

1 Corinthians 1:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

Analysis

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called (blepete gar tēn klēsin hymōn, adelphoi, hoti ou polloi sophoi kata sarka, ou polloi dynatoi, ou polloi eugeneis, βλέπετε γὰρ τὴν κλήσιν ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς)—Paul invites the Corinthians to examine their own congregation as proof. **Not many wise... mighty... noble**—the church is not primarily composed of the social elite, intellectuals, or powerful. Kata sarka (κατὰ σάρκα, "according to the flesh") means by worldly standards—human wisdom, strength, pedigree.

Paul does not say none but not many—there were some educated, wealthy, and influential Corinthians (like Crispus, Gaius, Erastus the city treasurer, Rom 16:23). But the majority were ordinary, even socially marginal. God's calling is not determined by human qualifications but by sovereign grace. This undercuts Corinthian boasting and factionalism: they have no grounds for pride, since God chose them despite (not because of) their credentials.

Historical Context

Corinthian society was stratified: patricians, freedmen, slaves. The church included all classes, but the majority were lower-status. Some wealthy patrons may have leveraged their social standing to create factions, expecting deference from

poorer members. Paul reminds them that God's calling ignores worldly status—a radical, countercultural claim in honor-shame culture.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Why does God typically call "not many wise, mighty, or noble" according to worldly standards?
2. How does the social composition of the church challenge worldly values of success, status, and credentials?
3. In what ways might churches today cater to the wealthy and educated rather than welcoming the lowly and marginalized?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Βλέπετε | γὰρ | τὴν | κλῆσιν | ὑμῶν | ἀδελφοί | ὅτι | οὐ |
| ye see | For | ^{G3588} | calling | your | brethren | how that | not |
| G991 | G1063 | | G2821 | G5216 | G80 | G3754 | G3756 |
| πολλοὶ | σοφοὶ | κατὰ | σάρκα | οὐ | πολλοὶ | δυνατοί | οὐ |
| many | wise men | after | the flesh | not | many | mighty | not |
| G4183 | G4680 | G2596 | G4561 | G3756 | G4183 | G1415 | G3756 |
| πολλοὶ | εὐγενεῖς· | | | | | | |
| many | noble | | | | | | |
| G4183 | G2104 | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

James 2:5 (Parallel theme): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

1 Corinthians 2:8 (Parallel theme): Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1 Corinthians 1:20 (Parallel theme): Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Luke 10:21 (Parallel theme): In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Luke 1:3 (Parallel theme): It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,