

When In Doubt – 1 Cor 1:26-31

1 Cor 1:26-31

26 – *For* indicates that what follows, supports what he just said in v25, that God’s ways are better than ours

If you’ve ever doubted God, this message is for you

That’s one of the main issues this passage can help us with

And who doesn’t have doubts from time to time? I do

I’ve wondered at some points in my life if there’s a God in the *first* place

And if there is, whether this book really is his Word

And if he really does have the power to change the world, and overcome all the sin and the death and the junk that goes on

I’ve had my share of doubts, and I’m pretty sure you have too

And the principles we find in this passage, the things we find Paul encouraging us to consider, are some of the most critical and foundational truths in all the Bible . . .
For meeting those doubts, and overcoming our issues

And the first of those principles, is to . . .

Look at the cross (v18-25)

When in doubt about God, or his power, or his love, or his goodness or his ability to provide – look at the cross

That’s not in v26-31, but in the previous paragraph that we talked about last week

That’s where Paul basically addresses their doubts about God’s power to save, by essentially saying – look at the cross

As in, consider for a minute, the power of God to use the death of his Son, to save your soul; To use something so *bad*, to do something so *good*

To use something so terrible, to accomplish something so wonderful

Only an all-powerful, all-wise, all-mighty God could do such a thing

And if he can do that, he can do anything – that’s the point

That’s why, when we’re in doubt, we should look at the cross. . .

B/c it restores our confidence in the God who *can*, as opposed to the God who *can’t* – which is what we’re prone to think when in doubt

It restores our confidence in the God who can meet our needs *now*, just **like he did *then***

Look at the cross, and the . . .

Look at yourself (v26)

When in doubt – look at yourself

That’s one of the implications of the 1st phrase of v26 – *consider your calling, brothers*

His intent is not just for us to look around at each other, but to look at *ourselves*, our own lives – as evidence of God’s power and goodness and wisdom

And you know more than anyone else, that if he could do a work of grace in you, he can do it in anybody – b/c you know your sin

If he could deal with you, he can deal with anyone

If he can change you, he can change others

If he can change *your* circumstances, he can change theirs

If he did it before, he can do it again

When in doubt about God’s power to provide, or guide, or make a difference in the world – look at yourself; the **proof’s in the pudding**

Look at others (v26-29)

When in doubt about God, or his power to save, or his ability to build his church – look at others

God *has* saved, and continues to save – all kinds of people, all over the world

• Including those from other cultures (v24)

That’s the idea of *Jews and Greeks* in v24 – meaning everybody

You want evidence of God’s power? Look at the changed lives in *other* cultures

Some of you are taking the Perspectives course right now

And one of the many things you’re learning or being reminded of, is that . . .

God’s plan is to save people from every tribe, tongue, and nation – fr every people group

And he’s doing it – from house churches in China and living rooms in Beirut . . .

To the hopeless in Haiti and the helpless right here

Like those of you who gave your life to Christ last week

Or the 35 students who did so at WinterJam this weekend

All over the world, God is powerfully at work to save people from other cultures – literally thousands every day; we live in a big world

And when in doubt about a big God – consider them; **look at them**; And look at . . .

• And those who are rich and famous (v26)

That’s another implication from v26 where he says *not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were noble*

Implying that some were

That God not only saves the average person, but those who are wise, or educated, or powerful, or influential, or privileged – not many, but some

Which contradicts the naysayers these days who claim that Christianity is only for the poor, the powerless, or the uneducated

Not so according to Paul, and not so according to what we see

From heads of state to heads of classes, from business leaders to team leaders – God also saves the rich and famous

Like Greg Ellis, a former linebacker for the Dallas Cowboys, and now a defensive end for the Oakland Raiders – with whom he signed a \$10 million contract last year

I think that qualifies him as rich and famous

And I want you to hear his testimony about Jesus for a minute (**I Am Second video**)

When in doubt about God’s power to save and make a difference in this world, look at the rich and famous

If he can save them, he can save you; Or your son, or daughter, or husband, or wife, or friend, or co-worker, or classmate, or teammate

When in doubt – look at those from other cultures, and those who are rich and famous . . .

• And especially those who are not (v27-28)

Those, according to v26, who *aren’t* wise/educated according to the world’s standards . . .

Those who *aren't* powerful; Those who *aren't* privileged
Which leaves average people like you and me – that's our church

We're a church full of common people, whom God has saved and brought together, to do uncommon things
Proof positive that *nobody* is beyond his reach, and *nobody* is beyond his use

- Including those, who as v27 says, are considered *foolish* by the world
God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise (27a)
IOW he chose those who embody foolish qualities in the eyes of the world, to *shame* those who think otherwise; who *think* they're wise; who *think* they know better
In saving the one, he shames the other, b/c it exposes the weakness of their wisdom

Which happens *now* to some extent (shame), but won't be complete until Christ returns
When that happens, shame will *reign* for those who think they know better – for those who think they're wise in their own eyes
B/c everything will be laid bare before *the eyes of him to whom we must give an account* (Heb 4:13)

- Look at the foolish, and look at the *weak* (27b) – *God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong*
When in doubt about God's power to save and overcome the strongholds of men – look what he's done through those who are weak
Look at his track record of saving people with little to no influence in this world . . .
And then *using* them to accomplish his work – work that puts the strong to shame
Think Mother Theresa; Or the uneducated apostles; Or Paul himself

