

OUR FOUNDATION

by

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OUR FOUNDATION

Many things may come to mind when we think of a foundation, but I think of fathers and their duty to give their children the right foundation.

In the Third Epistle of John, verses 3 and 4 read,

For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Beloved, that has got to be a transdispensational principle. Moses could have said it. David could have said it. Paul could have said it. You and I can say it!

Things have gone wrong when our children do not find their way. Today, we hear of the popular modern thinking, “Well, I don't tell my children anything about the Lord or about religion. They'll find out for themselves.”

Is that the way we bring them up? Why do we send them to school? Will they not learn in the school of hard knocks? Is not welfare good enough? Why train them? Why teach them anything? They will find out!

We must have a foundation for our children. The Hebrew rabbis had it: “If you don't teach your children a craft, you have taught them to steal.”

“I have no greater joy...” The Apostle Paul was a likeminded man. In the first letter that Paul wrote, I Thessalonians, let's notice chapter 2, verse 11:

As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.

Warn, comfort, exhort, and charge! This was a father's duty, and Paul was a grand spiritual father, a wonderful role model. We hear so much about role models today. In the spiritual sense, I know of no better role model than the Apostle Paul!

In I Corinthians 4:14-16, the Apostle Paul wrote to his beloved Corinthian church:

I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

What a father! What a role model! What a preacher! Paul did give them a foundation. If our children go astray, it is because we haven't given them a foundation; and we've failed as fathers—physically, morally, spiritually. (That does not mean, however,

that every child will follow everything he is told.)

Read the Corinthian letter, and you will see that the Corinthians didn't follow Paul like he said they should. But he pled with them. (They weren't under Law, you know.) He said, "I beseech you..." As Paul wrote the Romans, he said, "I beseech you to present your bodies a living sacrifice." That is the way we do it under grace; we *beseech*, and we also set a good example.

Paul addressed the topic of our foundation in I Corinthians 3:10-12:

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble...

The Apostle Paul mentioned a foundation in verse 10. He said what we have failed to understand and to proclaim often enough: "I have laid the foundation!"

If words have meaning, this means that the Apostle Paul was the one who laid this foundation. In any structure that you have ever seen, that you have ever heard of, how many times is the foundation laid? Once! No one can come along years later with the building half built and lay the foundation. They are too late! No one before Paul laid this foundation. Whatever it was, Paul laid it. That is what it means.

Paul was not an extended arm of, not the evangelist for, the Twelve Apostles. He was not Judas' substitute instead of Matthias. Paul was a brand-new Apostle with a brand-new message and a brand-new foundation! And that, beloved, is our foundation; that is where we stand.

Notice I Corinthians 3:9:

For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry...

That reminds us of farming. Earlier in this chapter, Paul talked about himself planting, about Apollos watering. (You don't plant and water a building, but you do a crop.) Paul used the farming illustration to illustrate how he had planted, Apollos had watered, and God had given the increase. The Corinthian church was that husbandry or farming, and it was growing.

The Corinthian church had growing pains to be sure. Shame on them for aligning in parties behind Paul and Apollos and Peter and Christ. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos...?" Really, he said they were nothing; but in another place he said they were one, not two or several competing. They were one in unity in ministering to the Corinthians' growth.

Then Paul said, "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God given me..."

When you set out to build something, what must you have? A set of plans! The plan that God gave the Apostle Paul for this building was GRACE! Grace was the foundation! It was grace from God, from glory. It was not Law from Moses, although it is true that God gave that, too.

On Mount Sinai, the Law was given by God to Moses, and what is it called? Moses' Law! Nobody gets bent out of shape because it is called Moses' Law. In the New Testament it says, "Have ye not read what Moses said...those that sit in Moses' seat." Moses was a great man. The trouble with Israel was not that they made too much of Moses, but that they made too little!

