

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The wisdom of God (3)

Wisdom in humility

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The wisdom of God” the third message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

God is perfectly good and infinitely wise, yet His wisdom is often not appreciated because our values and goals are often very different from what is in His heart and what He wants to accomplish. This is seen in His wisdom expressed in the area of humility.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

In the last message, we considered the wisdom of God expressed in the cross.

It is something that is so very wonderful and yet, it is something that not many people can so readily appreciate because it is contrary to what the natural mind would think of.

The apostle Paul tells us: "...Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles, foolishness." To people of the world whose hearts are not truly open to God, the cross is a stumbling block or foolishness; but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

So the greatest manifestation of the wisdom of God in the context of His perfect moral goodness is seen in the cross.

Today we go on to consider another aspect of the wisdom of God very much associated with the cross, but manifested in the area of humility. God deals with us in relation to this area of humility. How much we will benefit from what God wants to give to us, how He wants to help us very much depends on this area.

Let us go on to **1 Corinthians 1: 26-31**.

1 Corinthians 1: 26-31

- 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 Christ Jesus, 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."

The apostle Paul, in referring to the message of the cross and how God has sought to help mankind, told the Corinthian Christians that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble amongst them who benefited from the message of the cross.

He says: "...consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many..." So the vast majority of the Corinthians were not wise according to the flesh; they were not mighty, they were not noble. They were people who might have been despised by those people who were more able, those people in the higher positions in society.

So why is it that God chose these people? Why did God work in the Corinthians in such a way?

The apostle Paul explains: "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 he is telling us that there are many things in this world that people are very confident in, they take pride in; they take pride in these things and they despise those whom they perceive to be weak, to be not so wise, not strong; and God worked in the situation to contradict this, to help the people of the world recognize what is true wisdom, what is true power, what is true value in life.

Verse 29, he says: "...so that no man may boast before God". So there is a direction in the way that God works in this way. The objective as expressed here, one of the major aspects, is that: no man may boast before God.

Why is that so important? Why is it boasting before God is so very negative and damaging?

If we pause, we consider, we may be able to appreciate more the wisdom of God in this area. When people boast before God, basically in the context of what the apostle Paul is talking about, they are boasting about themselves: about what they can do, how clever they are, what they can accomplish, what they can achieve, and in that state, their attitude, their spirit is not right before God.

We are created beings, and whatever abilities we may have were given by God: whatever we can accomplish and achieve is the result of what God has provided.

So, when we boast, concentrating on ourselves and our abilities, we are boasting beyond what is proper and what is right.

When we think further and we consider the people who can develop quality that is pleasing to God, they need the quality of humility in order to develop.

For example, we consider the message of the cross. Who will respond to the message of the cross? At the heart of the message is repentance: because we have sinned, we need a Saviour; those who are sick need a physician.

So, if we are proud, we are not prepared to acknowledge that we have sinned, that we need a Saviour then we will not be saved.

It is those who are prepared to acknowledge their need, who are prepared to acknowledge that they have sinned and they are under the judgment of God, they need God's forgiveness, who will repent, who will come before God with gratitude, asking God for His mercy.

So, there are many people who reject the message of the gospel because they think, "I do not need God. It is foolish to believe in such a God."

When we concentrate on ourselves and what we can do, the values in our hearts will turn from the perfection in God to the self-desires of the flesh. And this is something that can easily happen if we are not conscious, not prayerful, in seeking the Lord to teach us His ways.

We may then think that it is advantageous for us to be in a lowly position: If we are not so clever, if we are not so mighty then we will be chosen by God; so people who are wise in this world, people who are noble in this world will be rejected – in reality, there is some truth in that but not accurate.

People who are lowly, people who are not so wise, not so capable, it is easier for them to humble themselves, to acknowledge their need, to come to God and to say they need a Saviour. Students who are not very able, who make many mistakes can quite readily acknowledge, “I need some help” but those who are quite clever, even though they need help may not say so. They want to prove that they can do it without help.

