

Feb 20 2011 1 Corinthians 3:10-12

HAVING A FIRM FOUNDATION

On these nice days you often see people taking walks again and some often take rides just to get out after being in for so long. Cabin fever in the winter is for the birds, so when warm sunny weather comes people come out of their dens like bears come out of hibernation. In fact yesterday I saw golfers playing the Rail. On those rides you begin to see the new construction sites going up. New places to work or new homes, or new places to shop. They begin to dig deep in the ground in order to lay footers, get things set in order to build whatever structure it is. When I was in seminary a friend of mine who was at the college took on some jobs one summer that I helped him with. In a new sub division we put in driveways, walks, and steps for about 10 homes. He was the brains, I was the worker. Never having done any of that stuff I was in the learning mode. He asked if I would help lay a foundation for a house. A professor at the college was a friend of his trying to save money and hired Stanley to do at least the foundation work. Once again I joined him and did lots of grunt work, mixing cement in a wheel barrow, carrying cinder blocks, helping him line things up. It was tough work. We worked at times late at night by floodlights in order to get the job done at our allowed time. I came away that summer with a greater appreciation for those who work hard laying brick, getting hands all scuffed up, hurting backs from lugging bricks, mixing cement, walking on a plank or two. I knew this wasn't my cup of tea. But someone has to do it, and it has to be done right.

Having the right foundation is critical when building a structure. Just think what would happen to this church if the foundation that was poured over 150 years ago was shoddy? A good storm could topple it. Or there might be huge cracks in the foundation. Or an earthquake or tornado could do so much damage that we would have to tear it down. During the tornado here people know what I mean as homes were moved from their foundations and they deemed unsafe.

This morning we return to Paul's message to the Corinthian church reminding them what the church was built upon. Hear now Paul's words to the Corinthians from the Message translation 1 Cor. 3:10-15

“Using the gift God gave me as a good architect, I designed blueprints; Apollo is putting up the walls. Let each carpenter who comes on the job take care to build on the foundation! [11] Remember, there is only one foundation, the one already laid: Jesus Christ. [12] Take particular care in picking out your building materials. [13] Eventually there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you'll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won't get by with a thing. [14] If your work passes inspection, fine; [15] if it doesn't, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. But you won't be torn out; you'll survive—but just barely.”

Takes a lot of people to build a building. Carpenters, roofers, dry Wallers, carpet layers, electricians, plumbers, and some I've perhaps left out. But we need to realize, each home, each building, each sub division comes first with a dream, then there is the architect who draws the plans before the dream ever can come true. You begin at step one, then step two, then step three and so on and so. Most structures don't happen overnight in our day and age. Ask the Christian church because they have run into problem after problem even getting started. But now, almost every day, especially with this nice weather, you can begin to see progress. In a few months their dream will be a reality. What a storm brought down didn't damp their spirits. They just moved to a new location with plans to build the church of their dreams with things that they could not have done easily in their old church. The one thing that keeps sustaining them is that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD! He is the foundation of their faith.

In our closing hymn the first verse goes, *“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for our faith in his excellent word! What more can he say than to you he hath said, to us who for refuge to Jesus has fled?”*

At the end of his sermon on the mount Jesus concluded his teaching by talking about a couple of houses. He said those who hear his words but don't do them are like a house that is built on the sand and when the storms come, well, the sand is washed away and down goes the house. That who hear his words and do what he says is like the house that is built on a firm foundation. The wind might blow hard, the rain might come down like cats and dogs, hail the size of baseballs might pummel it, lighting might strike all around it, but when the storm ends, that house will still be standing. It's like the homes the three little pigs built. One built his with straw and when the mean wolf huffed and puffed he blew that house down almost in record time and that pig ran to his brother's house that was made of sticks. Along comes the wolf and he once again huffs and puffs and blows that house down into a pile of matchsticks for kindling as the two brothers scurry off as fast as their little feet could carry them to the third brother's house that was made of brick. The three pigs were happy they were now safe for a time till the wolf came to this house. The next thing you know they heard a voice crying outside for them to give up and come out because the wolf was hungry and it was way past his lunchtime. Of course they said forget it. Told him to go to the new Subway and get one of their fat free breakfast subs. "No thanks," he said. He wanted a pig-in-a-blanket sandwich for his breakfast. So he huffed and puffed until he almost turned blue in the face, almost out of air and nothing happened. While the three pigs watched Oprah on TV and popped popcorn, that wolf ran himself out of breath, collapsed, strained to get to his feet and headed home angrily because he couldn't break down the foundation of the brick house. Meanwhile, the two brother pigs that lost their houses began to search the internet for plans to build their homes with the firm foundation they learned from their brother.