God's "grace movement" began right here with the Apostle Paul. We have been criticized for making too much of Paul. I am convinced our fault is not that we make too much of Paul—it is that as yet we haven't made enough! The Apostle Paul was the one from whom God's people and even the Corinthians were straying during Paul's lifetime. The Galatians strayed from the foundation that Paul had set-in Paul's lifetime! He wrote to Timothy near the end and said, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me."

The grace movement of that day did not make too much of Paul, but too little. How could they fail like that? How can we fail today when we have such words so plain? "Ye are God's building. According to the grace [the plan] of God...given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation..."

When we have a Greek word, sometimes our beloved King James Version, instead of translating it into English, leaves it Greek. For instance, *baptism*. That is what it is in the Greek. Do you know what it is in English? It is *baptism*. The word *deacon*—do you know what it is in the Greek? It is *deacon*--the same as it is in English.

This is the only place this word *masterbuilder* appears in the whole New Testament. They could very well have left that word in the Greek, and we would have easily known what it meant.

What is a masterbuilder? Have you ever seen a masterbuilder? How many of you have masterbuilders in your town? Do you think I mean carpenters? That is close. This Greek word is *architect*! Once we say it in the Greek, it is just as plain in English. That is what a wise masterbuilder is--an architect--he has the design, and he has the plans.

Paul said he was a "wise" masterbuilder. Where did he get that wisdom? Was that conceit on his part? He got that wisdom from God. This wisdom was not of the earth, not sensual. It was not from Paul's cunning craftiness. It was from God. As God's architect, Paul laid the foundation.

Paul wasn't the only builder, but he was the one who laid the foundation. Let us understand Paul's part in this scene. Others built

on it. Paul and Apollos were God's fellow laborers. The Corinthians were not fellow laborers in this context. They were the building. (The brick *is* different from the carpenter or the mason who puts it there.)

Paul gave a special word of direction and caution to the other builders. He said, "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon." There was more building to do beyond Paul's work. We are still building this building. We know from other Scriptures that this building has a name -- the church, the Body of Christ. This building is growing up, and I don't believe Paul had any idea that this building would be going on for nineteen centuries. But we are not to lay again the foundation or to find another foundation. We are to follow the plan -- the foundation already laid!

Do you know that in the business world it is not uncommon to find a contractor out on the job building with the wrong set of prints? As an engineer, the first thing I check when I go out on the building site is the blueprints or drawings they are using. Do they have the latest prints? Why? We find that we are all the time correcting mistakes, revising the prints, making sure that they carry the latest thinking. If you find someone building with plans marked "PRELIMINARYNOT FOR CONSTRUCTION," the work has to be tom out-destroyed-taken down! It is wrong! Sometimes even with a good set of prints, do you know what we find? The builder cannot read!

Beloved, people are just like that even in dealing with the Bible, aren't they? Are all the builders of Christendom building on a Pauline foundation? Paul said that "another builds thereon," and then he cautioned "but let every man take heed how he buildeth."

We are not talking here about salvation or how to be saved. If you are not saved, you are not on any Bible foundation, except perhaps one of sand. You have no real foundation or moorings for your life. You are perhaps running with the world, merrily on to a Christless eternity!

The salvation message today is that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ and His finished work; that is where it begins. That is part of this foundation which Paul laid. Our message is not "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins," It is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died, who was buried, and who rose again...and who's coming again from glory!" That is the gospel "by which you are saved."

Paul cautioned *all* workers about building on the foundation which he laid. Build upon it, but *take heed how* you build! Take heed!

I am sorry to say that as a preacher of the gospel, I have not always built upon this foundation. For the first twenty years of my life, the foundation of salvation was not clearly brought to my attention. (Those builders to whom I looked are going to have something to answer for.)

Then I was confronted with the gospel, and I was saved! It was by the clear message, that Christ had died and settled the sin question, and that all who trusted Him could be saved. I asked, "You really mean that? Is it true? Can I really know I'm saved by just believing that? It isn't Confirmation, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Sacraments? Don't these help?" Not at all. It is trusting Christ, and salvation is forever settled. Wonderful!

