

What does your Faith rest on

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[0 : 0 0] All right, let's pray before we get started. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your word which you have given us.

Thank you that you use your word to grow and shape us to be more like your son. We pray that you would be doing that today. Pray that your spirit would be at work applying your words to our hearts and minds.

We pray this in Jesus' name, amen. So it had been 10 months since we had arrived on Groot. I'd been doing some reflecting about thinking about what people thought of us, how did they perceive us.

And I came to the stark realisation that no one from this little community that we're in would notice or care for that matter if we just disappeared off Groot, if we just flew off.

We were invisible people. Outsiders. Totally insignificant in this place. We'd left a supportive church back here in Melbourne and now attended a church with very few people.

[1 : 1 3] We had left our nice street where we knew our neighbours and we're now living in a community of strangers. We had left friends who we could just drop in on and visit and now when I visited someone, I quickly got the feeling that they were waiting for me to leave.

So much of what had supported me, so much of what had supported my faith back here in Melbourne had been stripped back. What was my faith resting on?

Today we'll be looking at 1 Corinthians 1, verses 18 to 2, verse 5. I'm going to share a bit of our story over the past three and a half years on Groot and how this passage has been significant for us, giving encouragement, comfort and hope from both a personal perspective as well as from a ministry perspective.

And so as you hear God's word and my reflections from the Groot context, hopefully it'll encourage you and help you see some implications for your own life here in Melbourne.

What does your faith rest on? Paul's answer here in the beginning of 1 Corinthians is that our faith needs to rest on the Gospel.

[2 : 3 7] He gives us two reasons to rest our faith on the Gospel. First, he gives us the negative. Where not to rest your faith? Don't rest your faith on human wisdom because God has brought judgment on human wisdom.

And the second is the positive. Rest your faith on the Gospel because the Gospel is God's wisdom and power to save. So God is bringing judgment on human wisdom.

We see this through human wisdom's failure to access the goodness of the Gospel. In verse 19, Paul quotes from Isaiah. In particular, he quotes from what people call a woe oracle.

He says, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, the intelligence of the intelligent. I will frustrate. Destroy, frustrate.

These aren't soft words. They're judgment words. And did you hear the rhetorical questions in verse 20? Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law?

[3 : 44] Where is the philosopher of this age? Hasn't God made foolish the wisdom of the world? These questions are taunting humanity's wisdom. And that last one, Paul actually answers in verse 21.

He says, In the wisdom of God, the world, through its wisdom, didn't know him. God has tipped humanity's wisdom upside down.

He's made a fool of it. Humanity's attempts to come back to God inevitably fail. We as humanity cannot know God through our own wisdom, through our own thinking, through our own lifestyle, philosophy, culture, religion, technology, whatever else we come up with.

We can't know God. In verse 22, Paul highlights two major cultural ways of assessing things. Judaism, he says, demands signs of power.

And the Greeks, well, they look for wisdom. The cross of Christ flips them both. The story of Jesus, the promised king, hanging, dying, a shameful death on the cross.

[4 : 58] Through their own cultural lenses, both cultural groups can't access the glorious goodness of this message. One culture stumbles at the thought of the Messiah dying a failure, and the other one just dismisses it as foolishness.

God is bringing judgment on humanity's wisdom by making it useless when it comes to accessing his saving gospel. We also see God's judgment on human wisdom when we see the makeup of the Corinthian church.

It's like God is choosing a sporting team and says, don't worry about the all-stars, just give me the losers. Verse 26, not many of you were wise by human standards.

Not many of you influential. Not many of you noble of birth. But there is method in God choosing the losers. God chooses them to shame the wise.

He chooses them to shame the strong. God is flipping the values of the world upside down. He's bringing judgment on them. But why is God's judgment directed at humanity's wisdom?

[6 : 15] To understand this, we need to understand more about wisdom. Proverbs 9, verse 10, says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. So godly wisdom is living, doing and thinking which is grounded in the fear of the Lord.

In other words, godly wisdom is seeing God as God and living life accordingly. So human wisdom, on the other hand, is living, doing and thinking in a way that doesn't see God as God.

in a way that rejects him and in a way that rejects his message of the cross as foolishness. This is why God is bringing judgment on human wisdom.

