

May the Weak be Strong

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

What do you do when the Creator of all things seen and unseen who was slain to purchase your soul (Colossians 1:16; Revelation 13:8; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20), asks you a born-again believer to serve in His kingdom? While many believers have embraced getting closer to God as their life goal few are willing to be like the prophet Isaiah and cry out “here am I, send me” (6:5)? Looking through worldly binoculars that magnify money, fame, and power as being absolute indicators of success we tend to magnify and be blinded by our “worldly weaknesses!” Foolishly we say to ourselves surely Christ would never choose for His hands and feet one so low and wretched as I and yet to our utter amazement and dare I say with much terror He calls us, and we must choose how we will answer His call. We could continue to remain sleepy, pew sitting giants who are comfortable enough to give Him platitudes of service one hour a week by



reading Scripture, singing songs, and listening to sermons while at the same time ignoring their words that cry out for us to demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit in our lives; or we could choose to rise and trust He who asks also enables one to serve rightly and successfully in His kingdom! The following sermon is going to review 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 to help us remember that God chooses the foolish, weak, lowly, and despised of this world to serve Him and in doing so shames the wise and strong so that boasting of righteousness, holiness and redemption would only be done in the Lord!

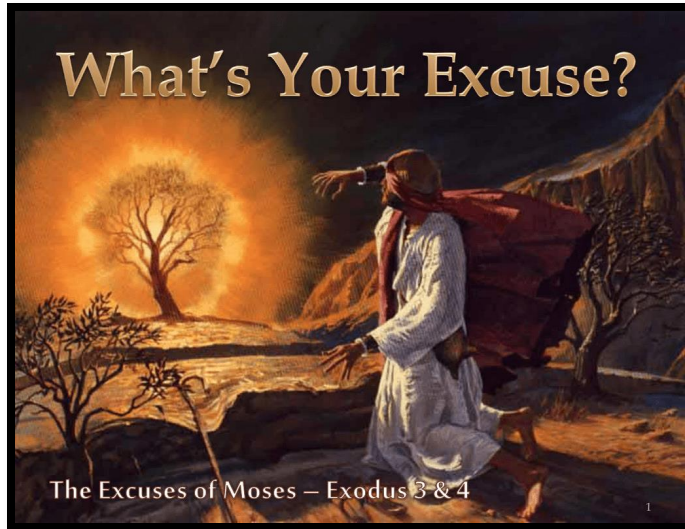
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Being Overwhelmed when Asked to Serve (26)

While church politics can be quite frightening nothing strikes terror into one’s soul like being asked to serve in God’s kingdom! You know that uncomfortable moment when you pick up worldly binoculars and what is being asked of you becomes so much “bigger, insurmountable and un-overcome-able,”¹ than this mere piece of dust and babe in Christ could ever attempt! In that moment of dare I say terror, is not our minds instantly flooded with excuses that prohibit our service. When I say this, I think of Moses’ call in Exodus 3-4. While he was tending the flock of

¹ Tony Evans, [“Greatness through Weakness,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 1 Co 1:26–31.

Jethro his father-in-law the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a burning bush (1-2). While Moses was afraid to look at God that day due to His holiness (6), he was also filled with terror of God's request that he go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of



Egypt (9). To try and convince God to choose someone else Moses gave Him five excuses: I am not good enough (11), I do not have all the answers (13), people will not believe I was chosen (4:1), I am a terrible public speaker (4:10) and I am outright not qualified (4:13). These excuses probably sound awfully familiar for many Christians still use them today in response to God's call! If only we would turn the binoculars around and see that our call from God is quite small in His eyes. Like Moses we need to be constantly reminded that God is not only with us (3:12) but is also responsible for the

results of our service (3:20)! Rest assured we are not called to be Christ's hands and feet without access to His power. Like Moses, God will give us words to speak (4:10-12) that will penetrate the stoniest of hearts and when we have faith as tiny as a mustard seed we need only ask, and He will move mighty mountains for His name's sake (Matthew 17:20)!

To help combat the church of Corinth's fear of serving Apostle Paul suggested to remember the circumstances of one's calling. I invite you to reflect upon the day when God came knocking on the door of your heart and through belief in His atoning sacrifice you were



born of the water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Were you wise by human standards, influential and of noble birth when you said yes to Jesus to be the Lord of your life? When God chose to bring the Good News to us, we had done nothing to earn our salvation (Ephesians 2:8)!² Our righteousness, holiness and redemption was a gift from God (31). Were we not gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful without understanding, fidelity, love, or mercy when we were called (Romans 1:30)? Surely, we remember

² Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Revised Edition., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 86.

