

I trust you all had a blessed Thanksgiving. As God would have it, the passage we have come to today gives us even more reasons to be thankful. I hope you will remember last week's message that taught us that giving thanks should be the normal Christian life (1 Thessalonians 5:18ⁱ). God is so good and worthy of our continual praise. Some people think praising God forever in eternity will get boring. That is because our current comprehension of God is so limited. Today's passage should expand that comprehension and cause us to give thanks.

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. 1 Corinthians 1:26 This verse always reminds me of the Countess of Huntington who once said that she was saved by an M. She said, "The Bible declares not many were of noble birth. It does not say 'not any!'"

Paul is referring to Jeremiah 9:23,24 *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, ²⁴ 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."* He will directly quote part of this passage in verse 31. The passage gives us a different perspective on life. Paul can see the reality of it in the makeup of the Corinthian church. It is believed that the church in Corinth mostly consisted of slaves. That is not to say that there weren't influential people also. The church was the only group that broke all the boundaries including slave and free, rich and poor, male and female, Jew and Gentile, and educated and illiterate. But in the eyes of the world, they were all foolish for accepting a crucified Messiah.

In the eyes of the world, we are the foolish ones who follow this old religion that tells us to deny ourselves and serve others. But what the world cannot see, what can only be seen when one has been given spiritual sight, is that **God is rebuking the idolatry of human wisdom through the cross.**

Let us consider our calling. Let me see. We have several former cult members, including myself. We have former drug addicts and some still struggling, adulterers, and even a few who dabbled in witchcraft. Many were deep in the New Age. A few of us even grew up in lukewarm churches somewhat inoculated against the Biblical Jesus.

Have you considered the miracle of your salvation? What if God only called the righteous? Or let us make the bar a little lower and ask what if He had a limit on the number of sins or the seriousness of them before He would consider calling us? What if those with big egos were disqualified? Or how about an I.Q. threshold? Would that not make God somewhat of a snob? Thank God He takes any condition because *all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23ⁱⁱ). Salvation is based on His grace, not our ability! Paul isn't belittling education, intelligence, or being a person of influence, but He is saying how those qualities can never lead to the truth of the cross.

It is the meek who listen to the gospel. The prideful turn away trusting in themselves and their "good works." The wealthy trust their riches. The scholars trust this world's wisdom. But when tragedy strikes, we realize that relying on the world is insufficient, no matter our status in life. We turn to God, or we harden our hearts.

The majority of the early church were slaves. That was probably truer in Corinth than anywhere else. And isn't that the heart of God all throughout Scripture, to comfort the oppressed and downtrodden (Hosea 1:10ⁱⁱⁱ; Isaiah 62:4^{iv})? The very nation of Israel was formed by coming out of slavery. It is the heart of Christianity today. How many ministries help those who are unable to help themselves, whether the impoverished, medically needy, or sex trafficked victims? It is Christians who are there displaying the heart of God. It is why Iran has one of the fastest growing churches. The oppressed realize how much they need God which helps them be open to the gospel, whereas the rich and comfortable often don't want to see their real need.

But remember too that it is not many, as the Countess of Huntington said, "It doesn't say 'not any.'" God's love reaches out to the rich and powerful and intellectual and noble (John 1:9^v). Even some of them realize their need for a Savior, and then God uses their gifts to bless the body of Christ and exalt His name. They can reach out to those in their social status group with the good news of Jesus. God needs us to be a voice in every stratum of our society. We must be careful not to parade them as special, as we tend to do with people of fame. The ground is level at the foot of the cross (Ephesians 2:8,9^{vi}).

Paul is confronting their prideful allegiance to certain preachers. He is saying that they are putting themselves above others in the church while not realizing God doesn't look at your social status or your patron. Those things are meaningless to Him. In fact, His heart is drawn to the weak and defenseless. He loves to show the riches of His grace by transforming those who were former blasphemers and making them into His evangelists.