If you observe what is taking place in the world, we may realize that in many parts of the world, the percentage of Christians who are women, female, is much higher than that of males. Why? Why is that so? It seems to be advantageous to be a female if we consider becoming a Christian.

From what we can ponder about, the likely reason is that man is created physically different from women and physically generally, they are stronger, they are more able, they earn a living, they provide for the family.

So in that kind of situation, it is quite easy for them to be proud, quite easy for them to be self-confident and they may not wish to acknowledge their need of God, of help.

On the other hand, women may feel weak and they are vulnerable and in many parts of the world, women are abused by the men and they feel insecure. In such a state, it is easier for them to come to God to ask for His help.

So it is easier for us to be humble when we are in a humble position, when we are in a lowly position, when we are not so able, not so capable.

But is it true that if we are in that kind of position, we will have a meaningful faith in God, we will truly be humble, we will truly walk with God and follow Him?

Let us consider **1 Corinthians 4: 7-10**.

1 Corinthians 4: 7-10

- 7 For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?
- 8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, *I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.*
- 9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.
- 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

So notice that on the one hand, the apostle Paul mentioned that many of these Corinthians, they benefited from the message of the cross because they were not wise according to the flesh, they were not mighty, they were not noble. Yet here he says they are still boasting. He says: "...why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

The Corinthians had benefited from God's grace; they had received from God much blessings. Yet they were boasting as if they had not received them. "You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us..." So there was exaltation, there was pride, there was boasting even though they began as people who were not wise, not so capable but God had helped them.

So the apostle Paul says: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor."

The apostle Paul was faithful to God, was often despised by other people; many wanted to kill him, many rejected him but the Corinthians, they could receive honour, they were distinguished, they were regarded as strong.

So while on the one hand the message of the gospel is meant to save those who are humble, who respond to God so that they would not boast before God, yet in reality we find that those who initially may not be strong but when God has helped them, they may become boastful.

When we look at the passage more carefully, we also notice the apostle Paul says: "...there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble..." He did not say there was not any wise according to the flesh, not any mighty, not any noble. That means what he is saying is that yes, there are more people who are in the category of not so able who have benefited from the cross, but there are also others who may be capable who also benefit from the cross.

So then what is the outcome? Why is it that there will be those who in the end will become proud; there are others who remain humble? What is the real issue?

When we look at the lives of the people recorded in the Scriptures, when we consider our own lives and the people that we know, we may come to the understanding that ultimately, it is our choice: What do you really want in life?

Yes, there can be certain situations that make it easier for you to choose a certain course of action but what if that situation becomes very difficult - will you still choose that course of action? Likewise, you may begin with a context that is very difficult for you to choose, but that does not mean you cannot choose that path.

Ultimately, it is still a question of: What do you really want in your life? What do you want to commit yourself to?

1 John 2: 16

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

So here it tells us that the boastful pride of life comes from the spirit of the world. If we choose to be identified with the world, if we choose to love the world, if we want what the world can offer to us then the boastful pride of life will be part of us in some form or other, sooner or later. In some situations, it may not be very obvious but it will manifest itself in the right circumstances.

So God's grace toward us is no guarantee that we will be humble. God's mercy toward us in helping us in our need cannot ensure that we will be humble and grateful to Him. That is up to us.

Let us consider an example in the Old Testament:

2 Chronicles 26: 3-5

- 3 Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem.
- 4 He did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father Amaziah had done.
- 5 He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him.

So here we have a record of a young man sixteen years of age when he became king and he reigned for a long time: fifty-two years in Jerusalem.

And we are told that he continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah... and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him. So he benefited very much from the grace of God; God helped him significantly as long as he sought the LORD.

Then we read **verse 16 of chapter 26**:

2 Chronicles 26: 16

But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.

“...when he became strong”: This tells us that previously, he was not strong. It was because God helped him; God caused him to prosper and he became strong.

“...when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly...” So there is a relationship between becoming strong and becoming proud. When you are strong, it is easy to become proud. When you are weak, you are more conscious of your need of God.