But I viewed water baptism as an outward sign of the inward work, and I went ahead with it. I have baptized people in bathtubs in Pennsylvania, in lakes in Illinois, and in the Atlantic Ocean. At the time, you could not question my sincerity. If you would have asked me for supporting Bible verses, I could have given them to you. I would have given you Romans 6, but the baptism there is not water baptism, I know now. But I did not know it then. Do not question my sincerity; but we can question how well I read Paul's blueprint!

Was I building on the Pauline foundation? Was that gold, silver, and precious stones, for which God will give me something great and good for blessing and reward? No, I am sorry to say, it was wood, hay, and stubble. That for which I might have expected God's commendation will be torched. It will be only so much smoke!

And how about some of you? Perhaps you, too, have failed to follow the "wise masterbuilder." You may not have always built on the foundation of Jesus Christ as presented by the Apostle Paul:

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel... the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery...(Romans 16:25).

Paul did not say "according to prophecy." He said it is "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revealing of God's long-kept secret." God had a secret; He kept it secret...until revealed through Paul! You cannot find this secret foundation in the writings of the prophets, Moses, the Gospels, or any other Bible writer.

That is the conflict Paul found when he went into a city. He established them in the grace message; they opened their Bibles, and some of them reverted back to Moses. And they had the wrong kind of help from some who came along and said, "Paul, who's he? Who does Paul think he is anyhow?" Paul tells us that he is the wise masterbuilder. God gave him the program. "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." That is were he got it--straight from glory!

Be a Berean and you'll see that the things Paul said were in *harmony* with God's past dealings but not *found* there. Paul said the mystery was "hid in God." Notice, *not* hidden in prophecy, not hidden in the types, not hidden in the shadows, not hinted at either. Do you think that you see the church as the Body of Christ in prophecy or types and shadows of the Old Testament? Look again! The New Testament says they are "hid in God" (Ephesians

3:9).

But it is not hidden in God anymore! Paul says it is “now revealed” and “now made known...” Follow his blueprint. God calls this kind of building “gold, silver, and precious stones...” If you do not build correctly according to Paul's blueprints, God says what you are building is wood, hay, stubble. That work for which you thought you would receive reward will be burned up!

It is not what men think or what the religious news media thinks of the ministry. It is what God thinks of it. Notice I Corinthians 3:13:

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire...

This is not the fire of judgment, not the lake of fire. This is not eternal fire, not hell fire. It is the testing fire.

One of the time-honored ways of testing gold is by applying heat, more and more heat! In the Old Testament it says “tried in the furnace seven times.” That means to the maximum, to the ultimate. Do you know what real gold does under this test? It just gets brighter. The slag is gone. Silver and precious stones behave the same. I'm told they sparkle more brightly!

In the world we have things such as “fool's gold” and “zirconium's”—they're not real gold or diamonds at all! We can be fooled, but not God and His discerning eyes of evaluation!

The day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is (I Corinthians 3:13).

Think of the man who has poured his life's ministry into something, and now he has God's appraisal: “Nothing left—all burned up!”

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (I Corinthians 3:15).

The man is saved because salvation is “the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.” But here, Paul is talking about works--works which abide (verse 14) and works which are burned up (verse 15). The builder is to take heed how he builds on the foundation which Paul laid, which is Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery.

There is one way to be assured that you are not fooled, not building wood, hay, and stubble instead of gold, silver, and precious stones. Are you following this Pauline foundation? Are you following Jesus Christ as He revealed Himself from glory—and not in His Sermon on the Mount nor in the Beatitudes nor in the miracles?

When the Lord healed someone, He said, “Go show thyself to the priests.” He meant the Jewish priests, of course. “Go offer the offering that Moses commanded.” Even the Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry was not building, hinting at, or indicating in any way this foundation which He *from glory* gave to the

Apostle Paul.