our depravity for if we do not then how could we ever know the depths of God's love and grace? Paul stated that while some of the church of Corinth such as Crispus, Stephanas, Chloe (Acts 1:16,16:15, 1:11), Gaius (Romans 16:23) and Aquila and Priscilla (16:19; cf. Rom. 16:3; Acts 18:2, 26)³ had status and wealth, most of the church who were called were of low status based on worldly standards! "God then we must conclude is no respecter of persons! God freely chooses whomever God pleases at will, and not in a manner beholden to human standards. God's grace does not necessarily correlate to social order or human patterns of evaluation."⁴ For example, when an argument broke out in the church of Corinth over whom was the greatest to follow, Paul or Apollos, Paul told them that successful service in God's kingdom is not dependent on how others rank one's level of spirituality but rather is based on whether or not one is faithfully performing the task that God has assigned (3:1-15). In other words, there are no justifiable reasons one can give to say no to God's call of service! So, now that we have expelled with any excuses lets now focus on why God predominantly chooses the weak and despised to do great things in His kingdom.

Whom God Chooses to Serve (27-30)

The reason why God choses the weak, foolish, and despised things of this world is to



shame and nullify the wise and strong. Let us unpack this statement and provide some clarity as to what Paul is saying. Corinth with its artificial double harbor covering some 460,000 square miles and its linking of Peloponnese to mainland Greece,⁵ was a super city of great fame, power, and money!⁶ It would be quite easy to use one's lowly status in such a society as an excuse to not serve. To combat this tendency Paul invited the church of Corinth to look amongst its members and realize how few of them were

³ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 105.

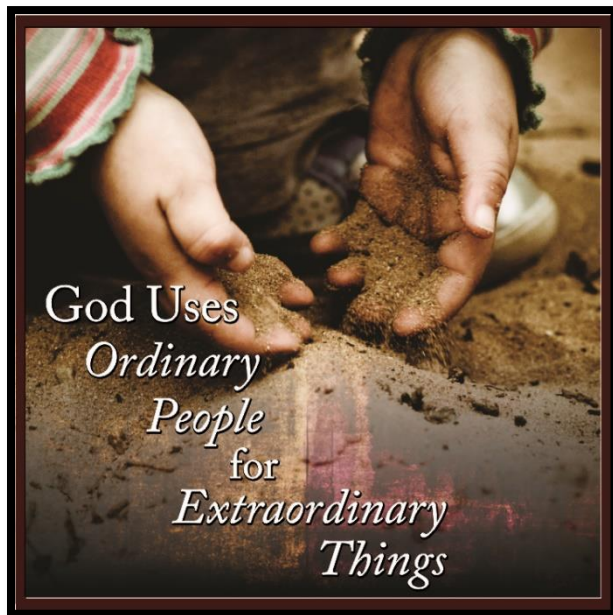
⁴ Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 46–47.

⁵ J. Murphy-O'Connor, "[Corinth \(Place\)](#)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1135.

⁶ Tony Evans, "[Greatness through Weakness](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 1 Co 1:26–31.

mighty based on human standards.⁷ While God sometimes chooses “mighty” people in the eyes of the world to serve, He predominantly chooses the weak for a variety of reasons. First, God chooses the weak to perform miracles in His name so that their success might point to the sovereignty of the Father and in doing so “eliminate the possibility that humans would feel self-satisfied and arrogantly elevate themselves before God!”⁸ Second, God chooses the lowly people to serve to prove the wise, influential, and rich as being foolish and wrong to view their worth based on things here today and gone tomorrow rather than on a relationship with Him (Matthew 6:19-20).⁹ This of course is not done out of a sense of vindication so much as it is done to invite the mighty of society to become foolish in the eyes of the world by humbly bowing their knee to a risen Savior! And lastly, God chooses the lowly people because such an act reflects His gracious character.¹⁰

So, let us rejoice and embrace the truth that God chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things in His kingdom! Did not Christ choose 12 ordinary men to forever change



the world? While displaying the apostles in larger than life, stained-glass windows inside the great cathedrals of Europe, has sent a message to all Christians that they represent an exalted degree of spirituality,¹¹ were they not just ordinary men? After all, they were not the spiritually elite when Jesus called them but were merely low-class, rural, uneducated, common people and yet they “turned the world upside down”¹² by demonstrating the power of the Gospel in both word and deed! When God chose Abram was he not a mere Canaanite whose family foolishly believed in many gods (Joshua 24:2)? Did not God choose a mere shepherd boy David to be the king of Israel who would be forever known as “a man after

⁷ Tony Evans, [“Greatness through Weakness,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 1 Co 1:26–31.

⁸ Marion L. Soards, [1 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 48.

⁹ C. K. Barrett, [The First Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 58.

¹⁰ Gordon D. Fee, [The First Epistle to the Corinthians](#), ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Revised Edition., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 86.

¹¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 9.

¹² Tony Evans, [“Greatness through Weakness,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 1 Co 1:26–31.

