

Lesson 5: “Upside Down Power”**1 Corinthians 1:26-31****Craig Crawshaw**

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 *For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong; and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.*

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

God’s view of power is upside down. What the world thinks of as power is not how God sees power at all. God is more interested in the weak than in the strong. He is more interested in those who recognize their weakness, than in those who celebrate their greatness. Worldly greatness is highly overrated to God. And He sees worldly weakness as something needing His attention and worthy of restoration.

God’s view of power is truly upside down. And Jesus and His cross will turn your concept of wisdom and power upside down. Jesus and His cross are foolishness and weakness to the world, but they are wisdom and power to God (v. 18) – and that’s how He wants us to see them.

TODAY’S OUTLINE

The Old Power Paradigm (1:26)

The Paradigm Shift (1:27-28)

The New Power Paradigm (1:29-31)

(a paradigm is a typical example or pattern of how to look at something)

THE OLD POWER PARADIGM (v. 26)

1. Achievement - accomplishing something important in the world’s eyes
2. Influence - people seeing you as successful and authoritative
3. Significance - sensing a personal worth, based on accomplishments

In v. 26 God describes these as:

1. Wise (in the world’s wisdom)
2. Mighty (in the world’s strength)
3. Noble (in the world’s status)

We recognize this “power paradigm” as:

“Keeping us with the Jones”

Fulfilling the “American Dream”

“You can do whatever you set your mind to”

“I am powerful”

In response, God says:

Psalms 28:7 *The Lord is my strength and my shield.*

John 15:5 *... for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

2 Corinthians 12:9 *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*

THE PARADIGM SHIFT (v. 27-28)

Jesus and His cross will turn your concept of wisdom and power upside down.

Verses 26-27 describe God's power as coming through the following:

1. The foolish (in the world's eyes)
2. The weak (in the world's strength)
3. The base (in the world's status)

In verse 26, God says these describe the majority of those called to be Christians.

Jesus – His Coming

Philippians 2:7-8 [Jesus] emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

1. He emptied Himself
2. He became a bond-servant
3. He humbled Himself
4. He became obedient to suffering

Jesus – His Clientele

- ✓ Parents too poor to sacrifice but turtledoves, and shepherds to first hear the announcement of His birth and come to worship
- ✓ Disciples who were fishermen, tax collectors and political zealots
- ✓ Followers who were prostitutes Mary Magdalene), blind from birth (Bartimaeus), murderers (Paul), sick, lame, leprous, hungry, thirsty, demon possessed, deaf, and already dead (Lazarus)

Jesus' clientele point to an upside down power shift of the "important" to surround the Messiah

The Cross

The cross speaks of vulnerability, frailty, pain, loss and shame – hardly power

Jesus choosing to die speaks of giving up one's power - weakness

YET - the cross has become a metaphor for life and upside down strength

- ✓ Dying to self
- ✓ Giving yourself away for the sake of others
- ✓ Ultimate humility

As such, the cross calls us to share in the "weakness" of God.

The infinitely POWERFUL became the most humanly weak.

The infinitely WISE lowered to our level to become the most humanly foolish.

AND - the cross confounded the wisdom and power of man.

The cross became God's wisest thought and most powerful demonstration.

In the cross, God redefined wisdom and power as we know it. The paradigm of power shifted.

And God freed His followers from striving to be achievers and performers for the world.

When Power Is Most Compelling

1. When SHARED WITH OTHERS (The cross is God's power-sharing with mankind)
2. When AVAILABLE TO THE WEAK (The Christian faith has always spread like wildfire among the oppressed & powerless (to slaves, to prisoners, to orphans, to the homeless ...))
3. When SIMPLIFIED (The best teachers are the ones who make difficult concepts understandable – "putting the cookies on the bottom shelf")

The CROSS shares life with all who would receive, empowering the weak and with a simple message that anyone can understand:

- ✓ God loves you and died to pay the price for your sins (John 3:16)
- ✓ Confess Jesus as Lord and believe in His resurrection from the grave and you will be saved (Romans 10:9)

THE NEW POWER PARADIGM (v. 29-31)

Because of Jesus and His cross, the new power paradigm has become:

1. **YIELDING** to others (Jesus died willingly to share the power of God with all who would receive it)
2. **TRUSTING** the Lord (Jesus was totally obedient to the Father's will and wisdom)

YIELDING TO OTHERS means (at least ...)

- a. Forbearance - forgiving even before they wrong you and "looking past" wrongs
Phil. 4:5 *Let your forbearance be known to all men. (Revised Version)*
- b. Regarding others as more important than yourself
Phil. 2:3b *Regard one another as more important than yourself.*
- c. Not letting their sins define them
1 Cor. 13:5 *[Love] does not take into account a wrong suffered.*
- d. Believing the best of them and hoping for the best (1 Cor. 13:7)
1 Cor. 13:7 *[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

TRUSTING THE LORD means (at least ...)

- a. Not relying on your own smarts and opinions
Prov. 3:5 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.*
- b. Going to God FIRST and FOREMOST
Prov. 3:6 *In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.*
- c. Cease striving and wait on God's timing and answer
Ps. 46:10 *Cease striving and know that I am God.*

BOASTING IN GOD ALONE

The new power paradigm makes boasting in one's self, nonsensical (v. 29); and boasting in God, essential. (v. 31).

Verse 31 quotes from the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 *Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me ..."*

SUMMARY OF THE WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD (v. 30)

1. **RIGHTEOUSNESS** - being right in God's eyes
God's PAST removal of the PENALTY of sin
2. **SANCTIFICATION** - being clean in God's eyes
God's PRESENT removal of the POWER of sin
3. **REDEMPTION (or DELIVERANCE)** - being ultimately saved in God's eyes
God's FUTURE removal of the PRESENCE of sin

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS UPSIDE DOWN PARADIGM OF POWER - REVEALED IN THE CROSS !