

## No Other Foundation: Part 2

**1 Corinthians 3:1 ESV** But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. **2** I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, **3** for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? **4** For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

**5** What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. **6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. **7** So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. **8** He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. **9** For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

**10** According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. **11** For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- I. We're in our second week discussing the foundation of the church, as we just read in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
  - A. To say that Christ is the foundation of the church, means that:
    1. He is the single reason we, the church, exist. We are not a social club, a support group, a political force, religious movement, or any other type of thing. We are literally the body of Christ, and he alone is our head.
    2. HIS is the only one with authority to give us direction and marching orders. Not popes, pastors, politicians, ideologies, or institutions.
    3. He is the power behind everything we are commanded to do. We are enabled to take up his mission because before his ascension he declared, "All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). We do not need the government's permission or society's approval to be the church. We do what we do on Christ's authority.
    4. He is the only rightful recipient of our praise, honor and glory. There is no other person, position, or cause that is of greater importance, and worthy of more of our attention, worship, adoration, praise. and thanksgiving than Jesus Christ. And this constant bringing of glory to Jesus is the sum total of the work of the church.
  - B. Last week we discussed **how** Christ became the undisputed, immovable, eternal foundation of the church:
    1. We learned that God created the universe to be only good, and that everything he created was to magnify his glory.
    2. We learned, however, that through Satan's deception and mankind's disobedience, sin entered the world and brought corruption, pollution and rebellion to the perfection, harmony and grace that God had intended.

3. We learned that Christ came to sacrificially die, be resurrected, and eventually ascend to his eternal throne, not primarily for the purpose of rescuing humanity, but because of his boundless zeal for God to be glorified.
  4. We learned that the “glorious by-product” of his obedience to the Father (by the sacrifice of himself) was that those who believe in his name would be eternally rescued from the ravages of sin; including sickness, sorrow and ultimately, death.
  5. Finally we learned that because of Christ’s obedient sacrifice, **Philippians 2:9b ESV** God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, **to the glory of God the Father**.
  6. This means that because of what Christ has done, he has purchased praise and honor for himself throughout all generations.
    - a) **Ephesians 1:13 ESV** In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, **14** who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, **to the praise of his glory**.
    - b) **Ephesians 3:20 ESV** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21 ESV to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever**. Amen.
- II. Now I know that most good church people would not think to disagree with this affirmation of Christ’s central role in the church, but, as they say, “the devil is in the details” -in this case, literally and figuratively.
- A. Most of us would readily agree that Jesus is the point, but when we closely examine how we are functioning practically, we quickly see that Jesus has slipped into second or third place, or even further back.
  - B. This is what Paul was confronting in Corinth, and in their case, he said that ignoring Jesus as the foundation of the church was keeping them as “people of the flesh” and “infants in Christ”.
    1. He is reminding them that Christ’s work on the cross was not to simply give us forgiveness for our sins, nor was it simply to make us new people, but more fully it was to make us a new **kind** of people.
      - a) He said of the people of Corinth in chapter one that they were, “those sanctified in Christ, called to be saints”.
      - b) **1 Peter 2:9 ESV** But you are a **chosen race**, a **royal priesthood**, a **holy nation**, a **people for his own possession**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **10** Once you were not a people, but **now you are God’s people**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
    2. But Paul’s indictment of the Corinthians is that they were, “behaving **only** in a human way” and “being **merely** human”.
      - a) His point is that, though there should be distinctions that cause them to stand out clearly from the way the world chooses to operate, they were just reflecting more of the same values as were found on the outside.