As it has been stated over and over again our country began because of faith reasons. Pilgrims came to this country and began to spread their beliefs about God. Throughout all those years of suffering in a new land their belief in the one true God who had brought

them to a new land sustained them and those who followed them. And so it has been till this day. Sometimes our faith is challenged, sometimes it wavers, sometimes it's tested, but the one fact remains, JESUS IS LORD!

Yes, we have different denomination started by individuals but the foundation of most of these denominations is Jesus. Martin Luther, Calvin, John Wesley were men of "one Book" the Bible. The foundation of their faith was that JESUS IS LORD! That is why I continue to say that this church belongs to Jesus Christ. He is the foundation of this church. Those who had a dream to have a Methodist church secured this land to build a church building where they could worship as Methodists. This church has continued for over 150 years with pastor after pastor building on the foundation that was laid for us by those who began this church, but most importantly on the foundation of their faith and the foundation that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!

Each pastor, each preacher, each evangelist that has stood where I stand today might have different gifts to bring to this church, different leadership skills, different ways to present the Gospel, but each one also has planted their seeds of faith. Each pastor has built upon that original foundation that was laid for us. The one thing I pray has, and will always remain constant. The foundation of this church isn't in the building itself, but in the people, but more importantly in what we believe and what is preached from this pulpit by each pastor that follows me. The one true foundation is JESUS IS LORD! As Paul says to the church in Rome, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."* He goes on and says, *"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith.'"*

Friends what we believe does matter. We often hear people say that it is not important what we believe and I don't believe that. There is only one way to salvation and that is through the cross and through Jesus Christ. You can't earn it, you can't buy it, you

can't trade for it, you can't get it from someone else, and you can't barter for it. No! Jesus said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you would know my Father as well."* And we know elsewhere in the Gospel of John he told us that he came to save the lost. He says, *"God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

That my friends, is the foundation of our faith. This faith is not a mystery but a trust in the one who brought it into existence. Out of nothing God brought life and light. Out of the ground he created man and woman and when creation was finished God stepped back to admire his creation and said, "Awesome!" Then Satan entered and distorted the truth as sin entered the world. But one day God sent his Son and well, you know the rest of the story. He came, he lived, he taught, he healed, he cast out demons, he loved, he suffered, he died, and he rose again, and lives today. That's our foundation. And those stories should not be boring, but a reminder of God's love for his people. Our salvation cost God something. It cost him his son. That's what we should always be proclaiming, salvation through Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.

Paul's message is not only to the church but to every individual. It does matter what you believe. You chose! No banging over the head. No offering you special gifts. No making idle promises. It's the simple fact of the foundation of our faith. Jesus is the one who gives life, healing, comfort and offers forgiveness and redemption. Every other believes is like sinking sand. Those who believe in Jesus and walk in his ways will end up living eternally in a place built for them in heaven. Those who don't, well you have heard it enough, they just won't make it and there is no second chance.

A strong hymn in our hymnal that comes under the title of 'Assurance' goes like this. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name....When all around my soul gives way, he

then is all my hope and stay....” The chorus goes, “On Christ the solid rock I stand, and all other ground is sinking sand.”

Let me remind you once again through Paul’s words for today about what you do or do not believe.

[12] Take particular care in picking out your building materials. (That’s what you believe.) [13] Eventually there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you’ll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won’t get by with a thing. [14] If your work passes inspection, fine; [15] if it doesn’t, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. But you won’t be torn out; you’ll survive—but just barely.”

What kind of foundation do you have? Will it stand up to the storms in your life? Or will it fall down when the first blast of a heavy wind blows your way? Is your house made of straw or sticks that will allow that mean old wolf to huff and puff and blow it down, or is it that brick one that is built on a firm foundation that keeps the wolf outside, while you rest inside with the assurance that you are safe?

Think about it....it does matter what you believe. And it does matter with what material you build with. And it matters what material you keep using for additions. After all, if God says it, it must be true!