

1 CORINTHIANS FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

J.K. MCKEE

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

1 CORINTHIANS

FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

© 2015 John Kimball McKee

All rights reserved. With the exception of quotations for academic purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: J.K. McKee personal photo

ISBN 978-1503009561 (paperback)

ASIN B01C7EPHKY (eBook)

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries
P.O. Box 516
McKinney, Texas 75070
(407) 933-2002

outreachisrael.net / outreachisrael.blog
messianicapologetics.net / messianicapologetics.blog

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, The Lockman Foundation.

Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Apocrypha are from the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), © 1952, Division of Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Fair Use Notice: This publication contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We make use of this material as a matter of teaching, scholarship, research, and commentary. We believe in good faith that this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law, and is in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. For more information go to: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>

Outreach Israel Ministries is a non-profit 501(c)3. All prices listed on the publications of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics are suggested donations.

is intended to convey how human wisdom and cleverness will not amount to much in the view of an Eternal God—especially if it is wisdom from pagan Corinth.

V. 19 is recognized to include a loose quotation from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 29:14: “Therefore look, I will proceed to remove this people. I will remove them and destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will hide” (NETS). This word was originally given in the context of the wise of Jerusalem thinking an alliance with Egypt was the only true defense to be effective against Assyria (2 Kings 18:17-19:37), when their confidence should have instead been placed entirely in the Lord. In a similar way, any of the presumed “wise” or “knowledgable” of the world—which may have included various purported Corinthian Believers—will be shown to be nothing by the true wisdom of God (v. 24), requiring all to turn to Him for sure and steadfast deliverance.

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

1:20 It is to be properly recognized that the presumed wise of the world—those who are knowledgeable and astute, in their own human strength—were present throughout both the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds. The CJB has for v. 20, “Where does that leave the philosopher, the *Torah*-teacher, or any of today's thinkers? Hasn't God made this world's wisdom look pretty foolish?” The way the Montgomery New Testament puts it is, “Sage, rabbi, skeptic of this present age—where are they all? Has not God made foolish the philosophy of the world?” The NEB offers the criticizing rendering, “Where is the wise man now, your man of learning, or your subtle debater—limited, all of them, to this passing age?”

It cannot go unnoticed how Paul's words bear some similarity to communication models which preceded him in the Tanach:

“Well then, where are your wise men? Please let them tell you, and let them understand what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt” (Isaiah 19:12).

“Your heart will meditate on terror: ‘Where is he who counts? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?’” (Isaiah 33:18).

“Causing the omens of boasters to fail, making fools out of diviners, causing wise men to draw back and turning their knowledge into foolishness” (Isaiah 44:25).

“He makes counselors walk barefoot and makes fools of judges” (Job 12:17).

Paul's own later statement, of Colossians 2:8, should also be recognized: “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition

of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Messiah.” Referencing 1 Corinthians 1:20 in his Second Century letter, Iganitius of Antioch would add the question, “Where is the boasting of those who are thought to be intelligent?” (*To the Ephesians* 18:1).⁷⁷

Even though one can probably sub-divide and speculate more on “Where is the wise? Where is the Sofer? Where is the lawyer of this world?” (HNV), Paul’s purpose was not really to focus on the specifics of both Jewish and Greco-Roman intelligentsia—but rather to emphasize how their human wisdom does not amount to very much, and is most limited, in view of an Eternal God. Garland concludes,

“Paul skewers those who refract their search for truth through the lens of human wisdom and derive their status from their expertise. These who have made it their goal to search for ‘truth’ greet with skepticism anything that does not match their own prejudgment of what truth is. God’s truth, revealed in the cross, fails to meet the intellectual elite’s criteria...”⁷⁸

1:21 Paul’s statement of v. 21 can seem a bit skewed, unless read two or three times by some, because its main purpose is to demonstrate how the wisdom of God is superior to human wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 3:7): “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (RSV). The reality present is that in God’s wise purpose or ordering of affairs (cf. Acts 14:16; 17:30), it is shown how human wisdom is shown to be insufficient in seeking Him. And as Paul observes, the apparent “foolishness” of the good news—“foolishness” in mortal estimation (v. 18; also Luke 10:21)—is what actually has the legitimate power to save and redeem people.