- b) How often is this true of us? Try to be painfully honest with yourself this morning. Are you reflecting the values of the kingdom, or are you “being merely human”?
    - 3. Because of this disconnect, Paul says to them, “I...could not address you as spiritual people...I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready...”
  - C. And what was the defect that was cutting them off from the identity and development that God had intended for them as believers? Paul says, “there is jealousy and strife among you.”
  - D. This is what I briefly mentioned at the conclusion of last weeks message. There was a factionalized celebrity culture that was blossoming at Corinth. To truly understand what is going on here, let’s look briefly at the history of the Corinthian church.
    - 1. In Acts 18, the Bible tells us that Paul stayed in Corinth with his friends Aquila and his wife Priscilla, as they were tentmakers together in the city.
      - a) While there, Paul went to the synagogue often to preach Jesus to the Jews and the Greeks.
      - b) However, the Jews at the synagogue begin to oppose him, so Paul decides to emphasize ministry to Gentiles.
      - c) This point is a turnaround for Paul’s ministry in the city. **Acts 18:8 ESV** Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.
      - d) So Paul preaches the gospel in Corinth for a year and a half, planting the church with Aquila, Priscilla and others.
    - 2. After this time Aquila and Priscilla go from Corinth to Ephesus, on the opposite side of the Aegean Sea, where they hear this passionate, eloquent Egyptian preacher named Apollos who knew enough about Jesus to make him want to preach boldly about him everywhere, but not enough to preach his message entirely accurately.
      - a) So having the benefit of being besties with the guy who would write the majority of the New Testament, they straighten him out on a few points.
      - b) **Acts 18:27 ESV** And when he wished to cross to Achaia (where Corinth is located), the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, **28** for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.
  - E. So to recap: Paul, Aquila and Priscilla plant the church at Corinth with the help of others. He has one and a half years of successful ministry there, and at some point thereafter, Apollos is commissioned by the Ephesian church to go and continue the work of preaching the gospel to the Corinthians.
- III. It is on this point that things start to breakdown. By the time Paul writes his letter to them, the Corinthians have begun to split into different “fan bases” concerning all the people who had influenced them thus far.
  - A. Some were loyal to Paul, but others thought Apollos’ preaching style left Paul in the dust.

- B. Herein lies the problem. This man-centered factionalism is exactly the opposite of everything that Christ had intended for his church, under which he would be the foundation, over which he would be the head.
- C. **John 17:11 ESV** And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, ***that they may be one, even as we are one.***
- IV. In order to really understand this, let's breakdown another passage of scripture together. Turn to Ephesians 4 and keep your finger there as we go through it.
- A. **Ephesians 4:11 ESV** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds (pastors) and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.
1. Paul wanted the Ephesians and Corinthians to see that all of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers and leaders that God gives to any church are a ***gift.***
  2. But the point was not for them to be gathering there own little tribes of followers or to be worshipped as the Grand Poobah of their own little kingdoms, but to be replicating themselves by equipping the saints for ministry as they infiltrate places in society where the preacher could never go, and to teach them to "build up the Body of Christ"!
    - a) **1 Corinthians 3:5 ESV** What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. **6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.
    - b) He is diminishing the role that they played and accrediting the success of what happened in Corinth to God. They were just obedient men, each playing their God-ordained part. Then he points where their focus should have been.
    - c) **1 Corinthians 3:7 ESV** So ***neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything,*** but only God who gives the growth.
    - d) If we've said it once, we've said it 1,000 times - it's not about you and I, but it's about Jesus! We (like Paul and Apollos) just have a role to play in what God is doing.
- B. **Ephesians 4:13 ESV** until we all attain to the ***unity of the faith*** and of ***the knowledge of the Son of God,*** to mature manhood, to ***the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ***
1. Paul says here that in giving us leaders to lead us, God has a specific destination in mind - "the unity of the faith". But has there ever been a time when people that claim to be Christians have been more divided?
    - a) You see it in denominations, political allegiances, doctrinal emphases, worship styles, etc. etc.
    - b) And believe it or not, none of these things, in and of themselves, are bad. They only become corrosive to our unity when we elevate their importance above what we should hold in common with all true believers, namely the supremacy of the Lord Jesus!
      - (1) This is why the early church formulated creeds. They did it to clear away the clutter and unify around what was of utmost importance.