For me, that first 10 months of group was helpful. The stripping back of my support structures, the realization that I was totally insignificant in the community.

[7 : 19] It was humbling and unnerving, but it was a super valuable lesson, being pushed back to the gospel. God doesn't save me through a super vibrant church.

God doesn't save me through the great preaching of my favorite preacher. God doesn't save me based on my level of significance in the community. Sure, these things are blessings and they may be helpful, but these things are not what I should be resting my faith on.

They are not what saves us. God saves us by sending his son to die on the cross in our place. And God's judgment on human wisdom, it also influences the way that Paul does ministry.

So chapter 2, verse 1, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom, says Paul. And in verse 4, my message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words.

When doing ministry in Corinth, Paul rejected the cultural wisdom of the time, which said that you need to be this great orator in order to be successful.

[8 : 33] He lets the message of the cross shape his ministry. On Groot, power is the go-to cultural wisdom that many outsider organisations seek.

They seek power to achieve their goals of their program. And so there's many different outsider programs all trying to get Aboriginal people to do this or to do that.

So there's edible garden programs, going to school programs, work for the Dole programs, social enterprise programs, sporting programs, and the list goes on. And there's two types of power that these outsider organisations try and harness.

There's, first there's the outsider power, which usually is in the form of money or resources. resources. And then there's cultural insider power.

So the outsider organisation will seek a culturally powerful person so they can sort of piggyback off the power and influence that that person has in the community to try and help that program succeed.

[9 : 43] Now this is an example of human wisdom that we see on Groot. And it may be tempting to go down this line but this passage pushes me to rethink and to actually reject this kind of wisdom.

It pushes me to depend more on the foolish and weak gospel of Christ. And actually our experience on Groot is that it's vulnerable people like the nobodies in Corinth who are amongst the most open to the gospel.

Our neighbour is one example. She is an Aboriginal woman but she's an outsider to Groot. She comes from the desert region so doesn't know the local language.

She's a woman so culturally just has less power than men. Her husband's in jail so she's alone and doesn't have any family support. She is vulnerable in the community.

When we first met her she was very shy but slowly slowly Kate got to know her. Kate learnt about her children.

[10 : 55] Kate learnt about the struggles she was going through. Kate learnt that she'd been to a Christian school when she was young and eventually our neighbour shared how she was interested in turning back to God.

So that's the group context. What about Melbourne? What is the cultural wisdom here? What is it that people value? Let's pretend you've got a friend who isn't a Christian.

Hopefully that's not too much to pretend. Hopefully we do have non-Christian friends. friends. And we're thinking about who we could introduce our friend to to sort of help them get to know Jesus.

Are you going to introduce them, are you going to introduce your friend to that Christian friend who is cool, witty, confident but just struggles to introduce Jesus into their conversations, who struggles to be open about their faith?

Or will you seek to introduce them to your Christian friend who's just a little bit awkward, a little bit like conversations a little bit stilted and slower but somehow they manage to introduce Jesus into that conversation regularly?

[12 : 22] Of course I think there's probably conversations to be had around spiritual giftings but I think we need to be careful when thinking about evangelism and thinking about this sort of thing not just to take on the world's wisdom and the world's values.

Often during the last three and a half years on Groot I've looked around me and wondered is there any hope? There are social, health, political, spiritual issues.

I feel so small and powerless, surrounded by seemingly insurmountable issues. But we come to Paul's answer to our question of what should our faith rest on.

If it's not human wisdom, what? And Paul's answer is not with humanity but with God. Our faith should rest on the gospel because the gospel is God's wisdom and power to save.

So the whole way through this passage the message of the cross is linked to people being saved. So verse 18, for us who are being saved the message of the cross is the power of God.

[13 : 34] Verse 21, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Verse 24, to those whom God has called both Jew and Greeks, Christ is the power and the wisdom of God.

So we see that it's through the message of the cross, the gospel that God saves. And it's this message that is God's wisdom and power.

In verse 30, Paul says that it's because of God that we are in Christ and that Christ has become for us the wisdom from God.