- When in doubt, look at the foolish, look at the weak, and look at the *lowly* from v28 – the nobody's of this world
Like the homeless, or beggars, or criminals – u know, the worst of the worst, the lowest of the low, the people we despise
Like in India, where certain castes are so low on th totem pole, they just as well not exist
And yet God still saves them – v28

Remember, he's talking about people here by way of the qualities *in* them
Saying that God chose *things that are not* – i.e. he chose those with qualities that render them virtually invisible to the world, qualities of “nobody-ness” . . .
To bring to nothing things that are – to render inconsequential, or ineffective those with the qualities and characteristics that place them in the spotlight
Those who think they know better, and can take care of themselves

- What an irony – that in saving/changing those who seem *unworthy* of God's attention . . . He renders insignificant and unimportant, those who think they *are*

It's like the widow in Mark 12 who gave out of her poverty, but was barely noticed amidst those who gave out of their abundance; But Jesus did
And he used her example to *shame* the rich/arrogant, while exalting the poor and lowly

- The proof of God's power to do mighty things . . .
The proof of God's power to accomplish that which you doubt . . .

Is in the fact that he saves all kinds of people – rich/poor, male/female, young/old, black/white, strong/weak, leaders/followers, educated or not

And in so doing, leaves no room for boasting *****
No room to say – “I did it myself” or “I helped u God” or “I had something to do w/ it”
If that were the case, there would be room for boasting

But there's not b/c God, in his *power*, saved the *powerless*, v29 – *so that no human being might boast in the presence of God*
That no person who thinks they know better, or has worldly power or status, might be able to say to God someday – “Thanks for the invitation, but I got here on my own”
Or – “I sure am thankful you did most of it, but let's be honest, I played a part too”

There's no room for that
B/c even if you do have power, or wealth, or knowledge, or status – it's useless when it comes to your salvation
As shown by the fact that God often saves those without it, and puts to shame those who have it

When in doubt about God, or his power to fulfill his calling in your life – look at the cross, look at yourself, look at others, and . . .

Look at the results (v30)

Look at the amazing results in the life of every single person who's saved
Look at what God has done, through Christ, in every single person he's ever touched
They're found in v30 – one of the most theologically packed sentences in all the Bible

Paul lists 5 results of our salvation, found in Jesus Christ; The first of which is life itself
1. In Christ we have life – life to the full, and life forever
30 – *He [God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus*
That is, in union w/ him, in fellowship w/ him – you have life, given by the Father
The *key* being Jesus – no Jesus, no life
But with him, *in* him – we not only have life, but have it to the full, and have it forever
Including everything we need to live it for him (1 Pet 1:3)

When in doubt – look at the result of your salvation
Look at the life, full and forever, that's yours in Christ

2. In Christ we have wisdom

V30 says that God made Jesus our wisdom – meaning that his wisdom is ours
Or as Paul says it in 2:16b – *We have the mind of Christ*
We have the ability to think his way and respond his way
And the more time we spend with him, the more we'll know it

It's like 2 people that have been married for 50 years – they know each other so well, they have one another's mind
They know what the other is thinking; They know what they'd say; They know what they'd do

And the same is true of Christ, for us – God has given us his mind, so that we can think and act just like him
When in doubt, look at that; Look at the result of your wisdom in Christ

3. In Christ we are righteous

Positionally speaking that is, not experientially

When Jesus died on the cross, he took our sin, and gave us his righteousness

Which was applied to our account, when we first believed

So that now when God looks at us, he sees in us not sin, but the righteousness of his Son

Enabling us to enter his presence, and stand confident before his throne

When in doubt, look at that – look at the result of your righteousness in Christ

4. In Christ we are sanctified – set apart *from* sin, *for* holiness

That's what Paul means when he says that God made Christ our *sanctification* – he made

Christ our holiness

He cleaned us up, and clothed us with robes of righteousness, so that we could live in

holiness – that's the idea of sanctification

Just like a little boy whose parents clean him up and dress him up, to be the ring bearer in a wedding – he's been set apart fr his dirt, for a special duty, and given new digs to do it

And so have we; Except our dirt is sin, and our duty is holiness . . .

And *our* digs are the eternal robes of righteousness that come with the sanctifying

presence of Christ

When in doubt about who you are, or what you're about – look at your sanctification in Christ

And fifth, look at the fact that . . .

5. In Christ we are redeemed

That is, we are delivered/liberated *from* the bondage and consequences of sin

By the work of Christ on the cross; *For* a life of service to God

That's the implication of Paul's statement that God has made Christ our redemption

He's made him our *payment*, to deliver us from *bondage*, and enable our *service*

From bondage, *by* a payment, *for* service – that's biblical redemption

When in doubt about God, or life, or his power to accomplish his purposes – look to that, look at the results of your salvation

And look to the cross; And look at yourself (what he's done in u); And look at others . . .

And then give him the glory (v31)

When you're soul has been restored, and your confidence regained – give God the glory

That's what Paul is trying to get across in v31, where he quotes Jer 9:24 (31)

Not in your own work – as if you can do anything anyway

Not in your own power, as if you can make a difference

Not in your own wisdom, as if you know anything that matters

But in Christ; *The Lord*; *Your Lord*

If you're gonna boast, boast in him; Boast in the one who's worthy

Boast in the one who removes your doubts, and calms your fears (pray)