We must understand the distinctiveness, the peculiarities, and the importance of this foundation. “Other foundation can no man lay.” Read what it says. Note the word other in verse 11. That word other means “another of the same kind.” In the Greek there are two different words: allos [another of the same kind] and heteros [another of a different kind].

Perhaps you buy Chevy’s, and maybe you bought “another.” Another what? Another Chevy--that is an allos. But then you bought nothing but Chevy’s, and then you bought “another”--a heteros--a Ford. It is different. Here Paul was saying that “another [allos] foundation can no man lay than I [Paul] laid” (Le., and be legitimate).

Peter had another foundation. It was from God--true but it was for the kingdom dispensation. It was a foundation upon which God was building, blessing, and promoting. And he said, in effect, to those builders, “Make sure you follow that program.” From Acts 2 and thereafter, Peter and his apostolic associates built on that foundation (see Matthew 16:16-19).

Isn't it wonderful that we have Peter later on in the New Testament shaking hands with the Apostle Paul (Galatians 2:9)? When he “perceived the grace” that had been given unto Paul, he gave him the right hand of fellowship--not the fisticuffs of confrontation. “When he perceived the grace...” What was it Peter saw? Paul's foundation! God was not building any more on Peter's foundation. It was good while it lasted; but Israel refused to listen, and God set them aside. God has a new foundation, and Peter shook hands with this man, God's wise masterbuilder. He shook hands with the architect. He talked to the man that God gave to draw up the plans.

We realize that God's evaluation day is coming. Yes, we are saved by grace through faith apart from works. Our works have nothing to do with our salvation. Even this poor worker whose works are burned up is himself saved, yet so as by fire! The works are burned up--not the man!

Paul tells the Ephesians, “...we are...created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Here in I Corinthians Paul is talking to the builders: “Make sure what you build will stand the test and receive God's glorious approval!”

Salvation is the gift of God. It is important, and we can't overstress it. However, sometimes we fail to understand that works done right according to the Book will be rewarded. Paul teaches reward. He says, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which the righteous judge shall give me because I've fought the fight, I've kept the faith...I followed the plan. I have built correctly.” His was a life of laying the foundation, and indeed, himself even building thereon.

“If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon” (verse 14). Notice how Paul cautions, how he guards. *Abide* means last on and on and on. Built upon what? *The foundation*. It says, “He shall receive a reward.” And do not underestimate that reward! We should work for the prize of the mark of the high calling--the reward! It's connected with Jesus Christ, beloved. It is Jesus Christ, preached, proclaimed, and revealed, where? *In glory!* For that is where this foundation was laid--in glory!

We are reminded again of Moses when he was called up onto the mount. God told him, “See that you make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount” (Hebrews 8:5). Moses came down from the mountain and wrote chapter after chapter on just exactly how to build the whole thing. Everything had to be made a certain way-God's way-according to the plans!

The Apostle Paul is saying, “See that you make it this way! This is the pattern which the Lord Jesus gave me from glory.” What cause for rejoicing! If Moses' ministry was glorious--and God says it was--then Paul's ministry is even more glorious, and God says through Paul that it is! (See II Corinthians 3:11.)

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (verse 15).

This is that fire of evaluation of the man's works. He suffered a great loss; you could call him “bankrupt.” This is put right here as God's warning! When you invest your life into something, you do not want it to go up in smoke. No indeed! We would rather have that first part that Paul set before us. “He shall receive a reward.” Eternal life-and reward to boot!

Paul continues in verse 16, “Know ye not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you [speaking of the building, not the builders]?” He is talking to the Corinthians. “We [Paul and his associates] are God's coworkers; you [the Corinthians] are God's building.” Yes! The Body of Christ is the building we are talking about--the holiest and most majestic of all time!

It is interesting to read about the temple of Israel in all its splendor and beauty! Herod's temple (which was 49 years in building) was still standing when the Lord lived and the Apostles wrote these words. But the most glorious building ever conceived and revealed to the human race is the church, the Body of Christ, and you are part of that very temple if you are saved. This should help us appreciate the position of the believer in Christ during God's administration of grace.

