

What Is the Church? (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Church is Christ in living union with His own, and God chooses weak things to show that His works are not of human sufficiency, but of Himself.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:26

Topics: "The Nature of the Church", "Divine Strength in Weakness"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that the Church is not a physical building or organization, but rather the living union of believers with Christ. He explains that God intentionally chooses the weak and foolish to demonstrate His power, transcending human limitations and abilities. This union with the risen Christ allows believers to access divine resources and capabilities that surpass worldly standards. Sparks warns against complacency in weakness, urging believers to actively engage in God's work through their union with Christ. Ultimately, the Church is a manifestation of Christ's power in and through His people.

Transcript

"For ye 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; and 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 nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

What is the Church? It is Christ in living union with His own. That is the Church.

You do not build a special building and call it "the Church". You do not have a special organization -- a religious institution -- which you call "the Church". Believers in living union with the risen Lord constitute Church. This is the reality, not the figure.

Now, in union with Christ risen, all human limitations are transcended. This is one of the wonders of Christ risen as a living reality. We are brought into a realm of capacities which are more than human capacities, where -- because of Christ in us -- we can do what we never could do naturally.

Our relationships are new relationships -- they are with heaven. Our resources are new resources -- they are in heaven. That is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians that God hath chosen weak things, the foolish things, the things which are not... that by them He might bring to naught the wise, the mighty, the things which are. Why did God appoint it so? Because it is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit... and to show that there are powers, energies, and abilities for His own which transcend all the greatest powers and abilities of this world.

That is the history of God's people... and that is where so many people go wrong. Men of the world look upon Christians and, for the most part, do not think much of them. They measure them by the standards of the world and say: "Well, they are rather a poor lot; their caliber is not much!".

But that is God's way, and the world never can measure that. Nor can that be done by human wisdom, strength, or ability at its greatest. God has chosen weak things for that. Why? Simply because weak things, in their dependence, are the best instruments -- the best means -- of allowing God to show that such works are not of any human sufficiency at all... but all of Himself.

Please do not take comfort from the fact that God has chosen weak things and foolish things... and say: "Well, I am that -- and therefore it is all right!" The point is: Are you, in God's hand, bringing to naught the mighty and the wise? Is it not a case of our resting back on our weakness and our foolishness and our nothingness... and our saying: "That applies to me; that is all right; that is all that matters!"

That is not all that matters. The thing that matters is that I -- being weak -- may know resurrection union with Christ in all His might and power; and, in that union with Him, mighty spiritual things should be done through me. That is the positive side.

We may know the Lord in a personal and inward way. We may draw upon the Lord's resources in a personal and inward way. All that the Lord has is available to us inwardly. Heaven is no longer closed when we are united with Christ on the ground of His atoning work.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/what-is-the-church-1-corinthians-126-31/>

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