

Humbling of the World

by Brian Brodersen

God chooses the unlikely and the unworthy to accomplish His purposes, and He looks for availability, not ability, in those who serve Him.

Duration: 39:08

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:26

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Christian Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes God's unconventional ways of choosing and using ordinary, humble individuals for His purposes, contrasting with the world's standards of wisdom and power. It highlights the importance of humility, availability, and reliance on God's enabling rather than personal abilities. The message encourages listeners to trust in God's calling and to be open to being used by Him, regardless of their perceived inadequacies.

Transcript

Again, as was mentioned by Dave earlier tonight, we will begin a study in 1 Corinthians 1 this evening. And I've often felt that if there was an epistle that had a real message for the present generation, this is the one. So much in the epistle that is applicable to us today.

So come on out and join as we begin to study through it tonight. This morning we want to concentrate on verses 26 through 29. And so let me just read them to you once again real quickly.

Verse 26, for you see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

And base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen yea. And things which are not to bring to not things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence. In the church, in the city of Corinth, there were those who had begun to want the approval of the society around them.

They wanted to be seen as wise and in fashion. They wanted to be seen as intellectual and sophisticated. In their quest to obtain this kind of reputation, they reinterpreted the gospel as a philosophy and set up some of the apostles as competing philosophers.

You see, Corinth was a city of great learning. It was a center of philosophy. And these Corinthian Christians were feeling a little bit intimidated with their seemingly simple message of the cross.

And so they were mixing philosophy with Christianity. The culture was influencing the church. The first four chapters of this epistle are a lengthy rebuke of that pride that had caused them to compromise the gospel.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a philosophy, but rather a revelation. A philosophy is something that allows for speculation, debate, modification, and expansion. Revelation is something to be declared, believed, and obeyed.

The apostles were not philosophers peddling their own opinions about God, but rather heralds proclaiming the message they were entrusted with. The Victorian preacher, Charles Spurgeon, he had an excellent comment on these verses. He said, it is clear to everyone who will observe either scripture or fact that God never did intend to make his gospel fashionable, that the very last thing that was ever in his thoughts was to select the elite of mankind and gather dignity for his truth from the gaudy trappings of rank and station.

On the contrary, God has thrown down the gauntlet against all the pride of manhood. He had dashed mire into the face of all human excellency, and with the battle acts of his strength, he has dashed the shield of man's glory in two. Spurgeon had a way with words.

He communicated that very effectively. You see, God's ways are so much different than our ways, and we see that here in our text that God has chosen the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised, and the things that are not. As a matter of fact, God's ways are so much different than our ways that you could almost determine what God thinks about something by just going the opposite direction of what man thinks about it.

Jesus said, that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God. God sees things differently, God does things differently, and this has always been the case. As we follow the long history of redemption, the long history of God working amongst men, we see over and over and over again, whether it be through various situations or the people that God chose for various tasks, we see this pattern repeated over and over.

God does things in ways that people never would have dreamed of. Think of Jericho, Israel. They're coming out of that long journey in the wilderness.

They've crossed, finally, the Jordan River, and they're about to go in and take the land that was promised to them so long ago. But they immediately meet opposition. There before them is this walled city of Jericho.

How are they going to enter into the land? How are they going to get through this obstacle? Well, God instructs them to do this. He says, I want you to go, and for six days, I want you to march once around the city silently. I want the priest to lead it, and I want the people to go out, and I want you to do this for six days.

And on the seventh day, I want you to march around the city seven times, and at the end of the seventh time around, I want you to blow the trumpets, I want you to begin to shout, and the walls of the city will fall down. Now, could you imagine Moses, Joshua, maybe some of those that had a little bit of military experience putting together a strategy like that? That's not anything that any person ever would have thought of. Of course, they would have been looking at the impossibility of the task.

We don't have any sophisticated weapons. We don't really have an army that's really trained. How are we going to do this? God says, you do this, and I'll take care of the rest.

But he does it in a way that nobody ever would have imagined. He does it in a way, in the end, that no person is going to be able to take credit for anything that's happened. It's going to be quite obvious that this is something that God has done.

We see it repeated over and over again. I think of the story of Gideon. And there's Gideon.

He's threshing wheat in a cave because the Midianites are oppressing Israel. And the Israelites have no power to overthrow the yoke of Midian. And the Lord comes to Gideon, the angel of the Lord, and he says, you mighty man of valor, go in this your strength and deliver Israel.