But verse 17 gives another caution:

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

At first glance this seems to say that if any man defile the temple of God, God is going to destroy him. That looks ominous! But the word *him* is in the *neuter* and, therefore, reads better:

If any man defile [or mar] the temple of God, it shall God mar; for the temple of God is holy, which ye are.

You are holy, but if anyone erects something that is not built on Paul's foundation, that is what God will mar or destroy. God is going to destroy that which is falsely built. This emphasizes and applies what we read in the earlier verses about works being burned that were not built correctly. I understand the word *him* in verse 17 to really be *it*. Thus, we understand that Paul is referring to this poorly constructed "temple." The marred building will be marred by God, that is, torn down!

Sometimes people think they're on the foundation. Sometimes people think they're saved. Did you ever ask someone, "Are you saved?" "Well, I do my best." Is he on the foundation? "Are you saved?" "I've been baptized. I've been confirmed." Is he saved? Did the builders who were building on this foundation help him along? No! The things which are not built upon that foundation will be marred by God which, I believe, means "torn down."

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise (verse 18).

That is a contradictory set of terms, isn't it? You become a fool that you may be wise. We need to understand that the word *fool* in the Greek had a particular meaning. That word in the Greek is the word *moros* from which we get the word *moron*. That may sound bad, but it simply means a man of *one idea*.

If you want to be really wise in this world, you need to get this one idea straight! And then you'll be what? Wise! And the one idea is Christ, the foundation laid by the masterbuilder, which is Christ in glory, head over all things to the church, which is His Body. That is this temple; that is this building. And that building rests upon the Pauline foundation, here laid in the Scriptures--in Paul's letters alone!

The other Scriptures help to declare who Christ is. Paul said he spoke of Jesus Christ of the seed of David, but he also said "raised from the dead, according to my gospel." That is where our foundation begins. That is the same Jesus Christ--but according to God's secret.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain [empty]. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your's; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's (verses 19-23).

All things are really ours. We are not the losers when we come to Christ and become part of God's building. We are not the losers when we build on this foundation if we are among God's

workmen. We have lost nothing. Paul is our Apostle, “the Apostle of the Gentiles” who “magnified his office.” There is not a happier life than that lived in Christ, and in Christ on Paul's foundation. Life is truly ours!

“Or death.” How many are able to face that last enemy, death? Everyone is trying to avoid it. All the health quacks are out trying to extend life and postpone death. People do everything they can to avoid that awful interrupting, ending, termination of life, but they cannot.

Even death is ours. We can claim victory through Christ because we are identified in Christ *with death behind Him*. His death on the cross was our death. His judgment for sins was our judgment. It is past; we are identified with Christ *in glory*. What a foundation! He is coming to take us there! He is going to fashion our bodies like His body of glory--eternal and forever with the Lord!

All things are yours. “Or death, or things present...” People claim to be in the “now” generation. I'll tell you who is the “now” generation--grace believers on this Pauline foundation!

“Or things to come...” We are the futurists--we have claimed the future. By God's grace it belongs to us through Christ. “All things are yours, and you are Christ's.” Notice that Adam is not mentioned here. We are out of Adam and into Christ! “And Christ is God's.”

We are Christ's, and Christ is God's in this peculiar foundation laid by the grace of God through the Apostle Paul. Have we made too much of Paul? Could we make too much of Paul, that is to say, Paul as God used him, Paul as God brings him to us, Paul as God used him to write more than half the books of the New Testament? That is the foundation, beloved. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid.”

The Psalmist said, “All the foundations of the earth are out of course...when the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?” The answer for them was to go back to Moses.

Today, the foundations of the church, of society, and of everything, in a practical sense, are in real trouble. The solution? Back to Paul!

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon (1 Corinthians 3:10).

Take heed, beloved! Take heed!