So this is an issue that we need to ponder about and consider: our context, how we live our lives, what can influence us and how we need to beware.

In this situation, we may wonder: Should God then have helped him to be strong? Would not it have been better if he had remained weak? Then he might have continued to seek the Lord.

That is one way of looking at it, and sometimes that may take place. But our lives are dynamic: our circumstances do not determine what choice we will make.

If God had not helped him to be strong, it is possible also he might have become discouraged, he might have lost faith in God, but when God helped him to prosper, he could have become very grateful and deepened in his walk with God.

So we cannot say that this situation will lead to that outcome in our choice.

His heart was so proud because he focused on himself: what he wanted, what he enjoyed, what he found helpful in his context in the world. So as he became strong, he became proud and became self-confident and was no longer conscious of worshiping God in the right spirit. So he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. This was something that was not for him to do but he was presumptuous because he felt strong.

If we want to know God, if we want to live a life that is meaningful before God then we need to understand God's wisdom in this area. God helps us when we are humble and after He has helped us, we may become proud – and this is very dangerous. We must remain humble as we receive God's help.

The Lord Jesus tells us that we must have faith like a little child; we must humble ourselves like a little child.

It is easy for a little child to be humble because he knows that he knows very little; so for him to be humble is quite easy. But look at that same child who was humble when he was young: If he grows up and if he becomes very capable, very wise in this world, acknowledged by other people, is he likely to remain humble? Not so likely.

But does he have to become proud? No, he can still remain humble – and that is where the quality is.

When we grow up and we are able and if we remain humble like a little child, then there is quality in our lives. And that is what God is seeking to help us to develop.

When we were weak, He helped us. When we become strong, will we still be humble before Him, will we still acknowledge Him in the right spirit and not boast in what we have become?

Isaiah 57: 15

For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell *on* a high and holy place, And *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite..."

God is the high and exalted One, the Ruler of the whole universe. He dwells in a high and holy place but He says: "And *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit". He deliberately selects this term to help us understand: the contrite and lowly of spirit.

The contrite are those who when they have failed, when they have sinned, they are very sorry. They acknowledge their sins, they are prepared to change; they come to God for forgiveness. The lowly of spirit: they are not boastful in themselves, in what they are or what they can do, what they can be, and it is such a spirit that God appreciates and He will revive the spirit of the lowly; He will revive the heart of the contrite.

Sometimes the lowly and the contrite may be very discouraged, depressed; they may feel hopeless because the conditions are difficult and they may have failed very badly. God understands and God is prepared to reach out to such people to help them, if they are genuinely contrite and they are prepared to change, they are prepared to come to God for help.

If we want to be humble, let us appreciate there are many different aspects of humility.

There is an aspect that is fundamental, basic that all of us must have if we are to be Christians, and that is: we must be humble enough to sincerely acknowledge that we have sinned, we need a Saviour and we want to change our lives; we ask God for help, we thank Him for having provided the path of forgiveness for us. This is basic humility that is required for everyone who wishes to benefit from the cross. If we are not prepared to acknowledge that we have sinned and we need forgiveness, then we cannot be forgiven.

So that is basic humility that all of us must have, but we should not be satisfied just to have that basic humility.

Humility is a very, very important, precious aspect of character and the highest level of humility is manifested in the character of God Himself. God manifests His humility in a form that is very difficult for us to fully appreciate, but we should ponder over and draw near to Him as we appreciate that.

Philippians 2: 5-11

- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.
- 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
- 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We are exhorted to have this attitude in ourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus came into this world and He lived His life as the perfect Man in order to help us.

Before He came into this world, who was He? He was God: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He came into this world; He did not cease to be God. He continued to be God but He was also man. He lived like us, in a body like ours, to face the temptations that we face. He existed in the form of God; He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself... He came into this world – He left the glory of heaven, the majesty of His position in heaven, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

So the Lord Jesus humbled Himself in terms of His position of glory and honour and power, in order to live a life that was despised by people, rejected by men – very much dishonour that was heaped upon Him because of His love for us.