Some may take v. 21 as implying that a figure like the Apostle Paul is completely against all human wisdom and knowledge, when the main issue is how human wisdom is frequently used as a means of boasting (v. 29), reliance in one’s own power or strength, and hence as an impetus by which people can dismiss God the Creator. This does not mean that all human wisdom and knowledge are valueless and meaningless, because human beings are created by God and bear His image (Genesis 1:27), and many—in spite of various limitations—do possess a yearning for knowing who they truly are, what the meaning of their life is, and what their purpose is in association with some Divine Being. Paul would attest of how for many of his fellow Jews, “For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge” (Romans 10:2). Various Athenians, when hearing about Yeshua of Nazareth and the resurrection of the dead, were intrigued, saying, “We shall hear you again concerning this” (Acts 17:32).

⁷⁷ Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 197.

⁷⁸ Garland, 65.

22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Messiah crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Messiah the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1:22 The Apostle Paul notes some of the major tendencies of the two major groups of people who would have encountered the gospel message in the Mediterranean: “For Jewish people ask for signs and Greek people seek after wisdom” (TLV). To some degree, one can sense an echo of Numbers 14:11: “The LORD said to Moses, ‘How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?’” No one group of people is excluded from their mortal tendencies, and indeed limited wisdom (v. 21), to demand something of Israel’s Messiah *on their terms*. The view of Fee on what is being witnessed here has to be mentioned:

“Paul...[divides] the ‘perishing’ into two basic classes, chosen partly because they reflect his Jewish view of the world, but mostly because they reflect the two basic ways that humanity in its ‘right mind’ (i.e., through wisdom) is religious. Thus the ‘Jews’ and ‘Greeks’ here illustrate the basic idolatries of humanity.”⁷⁹

In the Gospels, it is witnessed how many Jews did indeed demand signs of Yeshua the Messiah (Matthew 12:38-39; 16:1-4; Mark 8:11-13; Luke 11:15-20; John 6:26-29, 30-34). It should be recognized that such a sign or *sēmeion*, is rightly recognized to be associated with the “Hebrew [*ot*], a sign, mark, token” (Thayer),⁸⁰ in the case of Yeshua being challenged involving “signs, omens promised by prophets as pledges of certain predicted events” (BDB).⁸¹ Witherington indicates that this is “not just a miracle, but a miracle meant to demonstrate or prove one’s power,”⁸² hence the TLV having “Jews want miracles for proof, and Greeks look for wisdom.” Such a demand for signs, of course, is witnessed to be a distrust for God and His purposes. Yeshua answered how the major sign that His generation would witness would be the sign of Jonah, directly associated with His death (Matthew 12:39-40; 16:4; Luke 11:29-30).

1:23 Quite contrary to what the world system might try to limit a figure like Paul to do, he is confident in how “we preach Messiah crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to the nations foolishness” (PME). Whether one was Jewish, Greek, or Roman—all of the major groups in the Mediterranean whom Paul would encounter, were likely to have some strong, negative reactions, to the good news. As Fee explains, “‘Christ crucified’ is a contradiction in terms, of the same category as ‘fried ice.’ One may have a Messiah, or one may have a

⁷⁹ Fee, 74.

⁸⁰ Thayer, 573.

⁸¹ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 16.

⁸² Witherington, 113.

crucifixion; but one may not have both—at least not from the perspective of merely human understanding.”⁸³

To many Jews, Yeshua the Messiah is a *skandalon*, “**that which causes offense or revulsion and results in opposition, disapproval, or hostility, fault, stain**” (BDAG),⁸⁴ something which is rooted within the language of the Tanach (Isaiah 8:11-15; 28:16; cf. 1 Peter 2:6). A crucified or hung messiah, would be viewed as one who was cursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23; cf. Galatians 3:13), not as a kind of liberator. On the contrary, an executed messiah would be considered a failure.

