

## **“Things Which God Chose ...”**

*“... but God chose the foolish things of the world that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are; that no flesh should glory before God” (1 Cor. 1:27-29).*

In this chapter the apostle has manifestly confirmed the universal and eternal truth postulated by prophets of old who wrote, *“Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).* *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death” (Pro. 14:12).* Isaiah appealed to men to *“seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near ... For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways ...” (Isa. 55:6, 8).* The apostle had already quoted Isaiah by writing, *“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought” (1 Cor. 1:19; Isa. 29:14).* Paul emphasized this when he speaks of things God *“chose”*: things that are *“foolish;” “weak;” “base;” “despised”* and things *“that are not.”* The things God chose as *“foolishness”* is *“Christ crucified.”* The crucifixion of Jesus was contrary to all perceived wisdom for with the crucifixion came the accompanying resurrection; a conception wise men in Athens mocked and scoffed at (Acts 17:32f). To unbelieving, naive Festus, Paul’s declaration that God had raised Jesus was confirmation to him that Paul was insane (Acts 26:24). The *“foolishness”* of God puts to shame the wisdom of the wise. Our Lord said, *“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes” (Mt. 11:25).*

God chose the things that are weak. Pitting God’s weakness against man’s strength is no real contest. The mighty Goliath fell from a single stone thrust by the hand of “little David” (1 Sam. 17). Gideon’s 300 men were more than a match against Midianites, although their numbers were described as *“like locusts”* (Judges 7). The Assyrian king, Sennacherib, boasted in his chronicles of his victories that he had shut up “Hezekiah” like a bird in a cage (in Jerusalem). He failed to mention that God fought for Judah and 185,000 of his own men were slain in one night by Jehovah, and that he quietly folded up his tents and retreated back to his land again (2 Kings 19:35). The Hebrew writer puts it this way: *“turned to flight armies of aliens”* (11:34). By Jesus’ death, a fountain of life is opened to all who accept God’s invitation to come and drink.

God chose the "base" and "despised" things of the world to bring to naught "the things that are." Man, in all his wisdom and his veneration of carnal things, never comes to a knowledge of truth for the world, through its wisdom, does not know God. Yet the cross, a despised and hated object in the minds of those in the first century, has come to be an object to rejoice in and venerate. Paul said elsewhere, "But for be it for me to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). Through the cross Paul could be saved from his sins; through the great love the cross displayed, love for the world was crucified in Paul.

And God chose the things that "are not" to bring to naught "the things that are." Here "things that are not" refer to the attitude that men have toward the gospel: worthless, profitless, and bereft of value or virtue. Such is the estimation of "wise" men regarding the gospel! The Pharisees dismissed Jesus and His claims with this sort of reasoning. When soldiers (who had been sent to apprehend Jesus and returned without Him) were questioned, "Why did you not bring him?", their response was, "Never man spake like this man spake" (Jn. 7:45). Scornfully they were asked, "Are ye also led astray? Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees?" (Jn. 7:47f). In essence, "nobody, that is somebody, has accepted his doctrine." But "the things that are not" are the things that really count! Let us follow the instructions of the Hebrew writer: "Let us therefore go forth unto him, bearing his reproach" (Heb. 13:13).

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