Jory was a proponent of atheism and loved to try to destroy the faith of Christians. His sharp mind could spin a Christian in knots. But then God got a hold of him and made him a new creation and an elder in the church. Many of you never met Terry Coll. He lived in a trailer park across the street. He and his wife would turn their little girls loose to play all day while they went past the church to their drug dealer's house. On the way back they would pick up a sermon out front. Little by little God set them free and gave them a hunger for Himself. Terry got a job and became employee of the month. The family went on their first vacation ever. Long story short, Terry eventually became an elder. He is with the Lord now. At his work they called him The Preacher. God loves to show how great His grace is and restore His image in the worst of us (1 Corinthians 15:9,10^{vii}).

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; 1 Corinthians 1:27 So who is truly wise? They are those who know this world is not all there is (Titus 2:12^{viii}; 1 John 2:17^{ix}). They can look at the incredible order, complexity, and symmetry in the world and see the obvious fact that it is designed in great detail for human life. They realize they need their Creator to live as they should. They can see this is a sin sick world just as the Bible declares, and that we all need a Savior. They see man's governments throughout history and know there must be a kingdom of God that is infinitely better (Hebrews 11:16^x). In their simple observing of the world as it is they shame the wisdom of the wise.

And who are those that are truly strong but those who rely on the strength of God. I read of the incredible bravery of those in Iran and Afghanistan who are willing to be tortured and die for the sake of the cross. That is real strength. Those who stand up

against injustice when the powerful threaten them to try and keep them silent (Acts 4:17,18^{xi}). They are the ones who are truly strong. Many times in history it has been those who faced death without flinching, from the arena, to the burning stake, to decapitation by radicals, and kept their faith in the re-education labor camps whose testimonies converted the most hard-hearted. They are those who are truly strong in the Lord!

²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 1 Corinthians 1:28 “*The ancient Christians were for the most part slaves and men of low station; the whole history of the expansion of the church is in reality a progressive victory of the ignorant over the learned, the lowly over the lofty, until the emperor himself laid down his crown before the cross of Christ.*” (Alford, quoting Olshausen)^{xii}

God chose us lowly sinners as trophies of His grace (Ephesians 2:4-7^{xiii}). It demonstrates the vanity of the world to be meaningless. What is eternal is all that will remain, and yet the world runs headlong after the things that perish, from the body to finances to material possessions (2 Corinthians 4:18^{xiv}). The lowly born-again soul clings to their relationship with the eternal God, to His promises, and to the grace that came to us through the cross. In doing so we take hold of God's eternal reality. We demonstrate that all that fallen man seeks after is vanity. We show the promises of God to be true by our transformed lives that demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit.

²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 1 Corinthians 1:29 In the end, no one can boast of anything they have done when standing before God. All that lasts is what was accomplished through His love and grace. He owes us nothing, but He has graciously given us all things (1 Corinthians 3:22, 23^{xv}). No one can boast for all glory belongs to God (Isaiah 48:11^{xvi}). Everything comes from Him. He chose the lowly and despised to be the ones whose eyes He opened to see the world's treasure for the illusion that it is. By choosing the lowly, God is demonstrating that salvation is all by His grace. No one has any reason to boast before Him (Romans 3:27^{xvii}). **The cross obliterates all human pretension.**

No one can stand before God and boast that they knew all along what He was doing. No one at the crucifixion saw the cross as the means to demonstrate the glory and wisdom of God. No one has earned their salvation. We can only boast in our incredible, almighty, ultimately wise Lord and Savior. He has done it all in such a way as to help us see we are but creation and He is the sole Creator and Lord of all.

Those who have lived for the praise of man and the things this world has to offer will find on Judgment Day that all that was merely wood, hay, and stubble that are consumed in an instant. All the things they boast in now will be gone. I think that even Christians will find that much of their investment of time in “good deeds” that were not led by the Spirit but rather by duty or a desire to be seen as spiritual will also end up consumed, though their soul may be saved (1 Corinthians 3:12-15^{xviii}).