Of critical importance would be the expectation of Isaiah 53 (cf. 1 Peter 2:22), which has doubtlessly been interpreted in many different ways by the Jewish theological tradition—but which those who acknowledge Yeshua as Israel’s Messiah have recognized to speak of Him. Yeshua as a stumbling-block or scandal would have been especially true of those who looked for a different kind of messiah, and those who held to different interpretations and views of various Tanach prophecies. Witherington indicates, “They looked for a messiah who would come and triumph over their foes, not to be executed by them! A crucified Messiah was an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. It does not appear that Isaiah 53 was thought to refer to a messiah in early Judaism.”⁸⁵ Yet, it is the Divine Author of Scripture who gets the final say on what His Word means—not human recipients! When inquired by His Disciples when the Kingdom was to be restored to Israel, the Lord answered, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7). As David H. Stern validity states in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*,

“[A]ll Jewish hopes in the Messiah centered on his restoring self-rule to Israel (Act 1:6-7&N) and bringing peace to the earth (Isaiah 2:1-5). Given such expectations, a Messiah crucified by Roman oppressors seems an insuperable obstacle. But careful reading of the *Tanakh* shows that the obstacle is removed by understanding that the prophets predicted an inglorious first coming of the Messiah to die for the sins of the world (Isaiah 52:11-53:10; Zechariah 9:9, 12:10) before being resurrected (Isaiah 53:10; Psalm 16:10), returning to the Father in Heaven (Psalm 110:1) and coming again in glory to fulfill these hopes (Isaiah 53:10-12).”⁸⁶

⁸³ Fee, 75.

⁸⁴ BDAG, 926.

⁸⁵ Witherington, 109.

Ibid., fn#7 indicates that at the time of his writing, that various data had been released with new evidence to the contrary, which he had yet to examine.

Various publications that are common to much of the Messianic movement, addressing the issue of Isaiah 53, include: Mitch Glaser, *Isaiah 53 Explained* (New York: Chosen People Productions, 2010); Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012); Herbert W. Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel’s King* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012).

⁸⁶ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 443.

While many First Century Jewish people had problems with Yeshua of Nazareth as a Messiah sacrificed for their sins, to Greeks and Romans, a crucified figure had to be someone of dishonor and shame. As the Goodspeed New Testament puts it, such a premise is “absurd to the heathen.” The Second Century figure Lucian absolutely mocked the Believers of his day, thinking that they were utter fools for abandoning Greek polytheism and serving someone crucified:

“Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property, receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence. So if any charlatan and trickster, able to profit by occasions, comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk” (*The Passing of Peregrinus* 13).⁸⁷

Commentators have certainly had to elaborate on how Greeks and Romans considered a crucified messiah to be something of an absurdity—as though an event of humiliation is actually the means by which salvation and ultimate triumph may be found. Hays describes some of the political subversion that Yeshua’s crucifixion represented:

“Crucifixion was a gruesome punishment administered by the Romans to ‘make an example’ out of rebels or disturbers of the *Pax Romana*. As a particularly horrible form of public torture and execution, it was designed to demonstrate that no one should defy the powers that be. Yet Paul’s gospel declares that the crucifixion of Jesus is somehow the event through which God has triumphed over those powers. Rather than proving the sovereignty of Roman political order, it shatters the world’s systems of authority.”⁸⁸

More generally, for Jews, Greeks, Romans, and anyone else in the First Century world, the proclamation of Yeshua as *the Savior* is one that ran completely contrary to what most people would expect—clearly because God’s wisdom is far superior (vs. 19, 21). Soards further observes,

“For Paul, in this rejection of human norms, God truly shows himself to be God precisely because he refuses to let humans dictate terms; and so he acts in sheer defiance of their expectations so that God’s own way of working is presented as a saving reality that humans can experience only on God’s terms. Humans are forced to shelve their standards and to swallow their pride; they either accept or reject God for who he shows himself to be.”⁸⁹

1:24 In spite of some of the mortal limitations that exist in recognizing the Messiah, Paul details to the Corinthians, “But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (NLT). There are Jewish people and those of the nations, who are able to see the power and wisdom of the Creator manifest in the work

⁸⁷ Lucian: *Lucian With an English Translation*, trans. A.M. Harmon (London: William Heinemann, 1962), 15.