And Gideon really, in a sense, he sort of looks at him and says, I think you have the wrong address. I think you have the wrong person. And Gideon goes on to say, he said, I am from the least tribe in Israel, and I am the least in my father's house.

You see, Gideon saw himself as the most unlikely person for the task of delivering Israel. But the Lord said, go in this your strength. And the Lord was with him, and he went.

And as you read through the rest of the story and find out just how they overthrew the yoke of the Midianites, that in and of itself is a fascinating story similar to what happened with Jericho. We come a little further in the history and we find the story of David. And remember how God had sent Samuel to the house of Jesse that he might anoint a king.

And Jesse calls his sons to come and pass before Samuel but Jesse doesn't even bother to invite David to this feast. In Jesse's mind, David is not even a candidate. So the sons of Jesse come, they march before Samuel.

Samuel looks at Eliab, the first, and he says, oh, surely this is the Lord's anointed. He's taller than anybody, he's stronger than anybody, he's handsomer, surely this is God's man. And the Lord speaks to his heart and says, no, Samuel, that's not my man, I've rejected him.

For man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. And as this parade of men pass before Samuel and there's no king, Samuel finally says to Jesse, do you have any other sons? And Jesse says, well, yes, I have one other one, the youngest one who's out with the sheep. Samuel says, call him.

And when David comes into the room, the Lord speaks to Samuel and says, anoint him, this is my chosen. Nobody would have ever dreamed that David would be the one to be anointed. And then, of course, if we follow David further, if we look at his victory over Goliath, who would have thought that this young boy, this teenager, could have ever defeated a seasoned warrior like Goliath? But you see, this is the way God works.

He takes the most unlikely people and he uses the most unlikely means. Think, of course, of Jesus himself. Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus is the King of kings, he's the Lord of lords, he's the Lord of heaven and earth.

And yet, when he comes into the world, he doesn't come to Rome, he's not born in the capital city, he's not born in a palace, he's not even born in Jerusalem. The religious center of the world. But rather, Jesus is

born in Bethlehem.

And at that time, Bethlehem was a relatively insignificant village. And then, as we look at the life of Jesus, how does he grow up? He doesn't grow up in the palaces being trained and pampered there as a prince. No, he grows up with the common people.

And he's a working man, he's a man who is a carpenter, by trade, and again, we see with the Lord himself this very same principle, and finally, we see it with the apostles. The ones that he chose and sent out. Now, of course, to us today, we think of the apostles in a sense of their greatness, and certainly, there was an element of greatness there, but sometimes we can forget that these were ordinary men.

Jesus did not go into the academies in Jerusalem to find those who would take his message around the world. Instead, he chose fishermen, he chose a tax collector, he chose a revolutionary, he chose basically just a bunch of ordinary guys. Jesus Christ is, and always has been, the champion of the common man, of the poor man, of the average Joe, if you will.

Listen to his words. He said, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

And then he said to John, or told these disciples of John's to go speak to him, John the Baptist, go tell John the things you have seen and heard, that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. Karl Marx used the term proletariat to describe the working class. He and those who followed his philosophy set themselves up as the champions of the proletariat.

It's interesting, Marx took this word from Roman society. The proletariat was a reference to the lowest class in Roman society, the foolish, the weak, the despised. Our text is describing the proletariat, and it says that these are the ones that God has chosen.

Jesus is the common man's hero. He uses common men and women to fulfill his purpose. He always has, and he still is continuing to do that today.

It was a sad day in history when the church became a center of prestige and power. When position in the church went to the highest bidder, the rich and the famous were given preferential treatment, and the pulpit was reserved for the academic. All of this kind of thing is in direct opposition to the teaching of the scriptures, and is really a capitulation to the very things that Paul was warning the Corinthians about.

And sadly, this has happened over and over and over again in the history of the church. But you know what God has done? When the church becomes so influenced by the world, so infiltrated by the world, that it's no longer effective, and it's no longer carrying out God's intended purpose, you know what he does? He just goes right around that, and he starts something fresh and new. A great illustration of that in history would be the Methodist movement.

And this picture I just described of the church where position has gone to the highest bidder, and the rich and famous given preferential treatment, and only the academics allowed in the pulpit, that is a very vivid description of the church of England at the time of the Wesleys. And what God did through John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield is he bypassed that church that was no longer effective, and these guys took the gospel out to the common people. They took the gospel to the farmers, they took the gospel

to the shopkeepers, they took the gospel to the miners.