³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ *so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”* 1 Corinthians 1:30,31 We are in Christ Jesus because of that wonderful wisdom of God. Christ Jesus has become to us wisdom from God. *This knowledge does not belong to those who endlessly focus on themselves. Those who truly come to know God delight just to know him. He becomes their center. They think of him, delight in him, boast of him. They want to know more and more what kind of God he is.*

As they learn that he is the God “who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth,” naturally they want those same values to prevail—not because their egos are bound up with certain arbitrary notions of, say, “justice,” but because their center is God and they take their cues from him and his character. They boast in him.^{xix} Not in their education, or standing, or talents, just in the wonder of Jesus’ and His love.

He became to us wisdom from God. Thank the Lord that **Jesus became to us wisdom from God.** The wisdom of the world was our mindset before we knew Jesus. And as has already been declared, that kind of wisdom is foolishness. It looks at the complexity and beauty of creation and declares it all an accident of time and chance. It encourages us to live for the moment and do it our way, when living for the moment is to forget what matters for eternity and to do it our way ends in destruction. But then Jesus became our wisdom and showed us the truth of the Word of God. He showed us that He is the Way (John 14:6^{xx}). He taught us the wisdom that says it is better to give than receive (Acts 20:35^{xxi}). He showed us freedom from selfishness and the joy of serving others (Mark 10:45^{xxii}). There couldn’t be a greater contrast in the interpretation of this life. It is basically worldliness or Jesus. Praise and thank Him forever for becoming to us wisdom from God! Amen?

He is our righteousness. This is part of that wisdom that He is to us. He shows us what righteousness truly is and that there is no possibility of obtaining it on our own. It is perfectly right living and thinking before the eyes of a holy and perfect God. The prophet declared there would come a day when we engrave the words, “*The Lord is our righteousness.*” Jeremiah 23:6^{xxiii} God told Moses numerous times, “*I am the Lord who makes you holy.*” Then at just the right time in world history God sent Jesus to bear our sins and offer to us the righteousness of His life. The Apostle Paul explains, ²¹ *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* 2 Corinthians 5:21 Jesus became to us righteousness from God.

He is our sanctification. Did you notice in that last verse it is *in* Him that we become the righteousness of God? It is described as being clothed in Christ or putting Him on (Romans 13:14^{xxiv}; Galatians 3:27^{xxv}). There was a foreshadow of it when Moses wanted to see God. God had him go into a cleft in the rock and covered Him with His hand (Exodus 33:22^{xxvi}), which is an expression to help us understand since God the Father is a spirit and does not have a physical body, when we are in Jesus, the Rock, we are covered by Him and God sees His righteousness and not our past sins. Our sins were nailed to the cross with Christ, for He took all our sins upon Himself and bore the punishment we deserve. That is why He is our sanctification. That is why we are considered to be in Him. Here too we have even the Torah proclaiming, ⁸ *Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.* Leviticus 20:8 You might say, wait a minute, first God said to keep and do His statutes. Yes, we should, but we simply can’t, so God reassures us with the fact that He is the One who sanctifies us, not our works. And just in case we didn’t get that it is the LORD who makes us holy, it is repeated five more times in the Old Testament (Leviticus 21:8^{xxvii}, 15^{xxviii}, 23^{xxix}; 22:32^{xxx}; Exodus 31:13^{xxxi}). It is the work of God through Christ Jesus who makes us holy, which is to be sanctified. We are set apart for the purposes of Almighty God our Creator. Jesus has become to us our sanctification! Praise God!

He is our redemption. To be redeemed is to be bought back, or we could say to be made of value again. We were made in the image of God, but sin marred our souls and condemned us to the justice our rebellion against God deserved. We were slaves to sin (John 8:34^{xxxii}). But Jesus purchased us out of that slavery with His own blood. His sacrifice made it possible for us to be sanctified in Him and thus be able to receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit begins the process of sanctifying our thoughts and actions which is setting us free from sin. While God sees us already sanctified in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit is helping us increasingly exercise that freedom from sin day by day (Hebrews 10:14^{xxxiii}). That is what it means to be redeemed. Are you redeemed? Are you growing in grace?