But what does that mean, that Christ has become the wisdom from God? It's important to remember that wisdom is not just ideas, it's not just stuff up here, but rather it's living, doing and thinking in light of truth.

So Christ is the wisdom from God, means that he, Christ, is God's wisdom embodied, lived out. If you want to know what it looks like to be wise in God's eyes, we need to look at Jesus.

[14 : 51] And verse 30 says that God has included us in Christ. This is salvation. Because we are in Christ, God sees us not living according to human wisdom, but according to his wisdom.

In Christ he sees us as righteous, holy and redeemed. We are saved from living a life in line with human wisdom, and at the same time we are saved to living a life that is in line with God's wisdom.

We are saved to live out a life of righteousness, holiness, and redemption. And God's wisdom and power to save, it's not just a bunch of words, it's actually demonstrated by the Spirit's work.

Paul says in chapter 2 verse 4 that he didn't preach with wise and persuasive words, but rather with the demonstration of the Spirit's power.

Here he's saying to the Corinthian Christians that you have been saved, you have been changed, you have experienced the Spirit's power. It's this transformation in them that is the demonstration of the Spirit's power.

[16 : 08] So we see that it is through the gospel, through this message about Jesus Christ and him crucified, that God saves his people.

There is hope. That is why we need to rest in the gospel. On Groot, I have the privilege of catching up and reading the Bible with a friend.

My friend reminds me that in Christ there is hope. My friend is a Christian. He had a background of drug addiction and dysfunctional relationships.

But one day a local Christian man who himself hadn't been Christian long shared the good news of Jesus with my friend and he became a Christian. Now ten years on he is still committed to trusting and following Jesus.

Over that time he has had very little discipleship input. also has quite low literacy so can't read the Bible for himself. But God has sustained my friend's faith over many years despite such little support.

[17 : 22] Today my friend's character is testimony of the work of Christ in him. There are signs of righteousness, holiness and redemption. He is a demonstration of the Spirit's power at work through the gospel.

So regardless of how I feel when faced with what I perceive as insurmountable issues, there is hope. I need to turn back to the cross of Christ and be reminded that there is hope because this message is God's power to save and change.

change. It's God's power to save and change me, it's God's power to save and change you and it's God's power to save and change those whom you love and anyone who rests their faith in it.

And so the fact that the gospel is God's wisdom and power to save also influences Paul's ministry. chapter 2 verse 1 Paul gives us insight not just into his message but into his method.

He says Paul's method matches his message.

[18 : 59] message is about a weak and foolish cross and his method is also perceived as weak and foolish. But why does Paul let the cross shape how he preaches not just what he preaches?

In verse 5 we hear so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power. How comforting is that to know that when you put your faith in the gospel you are not dependent on some human wisdom that changes in time and place but rather you are resting your faith on God's almighty power.

And it should also be a comfort and encouragement when you are feeling timid trying to pluck up the courage to introduce Jesus into that conversation maybe with the mums at the playground maybe with the neighbour over the fence or with a work colleague.

Remember it's Jesus hanging on the cross that deals with sin not your eloquence and persuasiveness. It's the spirit applying the good news of Jesus to the hearts and minds of people that saves.

It's not your charm or your wit or your confidence. Be encouraged and talk. So what is your faith resting on?

[20 : 26] Hopefully you've heard how this passage has grown our conviction about God's wise and powerful gospel and how your faith needs to be resting on God's power and his wisdom that we see in the gospel rather than on some form of human wisdom which is under God's judgment.

I trust that you can continue to work this out here in your own context. I know that we're looking forward to returning to Groot and working with his people there to share this foolish message about Jesus.

Andrew's going to come and respond by prayer. thanks so much Matt.

Let's pray. Gracious Father thank you for the Lord Jesus who is your wisdom to be saved. Our righteousness holiness and redemption.

May we trust not in our own wisdom and words to see our friends and family saved but in your good news about Jesus. And since we ourselves have not been saved by our own wisdom and works but by you through this good news about Jesus help us as the passage says not to boast in ourselves but in you and the Lord Jesus.

[21 : 52] Help us do this we pray in his name. Amen.