They preached in the open fields, they were actually banned from preaching in the churches. And they tried to forbid them from preaching in the open fields, but they began to preach in the open fields, and thousands of people began to turn to Christ, and then from those miners, and those farmers, and those shopkeepers, and those common people, they were raised up to be the next generation of ministers of the gospel. But you know we don't have to look that far back in history to find a similar thing, because we ourselves are actually a part of something just like that.

With the Calvary Chapel movement, 40 years ago, when the church had closed its doors to the work of the spirit, and to those that God wanted to bring in, and had been influenced by the philosophy of the world to a large extent, and the pulpit was reserved for the academic and those kinds of things that were so much the case back then, the Lord went around all of that, and raised up a new work, and he did it here through Pastor Chuck, and we have now many names that we can mention, men that God has used in an extraordinary fashion, and is still using, men like Mike McIntosh, men like Greg Laurie, Raul Reese, Jeff Johnson, Steve Mays, John Corson, Bill Gallatin, Joe Foch, and these are just a few of the names, there are many, many more that God has done this kind of a thing with. Now we hear the names of some of these men, now I know that some of them aren't all that familiar to you, but of course names like Greg Laurie, and Mike McIntosh, and Raul, and John, those are very familiar names, we think of those men, and rightfully so, we think of them as men who God is using powerfully, and they are having a great influence and impact, but yet do we remember that these are just ordinary guys? They're ordinary guys that God put his hand on them, and he raised them up, and he continues to do that, and through them, and many other ordinary men, God is using them to confound the wise even to this day. And I believe that there's a whole new generation of men that the Lord wants to continue to do this very thing through.

We have approximately 1,400 Calvary Chapel Fellowships around the world, and I am thrilled about that, but you know what, we need about 10 times as many as we have, because the needs are so vast, because the emphasis, of course, of this ministry has been to disciple God's people through teaching them the scriptures, and all around the world today, we're finding that people are crying out for someone to come and teach us. There's much evangelism, there are many conversions, but sadly, much of the church has lost its way when it comes to the priority of teaching, and so Christians are starving to death spiritually, and longing for teachers to come, pastors to come, and to minister to them, and I believe that God wants to supply the church with a whole new crop of pastors, and where is He going to draw them from? He's going to draw them from the common people, just like He has always done. Perhaps you will be one of those that God will call out, but whether it's to go out and pastor, or it's to go out on the mission field, or it's to start a Bible study in your home, or they're at the job, or reach out in the community, in whatever sort of a way, God wants to use you, and maybe you've sensed that to some degree, maybe you've felt some sort of a stirring, but yet, perhaps you've also had that sort of thing where although you've felt like maybe that was something, but immediately you think, you know, I can't do that.

I'm not smart enough for that. I'm not strong enough for that. I'm not noble enough for that.

I just don't see how God could use me. Someone has rightly said, it's not ability that God is looking for, it's availability, and we have got to always remember that. You see, God has always worked this way.

He's always chosen those that man would pass by. That's been his habit, and he hasn't changed that a bit. He's still doing that today.

So even though you might see yourself as inadequate, even though you might see yourself as, well, I'm not strong spiritually enough for that, or you know, my background doesn't qualify me, or maybe my background disqualifies me for that, know this, that that isn't the case. You're actually right there amongst those masses from which Jesus has drawn his servants over the ages. I think of many of the great missionaries, and some of them, it's interesting, when you read their stories, their biographies, you find that some of them who had the greatest impact on the mission field were initially rejected by the mission society that they sought to go to the field through.

Those that sent Hudson Taylor to China, or the agency through which he made his way to China as a missionary, they were disappointed in him. They didn't feel like he was educated enough, and when he got there, they didn't see him as ever playing any kind of a significant role in the work that was going on, but he happened to be the one that God would use to lay a foundation in China for the gospel that is still reaping a harvest today, 150 years later. Or I think of Gladys Alward, who wanted to go to the mission field, wanted to go to China, and was told by the mission society that she was too old, that she was too feeble, and that she just didn't have the brains for it, basically.

But you know what? That woman, she felt a call on her life, so she didn't let that discourage her. She made her way to China anyway, and guess what? God used her in an extraordinary way. And although the mission society said they didn't think she had the brains for it, they didn't think she was gonna be able to acclimate to the culture, she certainly wasn't gonna be able to pick up the language, she became so capable in the language that people thought she was a native speaker.

So you see, God's able to do these things. It's not ability, it's availability. We think of the apostles, again, going back to them for a moment.