That love of the Lord Jesus Christ had to be manifested in humility if He were to truly help us in our need. If the Lord Jesus refused to leave the glory of heaven, if He came into this world as the King of kings and Lord of lords, how could we be helped? We will still be in our sins.

It was because He was prepared to come into this world as a man who could be ill-treated by others, who could be rejected and despised, that He could take our place on the cross.

And when He had done so fully, God raised Him from the dead and God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name ...

It does not mean that we must always be in a lowly position, that that is always the best, but the point is we must be prepared to do so. We must be willing to take any position, go through any situation that God sees fit for us, if He is to accomplish His purpose in our lives.

Isaiah 53: 2-5

- 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
- 3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
- 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.
- 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

It is generally recognized that this passage was a prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and He has fulfilled it.

It cannot describe anyone else; it fits the Lord Jesus perfectly. He came into this world in such a form that there was no *stately* form or majesty. It was not something that was very appealing to mankind. There was not the appearance that we should be attracted to Him: it was not in the physical realm that men would be drawn to Him. The drawing power of the Lord Jesus is not in the physical realm when He first came into this world; it may be so when He comes again in His majesty but when He first came, He was not in that form of majesty. People may not be attracted to Him; not only that, He was despised and forsaken of men.

What attracted the people whose hearts were right would not be the physical; it was the spiritual and the moral. Those whose hearts were open to God, those who loved what is truly good would be able to see in the Lord Jesus the perfection of God, the moral quality of the being of God – and that is what should attract us when we think of the Lord Jesus. Many of the Jews, they wanted the Lord Jesus to be King in the physical realm.

What about us? What do we want the Lord Jesus to do for us in our lives?

Are we concerned about our job, our family situation, our physical health as the primary thing? Or are we more concerned about the spiritual quality of our being and we want Him to help us in this area? If this is what we want, then let us focus on the heart of the Lord Jesus and we will be able to appreciate what He can do for us in transforming us to be like Him. We “eat of His flesh”, we “drink of His blood”, we partake of His life and we can be transformed to become like Him.

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Why? It was not because He indulged in self-pity that His life was difficult. He was a man of sorrows basically for us, for the sins of mankind.

If we learn to be like Him, we will also be men of sorrows. As we look around us and as we see things going wrong, the hearts of men hardened against God, we will also be men and women of sorrow. We long for people to turn to God, to live for Him, to be what they ought to be.

And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Who understood His context, what He was going through? He came on a very important mission but very, very few people had much of an idea of what was going on in His life.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. He was smitten of God but not for His own sins. He was afflicted not because He went astray. He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

The description is so thorough; how much should we be grateful to Him!

The Lord Jesus – the Creator of the universe – humiliated, suffering in this way: What humility is required for Him to go through that! This was not the humility of a contrite heart. The Lord Jesus never sinned; there was no need for Him to repent. This was not the humility of someone who acknowledged he had sinned and needed forgiveness; the Lord Jesus never sinned. This was the humility expressed in going through very difficult circumstances for the sake of the well-being of others, and this is the kind of humility we need to learn, we need to develop, to be like Him.

What are we prepared to go through in order to fulfil the will of God, to contribute meaningfully to the lives of others? The Lord Jesus went to such an extent that He was despised, forsaken, scourged, mocked at because of His love for us.

Sometimes, we may think, “Well that is the Lord Jesus, the perfect Man suffering like that, but how about God Himself? Does God Himself suffer in this way in going through all these difficulties?”

First, we know that the Lord Jesus is God Himself, but beyond that we are also told that God the Father was involved in this whole process.

2 Corinthians 5: 18-19

- 18 Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,
19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself... There are many different aspects of this but at the heart of it, we can say God suffered very greatly in the life of Christ on earth.

We may think God the Father was in heaven.

Yes, it is true He was in heaven but God was in Christ going through the difficulties and the sufferings that He went through in the sense that His heart was fully with Him.