⁸⁸ Hays, 31.

⁸⁹ Soards, 42.

of Yeshua of Nazareth. As Proverbs 19:21 directs, “Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand.”

In seeing a reference to “Messiah is God's power and God's wisdom” (CJB), there are certainly theological discussions as to whether the Son and His work are just to be taken as manifestations of the Father's power and wisdom, or if there might be more intended beyond virtue. Taking power and wisdom as a representation of God's majesty, is most natural, given a word like Daniel 2:20-22:

“Daniel said, ‘Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.’”

With various emphases on what the wisdom and power of God represent—both to the unbelieving world at large, as well as to the Corinthian Believers and the challenges they were facing—interpreters have often taken Paul's words here to be demonstrable of God's superiority. Morris states, “The idea of wisdom runs through this passage; clearly the Corinthians had emphasized it. But to Greek intellectuals the cross was utter folly; it made no sense; there was no wisdom in it.”⁹⁰ Hays makes the direct point of how for Paul, “He is in effect saying to the Corinthians, ‘You want wisdom? All right, here is the wisdom that God has provided us: Christ Jesus. And remember, that means Christ Jesus *crucified!*’”⁹¹ With some of the speculation present that Paul's reference to Yeshua as “wisdom” should be connected to the figure of Wisdom, Sampley offers the critical thought,

“This linkage of power and wisdom should be interpreted by Paul's identification of the gospel as ‘the power of God for salvation’ (Rom 1:16) and refers not to Christ as some incarnated wisdom but to Christ's death and resurrection as the locus of God's power effectively working in and for believers.”⁹²

The figure of Wisdom (Heb. *chokmah*; Grk. *sophia*) is widely seen in Proverbs 8, 24, Wisdom 7-9 in the Apocrypha, the works of Philo, and various other bodies of Second Temple Jewish literature. Mainly, the figure of Wisdom for Second Temple Judaism, was a created force of God, which assisted God in creating the universe, and may also have some intermediary function. Those who tend to hold to a low Christology of Yeshua not being God, or only semi- or quasi-Divine, tend to strongly identify Yeshua as Wisdom. Others, however, will note that the figure of Wisdom in Second Temple Judaism bears some similarity with Yeshua in terms of function, but that Yeshua is ultimately different in terms of purpose (i.e., as would be witnessed in John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-20), thus indicating that Yeshua is

⁹⁰ Morris, 46.

⁹¹ Hays, 33.

⁹² Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:812.

indeed truly God. Various interpreters of 1 Corinthians, on some level, do identify Yeshua with, or at least make connections with the Messiah, and Wisdom.⁹³

It would seem to be a stretch to make any connection between the figure of Wisdom and Yeshua the Messiah in v. 24, as human beings rejecting God's majesty and strategy, is the actual subject being addressed.

1:25 God's superiority over all mortal machinations is witnessed: "For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (NRSV). Even if God could be considered "foolish" or "weak," God is still superior to human wisdom and human strength. While the Apostle Paul states this conclusion to demonstrate the folly of rejecting Yeshua the Messiah, it would also have served a purpose in admonishing the Corinthians for the diverse problems they faced. Many were consumed with knowledge and wisdom of their own origination, and as a result—even though claiming the Lord—had to have considered themselves self-sufficient and with little need for Him. And, as Sampley draws out, this not only had a broad consequence of dismissing the power of the good news and Yeshua's cross, it would have inevitably brought about divisions and rivalry among the Believers:

"The Corinthians are not contending about some intellectual or even theological issue as if such notions could exist in a classroom or debating hall. They are competing for status. Wisdom and its cultured speech earned status in the culture of Paul's time. Peripatetic sages, skilled in rhetoric, claimed status for themselves and exploited others for their own ends. Their teaching drew its power from capitalizing on the social conventions that accorded power and status to a teacher and to what he taught when it was persuasively expressed in eloquence. In such a human transaction, the only power at stake is the power one can evoke from the hearers; the hearers generate the power by the very granting of it to a speaker....Paul sees that the gospel's power depends on nothing but God's own power and not at all on the social and cultural conventions of power."⁹⁴

⁹³ Cf. Bruce, pp 35-36, Witherington, 116; Keener, 28.