Remember when they stood before the Sanhedrin, and this man had been healed, this lame man, and there was no denying that these men had performed a miracle, and it says that the political and the religious leaders, they looked at them, and they marveled that this could have happened through these men, because from their point of view, they were ignorant men, they were uneducated men. They were ordinary men, they hadn't gone to the academies there, they hadn't gone through that training process and all of that, but it does say this, they took note of them that they had been with Jesus. You see, that's the primary qualification right there.

Being with Jesus. Now for a moment, let's touch on what Paul does say regarding the wise. Now notice he doesn't say that there are no wise that are called, he just says that there are not many wise.

He doesn't say there are not any wise, because of course Paul would be in that category. Paul was a scholar, Paul was a brilliant man. Even those who are not Christians, on down through the ages, have noted the brilliancy of Paul.

Or think of Sergius Paulus, he's mentioned in the book of Acts. He was the pro-council of Cyprus, and we're told there specifically that he was a highly intelligent man. Or you think of Erastus, he was the treasurer for the city of Corinth to where this epistle was written.

And we could mention others, Acts mentioned certain prominent women, and there were others even in the early church. And of course if we wanted to take the time to go throughout the long history of the church, there are many, many, many names that we could mention of wise people in the sense of people who were brilliant in their field, whether it be theology or philosophy, or science or the arts. There are so

many names, we don't have the time to mention them.

But comparatively speaking, when you think of the masses of people who have been saved and served the Lord throughout the ages, the majority have been just ordinary, common, everyday people. You see the problem with the wise, it's not that God doesn't love them, but the problem is generally they are wise in their own eyes. And that means they are proud.

And we know what God does with the proud. He resists them, but he gives grace to the humble. So this is the way the Lord has worked all throughout human history.

And this is the way that God is working today. There's no difference. And God wants to use you.

And he is the one who will qualify you. He is the one who will enable you to do. Whatever God calls you to do, you can be sure of this, he will equip you to do it.

If he calls you to go be a pastor of a church, he will equip you to that work. If he calls you as an evangelist, he will give you that. If he calls you to the mission field, he'll give you that.

Whatever he calls us to do, he enables us, he equips us to do those things that he calls us to do. But his habit has always been to bypass the proud. Now, why has God done things this way? Well, in Matthew chapter 11, we read there that Jesus said, as he was praying for that little flock of followers, he said, Father, I thank you.

Lord of heaven and earth, I praise you that you have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and you have revealed them to babes. God has actually hidden these things from the proud. He said, I thank you, Lord, that you've done this.

You've hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and you've revealed them to babes. You've revealed them to the common people, to the simple people. And then he says this, he says, for so it seemed good in your sight.

It seemed the good thing to do, the right thing to do. And isn't it true that there's nothing quite as obnoxious, there's nothing quite as annoying as an arrogant person? You know, is there anybody that likes a braggart? Is there anybody that enjoys listening to somebody boast about how much better they are than anybody else? Or is there ever a time when we see somebody in their pride and their arrogance, oppressing humble, simple people, that we look on and say, that was the right approach, that's the thing to do? Is there anybody that actually commends that kind of behavior? I don't think so. A few twisted people, maybe, but the vast majority of normal people look at that and say, that is wrong, that isn't right.

When you hear some really arrogant guy making some statement, I've been a boxing fan for years, and you know, sometimes before a fight, you know, one guy would be really mouthing off and you just would say, man, I just can't wait to see this guy get knocked out, just to shut him up. I mean, that's just the way we feel, right? Well, you know what? God feels the same way. That's what Jesus said.

It seemed good in God's sight. Man's pride is an affront to God. And there is coming a day, Isaiah tells us about the day of the Lord that's coming, the wrath of God that's coming, and you know what God's gonna do in that day? He's going to lay low the haughtiness of the proud.

God is going to humble the human race. And he's actually been doing that all the way along by bypassing those who are wise in their own eyes and selecting those who are humble and recognizing their own inadequacies and inabilities, and God takes them and he raises them up. The second reason why he does it is so that there would be no boasting coming from man.

You see, when God does a work, he doesn't want people going around taking the credit for it. And again, it's that same sort of thing. You know, when people are boastful, it's an unpleasant thing, and especially when people are boasting about things that they haven't really done.

That's even worse, isn't it? And of course, when somebody is used by God, in the end, they haven't really done it. What they've done is simply yielded, and it's been God who's done it. And God wants us to always keep that in mind.

He wants us to always remember that. And when God uses somebody in an extraordinary fashion, when God uses somebody in a powerful way, he doesn't want that person taking the credit for it, and he doesn't want us giving that person the credit for it. He doesn't want any human boasting.