The Lord Jesus always did the things that were pleasing to the Father and whatever He went through, the Father went through with Him and the humiliation that the Lord Jesus went through must have been a very difficult experience for God Himself.

But He was prepared, He was willing, to go through all this, reconciling the world to Himself.

If God Himself – the almighty Creator of all things – is prepared to humble Himself to such an extent, what can we say about our lives? How far should we go? There should be no limit in terms of how we should be prepared to live our lives for God.

Let us then consider the practical application of this.

We have seen the Corinthians, who although God helped them, many of them, they remained fleshly, there was strife and jealousy and they were still boastful.

How about a person like the apostle Paul?

The apostle Paul would not be classified among those who were not wise in the world, not mighty, not noble.

The apostle Paul was a Pharisee, he was well regarded, he was capable, but God also called him. It does not mean that God rejects all those who are wise in the world, who are able.

What happened to the apostle Paul?

He was initially self-confident; he was a Pharisee, he thought he knew but he was mistaken. But when the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to Paul (who was called Saul at the time), his response was clear: he acknowledged he was wrong, he was prepared to change, he submitted to the Lord, he chose to follow Him with all his heart.

It was his choice how he would live his life.

When he recognized that he was wrong, he changed and he called himself the "chief of sinners" or the "foremost among sinners".

That is because of his great sense of his unworthiness before God, how God had been so gracious to him. He persecuted the church of God and yet God reached out to him in His love.

The apostle Paul was grateful all his life.

So then, what happened to him?

2 Corinthians 12: 7-10

- 7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself!
- 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.
- 9 And He has said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.**" Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
- 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

We have seen that when God blesses us, when God enables us, when God helps us and we become strong, we can become boastful, we can exalt ourselves.

And God was conscious that this could happen to the apostle Paul and God sought to help him, and we are told here: Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh...

Who gave the thorn in the flesh? ...God; what was the purpose? ...to keep Paul from exalting himself; why? ...because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations.

So here it tells us that the surpassing greatness of the revelations from God to Paul could lead to Paul exalting himself. He could regard himself as the great apostle Paul who knew so much, who understood so many things, who had seen many things that many people had not seen.

He could have become like that: not that he would, but there was a danger. There is no indication here that Paul exalted himself; there is no indication that he failed but we are told it was to keep him from exalting himself; it was to prevent this from happening.

So God is very wise.

He is very gracious and yet in His graciousness and in His wisdom, He allowed severe suffering for Paul: a thorn in the flesh...

He says: "... messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself!" Satan was waiting all the time to try to destroy Paul, to cause him to suffer, to cause him to be discouraged, to turn away from God. God allowed Satan to afflict Paul but the purpose was to keep him from exalting himself. How would that work?

Basically in the context of being tormented by the thorn in the flesh, Paul would be very conscious of his own weakness. He would be very conscious of his need of God; he would keep praying, looking to God that God may sustain him, enable him. It required humility.

The apostle Paul would need to constantly acknowledge his helplessness before God and to cry out to God for His enabling to go through the difficult situation. It was so difficult; he says: "Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me". It was something significant to him and we are told the Lord's response to him was: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

The Lord told Paul: "Yes, I know it is very difficult but My grace is sufficient for you". It is in the context of the weakness of Paul that he would experience in a deeper measure the power of the Lord.

Very often, we may not experience the power of God so deeply because we are not so conscious of our weakness. When we think, or when we are aware, that we are able to cope with various situations of life, it is easier for us to depend on ourselves and our natural abilities rather than on God.

So when the apostle Paul understood this, he said, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

Who would boast about their weaknesses?

We generally boast about our strengths; we boast about what we can do. But here the apostle Paul said he boasts about his weaknesses. Can we boast about our helplessness?

Yes, in the context of the power of the Lord: our boasting in our weaknesses is not to glorify ourselves but to glorify the Lord, that in the midst of our weakness, we know His strength, that He is sufficient for us, His grace is sufficient for us.

