

The Apostles argument in illustration of which
the text is introduced is evidently this - The
wisdom of and eloquence of ^{statesman &} Philosophers have
been fairly tried - Their effects in reforming
the world have been extremely small if at
all perceptible - In the wisdom of God the
world by wisdom knew not God - Men
became vain in their imaginations or reasonings
& their foolish hearts were darkened. Something
else is therefore necessary for the salvation
of men. - That ever this may be it is
plain it must be different ^{from} the wisdom
of the princes of this world - the cold
speculations of the Philosopher or the insincere
crotality of the statesman contrived and
practised with views ^{generally} ~~merely~~ political ~~the~~
~~rather~~ to give effect and authority to their
laws in order the better to govern the multitude
and render them subservient to their ^{own} ~~own~~ interests
or ambition. Hence therefore it hath
pleased God by the foolishness of preaching
to save them that believe it can be no
recommendation to the Gospel of salvation thro

faith in Jesus-Christ to be conformed to the tenets of this philosophy or to borrow assistance or support from the charms of that eloquence which had proved so ineffectual way so utterly unsuitable to ~~accomplish~~ ^{effect} the design which the gospel was intended to accomplish. —

Since then the preaching of the gospel was so simple as to be called by the Greeks foolishness yet so powerful as to produce complete reformation in the lives of those who believe in so much that the apostle could say to some who had previous to their conversion ~~had been~~ the vilest characters—ye are washed ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God— it was surely not indispensably necessary that ^{the} preachers of the gospel should be acquainted with the heathen Philosophy— conform to the Jewish ceremonies or deliver their discourses according to the rules of Grecian eloquence— Hence the apostle calls on those to whom he wrote to consider their calling— particularly as to the instruments employed by God in giving it

asserting without fear of contradiction that
at many ~~were~~ philosophers, not many men
of high standing or honourable connections
were by God employed as heralds of the gospel
nay that those who possessed those advantages
were forbidden to employ them lest the
effects of the gospel should be attributed to
wrong causes the faith of genuine Christians
be thought to stand in the wisdom of men
and through the influence or authority of
teachers of high standing and popular address
insincere persons might be induced to connect
themselves with the church to the prejudice of the
gospel the less of the builder who had built
upon ~~the~~ Christ the foundation wood, hay or
strubble and to the serious detriment of the
temple of God compose of true believers.

Hence he enquires where is the wise?
Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of
this world? Hath not God made foolish
the wisdom of this world by accomplishing
through the foolishness of preaching that
which the wisdom of this world with all its

learned and eloquent advocates could never
effect. As the Apostle says that it
was by the foolishness of preaching that
God was pleased to save them that believe
and to put to confusion the understanding
of the prudent I conclude that the
character of the preachers by whom the
corenthians were called was more particu-
larly in his view than that of the Coren-
thian converts before their conversion and
am therefore in favour of the correction
of Mr Knight in supplying the elipsis at
the end of the verse with "called you"
"instead ~~are~~ called" - because it seems
to be more agreeable to the Apostles main
design. But that the old translation
~~is agreeable to fact viz.~~ that not many
wise or noble or mighty were called is
as he supposes not consistent with fact
I can see no reason to believe. For although
it is said that many of the chief rulers ~~and~~
~~a~~ great believed on him - and that a
great company of the priests were obedient
unto the faith and from the directions

given for the management of servants
and regulating the extravagance of dress
as also from various intimations in
the writings of the Apostle Paul himself
it is abundantly evident that some of all
the three characters mentioned in the text
were not only called but had accepted
the invitation - yet their number was so
small that they might with the greatest
propriety be said not to be many. -
So strictly true is this that I suspect that
it was the chief cause of what I suppose
to be an error in the translation.
And so exactly do the causes that desquali-
fy persons in high stations and of high
attainments in philosophy and science falsely
so called for being teachers of the gospel
correspond with those ^{which} causes the gospel to
appear foolishness to those that perish that
if the first be true namely that not
many wise mighty or noble were put
into the ministry we are in no danger
when we infer the latter that by the
preaching of the gospel ^{not many such would}
^{be brought to repentance.}

although it did not belong to the apostle
argument to notice it hear — and
farther the very reason that the critics
gives for the apostles gaining the attention
of the luxurious populace of Corinth goes
to prove that a majority of those who
composed the church at that place were
of the lower order of the inhabitants.

"Haring" says he "themselves seem as having
been credibly informed by others of the
miracles which Paul wrought and of
the spiritual gifts which he conferred on
them who believed they were so impressed
by these his discourses and miracles that
many of them renounced their ancient
superstition. But he adds — "Of all the
miracles wrought in confirmation of the
gospel that which seems to have affected
the Greeks most was the gift of tongues
For as they esteemed eloquence more than
any other human attainment that gift
by raising the common people to an equality
with the learned greatly recommended

the gospel to persons in the middle and
lower ranks of life — It would be
strange then if that which most
recommended the gospel to the attention
of the Corinthians appealed to the jealousy
that existed ^{between the} higher and lower orders
and that too in favour of latter to the
prejudice of the former ~~if there~~ I say
it would be strange if the converts
from the lower classes should not
surpass the number of those from the
wise the mighty and noble as to make
the latter appear few in comparison of the
former — nor does this argument
if true apply to the inhabitants of
Corinth alone — The relations the
jealous and the general characteristics of
the rich and the poor the high and the
low the learned and the ignorant are
very much alike and have been very much
alike in all countries and under every
combination of circumstances —
and discussions

The doctrine of the text then seems to be this. The religion of the gospel depends for its authority and its establishment not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God. That as the wisdom of men is foolishness with God those who entertain high notions of their own wisdom are not likely to be influenced by the gospel which is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Having settled in their minds previous opinions on almost all subjects connected with human life and human conduct to which they are accustomed to refer every case as if to the standard of truth and property they could not accede to the terms of the gospel which was neither taught by men nor received from men. Hence the wise and noble and mighty were less likely to become converts to the gospel than those whose minds were not so occupied with previous opinions and prejudices. ~~And even those~~ which

disqualified ~~them~~ or spoiled them ^{who entertain} for ^{the} attending to the spiritual doctrines taught by Christ and his apostles as ^{also} bottles broken by new wine are spoiled - ~~marked~~ destroyed as to further use - Hence the Apostle says in his second epistle to the same Corinthians - if our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost - to them who through their prejudice and unbelief have destroyed themselves and rendered themselves subservant to the God of this world to blind the minds of others that they might not believe. And even should any of the heathen Philosophers be converted and embrace the true religion they would by the very fact of having their minds unburied and their heads filled with their vain philosophy and science falsely so called be in a great degree disqualified for becoming teachers of the gospel of the meek and lowly Jesus as all their reasonings and illustrations and discussions

The 1st
must necessarily have taken their character
from their former habits of sceptical
disputation and thus rendered them
much more liable to be led into
error and heresy as several instances
in the early ages of the church abundantly
shew. The false teacher there at
Corinth had but little ground of
exultation over the Apostle Paul on
account of his supposed philosophical
acuteness or superior eloquence
nor has his imitators in the
present age much more ground of
boasting. Nothing is likely to
succeed so well in preaching the
gospel as to follow the plain and
simple method of the Apostle to
determine to know nothing but Christ
and him crucified in the churches

to compare and explain spiritual
things with spiritual - This is God's
plan. Who knoweth the reasonings
of man that they are vain and the
wisdom of the wise is his own craftiness.

All attempts to explain the mystery
of the gospel on the principles of
human wisdom or philosophy have
been and ever will be vain and
fruitless. For the counsel of the Lord
will stand and he will do
all his pleasure.

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