Therefore, if Christ is all these things to us, if it is what He has done for us, what do we boast about? When we see that all that is truly good in us is because of Him, how can we divide up into groups. Our humble condition and dependency on God should unite us. If we are to boast at all, we should boast in the Lord who is to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is what makes the life He has given to us of value. He is everything good in us. He is our glory and our eternal hope. *²⁴but 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.*” Jeremiah 9:24 Our only boast is in the Lord our God and the privilege of understanding that He practices and delights in steadfast love, justice, and righteousness! That is why He sent Jesus to save us!

How appropriate that we should come to this passage in the season of Thanksgiving. Our boast is only in what our Savior has done for us and made possible. He is our main reason to give thanks, and every other thing of value that we are thankful for is from Him. What He is to us is incomparably greater than anything this world has to offer. He has given us everything richly to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17^{xxxiv}), but the gift of Himself is beyond compare and the reason for all the other gifts.

When you are tempted to set your attention on things of life, I plead with you to turn your eyes to the wonder what Jesus has done for us and all that He is to us. He doesn't grant our wishes like a genie, but He does give us what is most important and lasting (James 1:17^{xxxv}). And as for those things He withholds, we can trust Him that He has a good reason which we will one day understand. Praise His name forever!

Questions:

- 1 Compare Jeremiah 9:23,24 with 1 Corinthians 1:26.
- 2 Which institution should be the least bigoted one on the planet?
- 3 How did God rebuke the idolatry of human wisdom?
- 4 Consider the miracle of your salvation!
- 5 Why does God seem to favor the weakest and wounded?
- 6 Why should we avoid parading the rich and famous?
- 7 Who are the truly wise?
- 8 How does the cross obliterate human pretension?
- 9 What does verse 30 declare Jesus is to us?
- 10 Who sanctifies us? Why?
- 11 What is our boast?

ⁱ **1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

ⁱⁱ **Romans 3:23 (ESV)**

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

ⁱⁱⁱ **Hosea 1:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.”

^{iv} **Isaiah 62:4 (ESV)**

⁴ You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.

^v **John 1:9 (ESV)**

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

^{vi} **Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)**

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

^{vii} **1 Corinthians 15:9-10 (ESV)**

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

^{viii} **Titus 2:12 (ESV)**

¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

^{ix} **1 John 2:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

^x **Hebrews 11:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

^{xi} **Acts 4:17-18 (ESV)**

¹⁷ But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” ¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

^{xii} Guzik, D. (2013). [1 Corinthians](#) (1 Co 1:26–29). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

^{xiii} **Ephesians 2:4-7 (ESV)**

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

^{xiv} **2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

^{xv} **1 Corinthians 3:22-23 (ESV)**

²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,

²³ and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

^{xvi} **Isaiah 48:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

^{xvii} **Romans 3:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.

^{xviii} **1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (ESV)**

¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

^{xix} Carson, D. A. (2004). *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (p. 32). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

^{xx} **John 14:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

^{xxi} **Acts 20:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

^{xxii} **Mark 10:45 (ESV)**

⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

^{xxiii} **Jeremiah 23:6 (ESV)**

⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

^{xxiv} **Romans 13:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

^{xxv} **Galatians 3:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

^{xxvi} **Exodus 33:22 (ESV)**

²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

^{xxvii} **Leviticus 21:8 (ESV)**

⁸ You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy.

^{xxviii} **Leviticus 21:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ that he may not profane his offspring among his people, for I am the LORD who sanctifies him."

^{xxix} **Leviticus 21:23 (ESV)**

²³ but he shall not go through the veil or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries, for I am the LORD who sanctifies them."

^{xxx} **Leviticus 22:32 (ESV)**

³² And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you,

^{xxxi} **Exodus 31:13 (ESV)**

¹³ "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.

^{xxxii} **John 8:34 (ESV)**

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

^{xxxiii} **Hebrews 10:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

^{xxxiv} **1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

^{xxxv} **James 1:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.