And therefore he said, "I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." He would not deliberately make himself weak, purposely go through situations where he would be insulted, enter into distresses of his own choice: No, this would come upon him for Christ's sake. In the course of living for the Lord, in the course of obedience to Him, in the course of doing what is right, he would experience various of these difficulties, and he said, "I am well-content in such situations, for when I am weak, then I am strong."

But the "I am strong" would not be in himself – I am strong in the Lord: I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

And this is something very precious for all of us to learn. We can be strong by becoming weak and when we learn to appreciate what the Lord Jesus went through for us in coming into this world, in dying on the cross, we have some idea of what it means to be weak in order to be strong.

The Lord Jesus went through such weakness that He was crucified on the cross when He had more than twelve legions of angels at His disposal at any time who could destroy all His enemies. A person who is not humble when challenged, "Come down from the cross and we will believe you" might simply do that and destroy them all.

But the Lord Jesus continued dying on the cross in the midst of all this abuse and ridicule, and because He went through that, we can be saved.

That is the degree of humility that we see in the life of the Lord Jesus.

So then, **Galatians 6: 14**

Galatians 6: 14

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

If we are to boast, let us learn to boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: not in our own ability, not in what we have accomplished, not in what people think of us but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he says: “...through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”. Either “through which” or “through whom”, it refers to Christ – His death on the cross – and we being identified with Him.

What would that mean? How do we boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?

We have seen earlier that it is easier for us to believe in the gospel if we do not have much power, we are not very wise, or we are female and we are weak and insecure; it is easier for us to believe in the Lord because we need Him. It is not so easy for us to believe if we are more able, stronger, more capable, but we still can believe.

But having said all these, let us remember: at the end of it all, it does not matter: Whether male or female, whether weak or strong; all of us can be truly humble, all of us can develop the highest quality in our being, if we learn the meaning of **Galatians 6: 14** – that we are not concerned about what we are capable of, we are not concerned about what we can accomplish on our own or what others may think of us.

We are concerned about what the Lord wants to accomplish; we concentrate on what is in His heart; we concentrate on who He is, what He has accomplished; we rejoice, we boast in that. He is someone whom we can praise with all our hearts and it is right for us to do so because He is worthy.

He did all this for us not because He had to; He did all this for us because He wanted to, because it was meaningful to do so, because He loved us: "He loved me and gave Himself up for me." This should be the testimony not only of the apostle Paul but also for all those who have appreciated what the Lord Jesus has done for our lives.

For this to be true and real, we must appreciate the second half of this sentence: through which or through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

If we know this reality in our lives, then the boastful pride of life of this world would mean nothing to us. We are not interested in what the world can give to us, what they may say; the praises of men do not matter to us.

We are crucified to the world means we are identified with the Lord Jesus in the moral meaning, direction and values that are important to Him. All other things do not matter to us. That is why the Lord Jesus was so overwhelmingly important to the apostle Paul that he said he determined to know nothing else except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

If we learn to boast in the Lord, we will find ourselves being freed from our insecurity, from our fears, from our desire of the things of this world, from a concern of what people think of us; we will be free from all this. Our only concern would be to live for the Lord, to be faithful to Him, to bring joy to Him, to do the things that really matter to Him. How wonderful such a life would be!

And this is meant for all of us. God wants us to live like that but we must learn to be humble. If we are not prepared to be humble, then we cannot live like that.

So if we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must learn to appreciate the wisdom of God expressed in the area of humility and develop this quality deeply in our lives: Give ourselves to God in worship and gratitude and work together with Him gladly and in faith to fulfil His will. If we do so, we will find true fulfilment in our lives.

Let us as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us to understand more deeply what it means to be humble before Him, how to approach it such that our lives would truly be of value and meaning in His sight.

Let us ask Him to help us appreciate more deeply the meaning of the cross: what the Lord has done for us, what He has gone through on our behalf; and let us gladly follow His example, live by His power and rejoice in being one with Him.