Against: Soards, 44; Thiselton, pp 203-204 who is especially negative toward it in terms of feminist theology.

⁹⁴ Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:812.

26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 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, 28 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, 29 so that no man may boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Messiah Yeshua, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD” [Jeremiah 9:24].

1:26 The Apostle Paul asks the Corinthians to remember the conditions by which they had originally received Yeshua. He tells them, “Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth” (TNIV). While there will further statements made about calling (7:17-24), the *klēsis* in view is definitely a calling to salvation, and the subsequent life of sanctification that it entails. Ciampa and Rosner similarly note, “The ‘call’ Paul has in mind here is the summons to salvation, which is also a vocational call.”⁹⁵ They further state, “Paul conceives of his call to apostleship as granting him a specific task (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1). Throughout the letter, the Corinthians’ calling, in keeping with their new identity as God’s holy people, is that of all holy/sanctified people (or things), namely, to preserve and protect God’s holiness and glory.”⁹⁶

Given the textual themes that exist, any vocational calling that might be present or detectable in 1 Corinthians, is that a calling to salvation brings with it the required vocation of a holy life unto God; a particular station in life as a permanent condition to be unchanged is hardly in the mind of Paul.

The demographics among the Corinthian Messiah followers were not from the high and mighty of society. Blomberg elaborates, “Not many were among the seemingly wise philosophers or rhetoricians; not many were powerful (‘influential’) in the government, military, or religious circles; not many were born into wealthy families...Many slaves and freedmen had made their way to Corinth.”⁹⁷ While the good news is something that is declared to all, for whatever reason, it was those among the more lowly of Corinthian society who had mainly received it. And, concerning some of the common features of Greco-Roman culture, the introduction of those who “were powerful...[and] of noble birth” (NRSV), into the assembly, may have been a factor in seeing a number of problems erupt. At the very least, some of the values of such people have been introduced into the faith community. Garland explains,

⁹⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, 103.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Blomberg, 53.

“[T]he well-to-do donat[e] benefactions—large banquets, a variety of public spectacles, temples, and great monuments—to enhance their public reputation. Paul’s attention to questions of social identity and status reveal his concern that the values of the culture in which the Corinthians live have inched their way into the [assembly] and are creating the divisions.”⁹⁸

1:27 With the God of Israel on the scene, there is a reversal to be manifest, as what the world would consider normal is treated by God as being abnormal. Paul once again (v. 21) details, “to shame the wise, God has chosen what the world counts a folly, and to shame the strong, God has chosen what the world counts weakness” (REB). The Lord being an instrument of shame toward people in the wrong, is certainly witnessed in the Tanach (Psalm 6:10; 35:4). More important would be how a reversal of status is something witnessed in the Tanach and Apostolic Writings (1 Samuel 2:1-8; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 1:52; John 9:39).

1:28 The reliance on human strength, wisdom, power, and intelligence, is further explained by Paul to be something meaningless—because the Father via His Son, has brought redemption to many of the lowly Corinthians, and has used an often dismissed instrument of the cross as the means by which all people can be saved. Paul elucidates, “God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something” (HCSB). Generally, as Stephen C. Barton concludes, this represents how the grace of God in Yeshua was subversive to the values of a city like Corinth, with His true power demonstrated not in human-contrived status, but instead in the offer of forgiveness to people:

“This is a statement of radical grace to a creation unable to help itself. It implies that human pride and competitive achievement are to be the basis for personal identity and sociability no longer. The anthropocentrism which pervades the Hellenistic cultural values of Corinth and sets human beings at odds with each other in a perpetual contest for dominance is placed under God’s judgment and electing grace.”⁹⁹

Prior makes some critical observations in how salvation coming to many of the lower classes in Corinth is something that necessarily would shame those of the higher classes. This is precisely the reason why the wisdom and power of God are often considered foolishness to the world at large—as God’s grace and mercy reach out *to all* and not just *to some*:

“...Christianity [meaning, Messiah faith] spread most rapidly amongst the lower classes of Mediterranean society, and this single fact (in class-conscious Greek and Roman society) was partly the cause of it being so offensive. The riff-raff were being converted, saved, changed. God picked out the scum of the earth and made them kings and priests in his kingdom [cf. Revelation 5:9-10]. This was precisely what Jesus had himself indicated when announcing his own ministry: ‘He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor’ [Luke 4:16ff]. This is the way of God, his wisdom, by the power of God.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Garland, 74.

⁹⁹ Barton, in ECB, 1319.

¹⁰⁰ Prior, 46.

It is clear enough that the standard of God is not the standard of the world (cf. Isaiah 55:8-9; James 2:1-9). Sampley addresses how the assembly, established by Paul in Corinth, is something that very much emulated the ministry example of Yeshua Himself—and unfortunately how not enough Western Christians follow this today:

“The descriptions of those whom God chose (1:27-28) have their parallels in the people the four Gospels delight in showing Jesus as having fellowship with: lepers, tax collectors, prostitutes—in short, outsiders. It is ironic that while Jesus welcomed such people and Paul’s church at Corinth seems to have been predominantly populated by persons of low social and economic standing, modern churches too often are not even hospitable to such. Some churches even ponder the propriety of having a food kitchen in the church because of the people it might attract.”¹⁰¹

1:29-30 The purpose of God moving to save the lowly, and not just the high, is so “that no flesh should boast before God” (v. 29, PME). An all-powerful Creator moving to redeem all of His human creations via their trust in His Messiah (cf. Ephesians 2:8), reveals Him to be absolutely superior to any Greek or Roman deities that might be concerned exclusively with the rich or high in society—and only after such rich or high have appeased them, perhaps through promises of building temples to them or winning various battles for them. Paul tells the Corinthians—quite contrary to any pagan ideas of appeasing a god or goddess, or any merit they sought from their own wisdom—“Yet from this same God you have received your standing in Jesus Christ, and he has become for us the true wisdom, a matter, in practice, of being made righteous and holy, in fact, of being redeemed” (v. 30, Phillips New Testament). Paul will later explain that with redemption in the God of Israel, comes the sacred trust of representing Him in the world, and being ambassadors of the reconciliation provided in Yeshua (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). And, while God’s wisdom is manifested in the work of Yeshua, and the righteousness and sanctification and redemption—Hays is keen to note, “All three of these words reconnect the significance of Jesus with the story of God’s redemption of Israel to be a holy people in covenant with him.”¹⁰²

1:31 While boasting or glorying in human flesh is something prohibited to Paul, boasting or glorying in the Lord is something to be encouraged: “Therefore—as the *Tanakh* says—‘Let anyone who wants to boast, boast about ADONAI’” (CJB). Generally, it is agreed that v. 31 includes a quotation taken from Jeremiah 9:24, “but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things.” It has also been thought that a reference from the Septuagint version of 1 Samuel 2:10 might have been intended:

“The Lord will make his adversary weak; the Lord is holy. Let not the clever boast in his cleverness, and let not let the mighty boast in his might, and let not the wealthy boast in his wealth, but let him who boasts boast in this: to understand and know the Lord and to execute

¹⁰¹ Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:816.

¹⁰² Hays, 33.

justice and righteousness in the midst of the land. The Lord ascended to the heavens and thundered. He will judge earth's ends and gives strength to our kings and will exalt the horn of his anointed" (NETS).

Indeed, boasting or glorying in the Lord comes with it a recognition of His supremacy and power!