- (2) Paul also focuses on common, binding truths here when he describes for us what “unity of the faith” looks like.
- c) “The knowledge of the Son of God” speaks not of mere awareness (which is plaguing the current church landscape), but the Greek word used here is **Epignosis**, which means “**precise** and **correct** knowledge”. It means to know Jesus thoroughly, like a close friend, by intimately relating to him, not just knowing facts about him, or religious duties you think pertain to him.
- d) When he says “Mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” this also is the opposite of modern cultural Christianity.
- (1) Instead of an easy believism that let’s you get your ticket to heaven and not concern yourself with life transformation, Paul makes a big deal here about maturity; about growing in Christ.
- (2) Remember that this was one of his criticisms of the Corinthian church: **1 Corinthians 3:1 ESV** But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, **as infants in Christ. 2b** I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it.
- (a) But take note how in Ephesians 4 Paul doesn’t define maturity by mere moral improvement, or religious attainment, but by becoming and looking more like Jesus -“to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”!
- (b) “The fullness of Christ” is my goal. The “measure of the stature” means that Jesus is the standard. We never compare ourselves to someone else or some man-made ideal. We only measure our progress by how we are conforming to his image. The benefit of maturing in Christ is...
- (c) **Ephesians 4:14 ESV** so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
2. Why were the Corinthians so subject to strange doctrines and the appeal of human appearances? Because they were still children, having never pursued “the fullness of Christ”.
- a) What practically does “the fullness of Christ” look like? Well to answer this I would ask you what do Jesus look like? Forgiving? Patient? Prayerful?
- b) All of those things are true. But the reason Jesus was all of those things was that he lived his life in total dependence on the Father. Do you? An increase in dependence on God is the definition of the increase of maturity.
- C. **Ephesians 4:15 ESV** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to **grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
1. Are we committed to growing up in every way into Jesus? Sometimes we relegate our thinking about Jesus to “churchy” things: worship, prayer, Bible study, etc. But Paul says here for us to grow up in Christ in **every way**.

- a) Does the way you treat your spouse reflect that you are growing up in Christ? Your children? Your boss or co-workers? How about your enemies? How about the way you spend your money and time? What about the way you serve your community?
  - b) In the end it may not matter as much as you think it does how many preacher's podcasts you faithfully listen to, or how moved you were by Hillsong's last album, if your life is not being fundamentally transformed day by day as you behold the face of Christ.
2. Paul says here that when every part of the body of Christ is working properly, that the body will build itself up in love.
    - a) You and I are the members of his body! And the only way we will ever work properly is by fixing our gaze on Jesus! Only when we do this will we die to ourselves more and more each day so that his life shines through us.
      - (1) The body will be built up by increasing love for Christ, and the only way to love Christ more is to seek our own glory less. And yet when we love Christ more, we will not be plagued by insecurity.
      - (2) Do you know why the Bible says that Adam and Eve were both naked and unashamed? Because they were never looking at themselves! Their focus was on God and on each other.
      - (3) You and I live fully clothed, and yet often completely ashamed! Why? Because we obsess over ourselves! Sin has made us the slave to our own desires as well as the way we think other people perceive us!
    - b) But if we return our gaze to Jesus, not only will we love Jesus more, we will find an increased capacity to love others way more deeply too. Did you know that it is impossible to love Jesus without loving people more?
  3. The only freedom from this hell in which we are enslaved to ourselves and the opinions of others, is in the words of the old song, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim. In the light of his glory and grace."
- V. Jesus is the foundation of the church. Anything else that we try to build the church upon is doomed to failure.
    - A. But remember, the church is not a building. It is a single body made up of individual believers all over the world like you and I, and Christ will never truly be the foundation of the church until he is the foundation of the individual believer.
      1. Never judge the church, or the members of it, for not measuring up to "the fullness of Christ" if you are not willing to strive for that lofty goal, and dying to yourself daily to help others get there.
      2. It's a foolish thing to judge a hospital for being full of sick people, or a diner for being full of hungry people; but the constant refrain of many is to curse the church for being full of sinful and broken people as well as hypocrites.
      3. Where else are they supposed to go? And why many of us would qualify if City View had a strict "no hypocrites" policy? Certainly not the pastor!
    - B. But since we're all probably as guilty as me, can we come forward and make an act of repentance? Can we say honestly, "Jesus we have broken our gaze?" Can we together look to him again and be restored?