He wants us to just rejoice in him and glory in him. Why, is it because God's on a big ego trip and he's gotta have a stroke in his ego? No, not at all. You know why it is? It's because God's the only one who can handle the praise and it doesn't go to his head.

The rest of us can't handle it. People start telling you how great you are. After a while, you kind of start believing it.

That's why God gave us wives. No human boasting. My wife is clapping over there, I can hear her.

Listen to what the Lord said through Jeremiah. Jeremiah. He said, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches, but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these I delight, says the Lord.

The Lord delights in that. You know, the Lord delights in humility. He loves it.

Because he is humble. He is humble. That passage that I quoted there in Matthew 11, you know, that passage goes on and there, Jesus, he says, come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. And then he says, for I am meek and humble in heart. God is humble.

God is humble. How could we, his creatures, ever elevate ourselves in any sort of pride? If we glory, we are to glory in the Lord. Now, as we close this morning, I wanna go back to speaking directly to those of you that you've had a stirring, you've had a sense of calling, you've thought that God might want to do something, but you've also had a battle going on in your head, all of the reasons why it can't really be.

All of the reasons why you're unqualified, you're not smart enough, you're not strong enough, your background isn't conducive to it, all of those kinds of things, you need to just put that aside and know that God's calling is his enabling, and he will give you the ability. You just need to take those steps of faith to start to move in the direction that God has for you. And he is faithful, and he will do it.

And as I said, I believe that God wants to continue to raise up men and women. He wants to continue to gift and anoint. And as much as I love and appreciate all of those guys I mentioned earlier, I am looking to see that replicated in the future in other men as well, and in younger men.

And I'm looking at those teenagers and those guys in their 20s, and I'm saying, okay, where's the next Greg Laurie in this group? Where's the next John Corson in this group? Where's the next Raul or Mike? Because I don't think God wants to stop with just these men. I think he wants to continue to work in this way, and we, of course, we open ourselves up for that as we continue to abide faithfully by the biblical pattern of Christian ministry. And that's what the Corinthians moved away from.

They moved away from the biblical view of things, and they started to adopt a worldly view, and it was a dangerous thing that Paul had to severely rebuke them for. But thank God by his grace, we're holding the course, and we're gonna let the Bible continue to be the guideline for us. This is how God works.

It doesn't matter what the world says. It doesn't matter what this particular church growth agency has to say about how you ought to do things. Our question is not what is man's opinion about it, but our question is what does God say? What has God done? And we know from what he's done and what he said that's the way he works, and he's gonna continue to work that way, and we're gonna yield to that.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that, Lord, you are the same. Yesterday, today, and forever, and even in this regard, Lord, that you work in this day and age, Lord, like you've always done.

Doing things that men would never come up with themselves, doing it in ways, Lord, that baffle us, and using those that would be, for the most part, passed over by others. Lord, we thank you that you are indeed the champion of the common man, the ordinary person, and we thank you, Lord, that as ordinary people, we can trust that you've got a plan for us. You've got a purpose that you're going to use us, and Lord, we know that there's no partiality with you.

It's not like you dislike people who are talented. Lord, you've given many gifts and talents, and we thank you for those that have been humble enough to take the brilliance and to be able to use it for your glory. We acknowledge that, but Lord, I pray this morning for just a fresh sense of calling and enabling for those that you've been speaking to, and Lord, we pray that you would raise up a new generation from all over our churches, Lord, to take your word, to feed your people.

In Jesus' name, amen. Let's stand together. The pastors are up front this morning, and they would love to pray with you, and from what I've heard from the guys, many have come up for prayer this morning just feeling strengthened and given confidence, once again, in the call of God upon their lives.

So maybe the Lord's spoken something like that to you today. Maybe he's stirred your heart once again. Come on up and let these guys pray for you.

Get filled with the Holy Spirit so the Holy Spirit can then lead you out and use you in the way that God wants to use you. If you have a prayer need of any sort, doesn't have to be on that particular topic, come on up, let them pray for you. I know that even a few people have received Christ this morning.

If you don't know the Lord, he's got a plan for your life, but you've got to get connected with him. These guys are here to help you do that. So come on up front and get some prayer.

May God bless you, and may he fill you with his spirit, and may he lead you into those things that he has for you this week. And let's close this morning by just once again, putting our focus back on the one that deserves the glory, the Lord Jesus Christ. ■ And we all bow down ■ ■ Kings will surrender their crowns ■ ■ For he is the love, unfailing love ■ ■ He is the love of God ■

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