God's own heart" (Acts 13:22)? Did not Christ choose to be born of Mary who was neither famous nor rich in the eyes of the world? In each of these cases these ordinary clouds of witnesses embraced their calling not because of any inherent ability of their own but due to their genuine belief that by the power of God all things are possible and permissible by those who have faith and ask in the name and will of Jesus Christ (Mark 10:27; Matthew 7:7; 1 John 5:14)! So, when God comes knocking on our door of hearts to serve Him let us gladly rejoice and accept His invitation with the assurance that an omnipotent and sovereign God knows what He is doing!

God not only chooses the weak but often gives us humanly impossible challenges so that upon successful completion His power might be known, and our faith might increase. For example, let's quickly look at the story of Gideon in the book of Judges. Since Israel had done evil in the eyes of the Lord for seven years, He gave them over to the hands of the Midianites (6:1). From the weakest clan in Manasseh and least in his family, God asked a man named



Gideon to raise and lead an army against Israel's enemies (6:15). We are told that upon his calling Gideon lacked faith so he asked God to give him three signs that victory would be ensured (6:17, 37, 39)! His faith grew and he mustered up 32,000 fighting men to go to war. Even this size of army was not that many considering the Midianites and Amalekites had camels that could "no more be counted than the sand on the seashore" (7:12). Since Israel would have boasted in their own abilities had they somehow won this war, God told Gideon to reduce the size of the army.

First God told Gideon to tell the fighting men if any of them were afraid they could leave, and 22,000 of them left (7:3)! Second, God told Gideon to have the men go down to the water and get a drink and only those men who cupped their hands and drank would remain in the army (7:5). With just 300 men (7:8) fully dependent on God¹³ and with trumpets, empty jars, torches and merely shouting "A sword for the Lord and Gideon" (7:20), God threw the Midianites and Amalekites into such confusion and fear that they turned their swords on each other and fled (7:22)! No doubt not only did Gideon's faith grow exponentially that day but he most likely was overwhelmed with joy because he said YES to serve God. In the same manner we too must not let the size of the service seem too big, or us too small, when God asks us to serve in His kingdom for it is precisely in our weakness that His strength is perfected (2 Corinthians 12:9)!

¹³ Tony Evans, "[Greatness through Weakness](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 1 Co 1:26–31.

Let me tell you one final story about how God strengthens us in weakness.



“A boy was trying to pick up a rock. He said, “Daddy, it’s too heavy.” He said, “Boy, you can pick that rock up.” He said, “Daddy, it’s too heavy.” “Boy, you can pick that rock up.” “Dad, you don’t understand, it’s too heavy.” “Boy, you haven’t used all your strength.” “Dad ... I ... I ...” “You haven’t used all your strength” “I have used all my strength.” He said, “Try one more time. Try one more time.” He reached down and he picked up the rock, this time it began to get up, it began to get up. Then he noticed underneath, the father had placed his hands. In other words, until I have been involved, you haven’t used all your strength. You

haven’t used all your strength unless and until I’ve gotten involved.”¹⁴

It is so easy to put on the binoculars, see the service He asks as being too big and become frightened. This fear is based on seeing the task through our eyes and abilities but what if we started seeing divinely assigned tasks through God’s eyes? With His hands firmly raising us up would not our deficiencies become irrelevant in His strength and would not His promise that those who put their hope in the Lord will not only renew their strength but will soar on wings like eagles (Isaiah 40:31) remove any doubt from our minds? “God says, sometimes I got to let you see you’re weak, so that you can finally discover I am really strong. And you can experience me. God has used the weak things of this world, and then when somebody asks you, you can confound the wise. How did you do that? You can explain. I don’t really know except God made a way.”¹⁵ The point of the story of the boy and the rock is that when our strength comes from God there is simply nothing we cannot do in His kingdom!

Look Around and Boast in the Lord (31)

Let us conclude this sermon with one final suggestion. First, take the time to examine the people living in your community. How many of them know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior? Do not most of them see the cross as mere foolishness as they are perishing in their sins

¹⁴ Tony Evans, [“Greatness through Weakness,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 1 Co 1:26–31.

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instead of a demonstration of His power and their atonement (1 Corinthians 1:18)? You were like them and yet despite your weaknesses and lack of influence and power based on worldly standards God called and invited you to believe in His Son and you became a new creation in



Christ Jesus! Tell them about Jesus not just with words but with doing the divine tasks God has assigned to you. Second, look around at all the people in your blessed church and realize that they and you are not to be sleeping giants who in fear do nothing in God's kingdom but are to be faithful servants whose light shines not because of accomplishments that God has done but because He has chosen the weak, foolish and the ordinary to shame the wise, influential, and noble people of this world. Would we even have known about Moses, David, and

Gideon's life had they focused only on their weakness and refused to serve? How many opportunities have we let pass us by simply because we refuse to see a sovereign God as being capable of making a great harvest from our filthy rags of service? So, they next time God comes calling you to serve please reflect on God's sovereignty, put fear aside and yell from the depths of your soul "here I am, send me" and when you do miracles in His name give Him the credit and forever boast in the Lord!