1 Corinthians 1:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

> 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:

Analysis

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 (kai ta agene tou kosmou kai ta exouthenēmena exelexato ho theos, ta me onta, hina ta onta katargēse, καὶ τὰ ἀγενῆ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὰ ἐξουθενημένα ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεός, τὰ μὴ ὄντα, ἵνα τὰ ὄντα καταργήσῃ)—Paul intensifies the paradox. God chose **base things** (agene, ἀγενῆ, "lowborn, ignoble") and **things despised** (exouthenēmena, ἐξουθενημένα, perfect passive participle: "things having been despised, treated as nothing"). **Things which are not** (ta me onta, τὰ μὴ ὄντα) means nobodies, non-entities by social reckoning—those who don't count.

God uses these **to bring to nought things that are** (hina ta onta katargēse, ἵνα τὰ ὄντα καταργήσῃ)—the verb katargeō (καταργέω, "to nullify, abolish, render powerless") means to reduce to zero. God nullifies worldly status, power, and pride by accomplishing His purposes through the despised. The pattern continues: the cross (ultimate shame) defeats sin and Satan (ultimate powers); resurrection (from death/non-being) conquers the grave. God creates ex nihilo (from nothing) and saves through the same principle.

Historical Context

In Greco-Roman society, honor and shame were paramount. Public reputation, social status, and patronage determined one's worth. Christianity turned this

upside down: God exalts the humble and humbles the exalted (Luke 1:52). The church's inclusion of slaves, women, and outcasts was scandalous—yet this radical equality testified to the gospel's transforming power.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What are "things which are not"—who are the nobodies and non-entities in today's world?
2. How does God use the despised and marginalized to "bring to nought" worldly power structures?
3. In what ways does the gospel invert social hierarchies and challenge status-seeking?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	τὰ	ἀγενῆ	τὰ	κόσμου	καὶ	τὰ
And	things which	base things	things which	of the world	And	things which
G2532	G3588	G36	G3588	G2889	G2532	G3588

ἐξουθενημένα	ἐξελέξατο	τὰ	θεός	καὶ	τὰ
things which are despised	chosen	things which	God	And	things which
G1848	G1586	G3588	G2316	G2532	G3588

μὴ	ὄντα	ἵνα	τὰ	ὄντα	καταργήσῃ
not	are	to	things which	are	bring to nought
G3361	G5607	G2443	G3588	G5607	G2673

Additional Cross-References

Job 34:24 (Parallel theme): He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead.

Romans 4:17 (References God): (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Isaiah 2:11 (Parallel theme): The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

Isaiah 2:17 (Parallel theme): And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

Isaiah 41:12 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.