

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=

Lesson 24

I Corinthians 1

INTRODUCTION: The Apostle Paul is writing this letter to a church that he has established. The church was very immature. The people were divided into four different groups: those who followed Paul, those who followed Apollos, those who followed Peter and those who said they followed Jesus only. (See I Corinthians 1:12.) They would not speak to each other, and it is thought that they even sat in different portions of the building. The church was also mixed up on the Lord's Supper, tongues, spiritual gifts, etc. It was the poorest and weakest of all the churches; however, Paul writes to admonish the individuals in the church that God uses the weak things of this world to confound the wise. He wants to encourage the people to believe that God can use them. I Corinthians 1 deals with the emphasis of God's willingness to use anybody who is completely surrendered to him, regardless of natural gifts, talents, and abilities.

I. THE SALUTATION.

1. Paul emphasizes his call. Notice in I Corinthians 1:1 the words, "called to be an apostle." He is emphasizing this to this church because he wants them to know that God calls people and that they are used because of complete surrender to God when He calls, not because of human talent.
2. Paul starts off by talking about Jesus Christ. Notice in I Corinthians 1:1 the words, "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God." It's interesting that of the 27 books of the New Testament, 24 of them begin talking about Jesus in the first verse; only the books of Luke, II John and III John do not start with Jesus. This is very interesting. The point of contact is Jesus. The most important thing is Jesus. As Paul talks to the Corinthian people, he is emphasizing to them that Jesus is the big Person; we are the little people. Jesus is the main subject; we are the ones who stand in the shadows.
3. Paul gives them the Christian salutation. Notice I Corinthians 1:3, words, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." When two Jews met on the street, they said, "Peace," just like we say, "Good morning," or "Hello." In fact, this is still true today; the Jewish greeting is "Peace." When a Jew was converted, however, his greeting became "Grace and peace." There can be no peace until there is grace. Once the grace of God has been shed abroad in our hearts, we have peace with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Paul tells the good things first. I Corinthians 1:4, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." Notice verse 6, "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." Though this was the worst church of all, and though rebuke will come later, Paul begins by speaking well of them. This would be a good thing for all of us to emulate. Wouldn't it be fine if we could speak good things first? Bear in mind, Paul was not speaking behind their backs; he was writing to them. This is not gossip, slander, or criticism. It is an exhortation given to them frankly and lovingly by the Apostle. Even so, he tells them first of their good characteristics.

This is true also in the first three chapters of Revelation. In the Apostle John's letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, he first complimented them. It mattered not how bad the church was; he commended them first. May we follow this example.

II. GOD'S UNWILLINGNESS TO USE ALL OF US. Notice the ones whom He will use.

1. He uses the preaching of the cross. In I Corinthians 1:18, 19 the word "prudent" means "intelligent." The preaching of the cross brings to nothing the understanding of the intelligent. Just a simple God-called preacher can do more than anyone or anything else to fight the intellectual

heathenism of our day. What the world needs is not a good argument but a good dose of salvation! What the world needs is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. He uses the "foolishness of God." In I Corinthians 1:25 the word "foolishness" is a very interesting word. In the Greek it is the word "moros." From it we get our word "moron." This does not mean that God wants to use morons or that God is a moron or an idiot. The word "foolishness" could also be "silly." God uses the silliness of His own people. That does not mean that we are to be silly or giddy; it means that though the world counts us as silly or idiotic, God can use us. It is always a fact that God's people are considered a little bit "off" by the so-called intellectuals.
3. God does not call many with human talent, wisdom, etc. In I Corinthians 1:26 notice the word "wise." This word would mean "secularly trained." We look at someone and say, "Boy, couldn't God use him!" God looks at someone whom we would never suspect and says, "If I would use him, I would get the glory." That is the kind He usually calls.

Notice the word "mighty" in verse 26. This word comes from the Greek word "dunatos," which means "powerfully able." From it we get our word "dynamite." The world looks at someone and says, "Boy, he is dynamite!" God looks at him and says, "If I would use him, I wouldn't get the glory. I'll use someone who doesn't have so much dynamite. I will choose a Billy Sunday, who is crude and not seminary trained; I will use a Dwight L. Moody with a 9th grade education; I will use a Sam Jones with improper grammar; I will use a Len G. Broughton, who weighs less than 100 pounds; I will use people not quite so talented and powerful, as the world counts talent and power, so that the glory of God may be shown in them, and it will be obvious to all that I did the work."

Notice the word "noble" in verse 26. The word "noble" comes from two Greek words, "eu" and "gnos." The first word means "well" and the second is the word from which we get our word "genes," which means "family heritage." Actually, what it means is that God does not use many people who have "well genes," "good genes" or come from good family heritage. This can be an encouragement to our people, especially our bus kids and poor children. God uses those with the little pedigree and with humble backgrounds to insure that He gets the glory.

4. God uses the weak. Notice in verse 27 the word "weak." This word is "A-dunatos." The word "A" in the Greek is the word for "no" and the word "dunatos" is the word for "dynamite." God uses those that have no dynamite, as the world counts dynamite.

Notice the word "base" in verse 28. The word "base" comes from the word "A-gnos." "A" means "no" and "gnos" means "genes," so "base" means "no genes." God uses those who have little heritage and no pedigrees. He doesn't use the full-blooded poodles; He uses the cur dogs. He doesn't use the Siamese cat; He uses the alley cat.

Notice the word "despised" in verse 28. This word in the Greek means "regarded as nothing." Nobody would suspect that this person could do anything. God takes a little nobody and makes him a somebody so that the entire world will know what God has done.

The reason for all of this is found in verse 29, "That no flesh should glory in his presence," and in verse 31, "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

CONCLUSION: In a Sunday school like ours, with so many hundreds of little boys and girls and young people who have such poor backgrounds and seemingly hopeless futures, we can show them that God can use them. Yes, God can use the "up and out," but He can also use the "down and out." He can use those who come from our best homes, and He does; but He can also use those who come from no home, and He does!