

A Foundation to Build On

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. I Corinthians 3:10,11

If we are to have a service that is pleasing to God, we must “take heed” to the way we build our lives. When building, no issue is more important than a firm foundation. As we build on the foundation of Jesus Christ, there are four principles that will keep the foundation of our building strong.

A Book You Can Trust

The Scripture tells us that all men are liars. In fact, men are so prone to lying that they will even lie to themselves. Because of this, it is important that we find some objective standard of truth outside of ourselves in which to place our trust.

The Word of God is our objective, tangible source of life. The words in the Bible are unlike the words in any other book. They are alive. It is only in these living words that we find the truth about life.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. John 6:63

For the word of God is quick [alive], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. John 17:17

Answering Satan's temptation, Jesus Christ again gave a pointed statement as to where we find truth.

But he [Christ] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Matthew 4:4

There is only one source of truth in the universe. All truth proceeds forth from Jehovah God and His Son, Jesus Christ. That truth is made known by the Holy Spirit of God. An incident recorded in the book of Daniel illustrates this truth. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. He called all the wise men and magicians of His kingdom to reveal to him the dream and its meaning. When none could do what the king asked, Daniel, a servant of Jehovah God revealed the dream and the true meaning of the dream.

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; Daniel 2:27,28

It was the God in Heaven, Jehovah, the God that Daniel served that not only knew the truth but also revealed the truth to and through Daniel. Only the God of heaven, the God of the Bible is the source and revealer of truth.

In the writings of Paul we learn how God reveals His truth.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. II Timothy 3:16,17

God revealed His truth by inspiring Scripture. The Bible is the revealed truth of the living God. By writing down His truth God ensured that it is preserved forever.

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. Psalms 12:6,7

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: Isaiah 30:8

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Matthew 24:35

This revealed preserved truth is found today for English speaking people in the Authorized King James Bible. It is in this book alone that we find the unchanging truth of the living, life giving God. Our objective standard of truth is not found in the philosophies and writings of men, nor is it found in the proliferation of books claiming to be the Word of God. True life is found in the inspired words of Scripture. Those inspired words have been preserved for English speaking people today in the Authorized King James Bible.

A Gospel You Can Believe

Now that we have an objective standard of truth, we must use that standard to learn what we should believe.

Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, and writer of the book of Romans, described man's turning away from God and His truth. Consequently God gave mankind up to a reprobate

mind and allowed him to fulfill the lusts of his flesh, walking in total disobedience to God's truth.

. . . Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; . . . And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. . . . God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Romans 1:20-32

Later in Romans Paul revealed the penalty for this disobedience.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23

The book of Revelation shows the death spoken of by Paul is not just physical death, but also eternal spiritual death.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. Revelation 21:8

We must realize that it is not what we do that condemns us. It is what we are.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. Romans 5:12-14

The question, "How can I have eternal life," refers to deliverance from the second death in the lake of fire. There are two examples in Scripture of this question.

And, behold, one came and said unto him [Christ], Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, . . . if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. . . . All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. Matthew 19:16-21

Then he [Philippian jailer] called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:29-31

The questions are similar but the answers are very different. Jesus Christ told the rich young ruler that to have eternal life he had to keep the law, sell all that he had, and come and follow Him. In contrast, Paul told the Philippian jailer to simply, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Why this seeming contradiction between the two answers, and which answer

should we accept as true? There is no contradiction; each answer fits the situation in which it is given.

Jesus Christ was born under the law and ministered to the nation Israel, the people to whom God had given the law.

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, Galatians 4:4

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: Romans 15:8

But he [Christ] answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matthew 15:8

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, preached a message that specifically *excluded* the Law of Moses.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Acts 13:38,39

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage [the Law of Moses]. Galatians 5:1

The Gentile message of salvation is found in the ministry of Paul. We must simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is it that we must believe about Christ? Do we simply believe that He existed, or that He was a great prophet?

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: I Corinthians 15:1-4

We must believe that Christ's death, burial, and resurrection paid the price for our sins. His shed blood satisfied the justice of God and when we trust in that blood God forgives all of our sins and gives us the gift of eternal life. We can do nothing to earn salvation but only trust in what Christ has done.

Study You Can Understand

God is a God that wants His people to understand his will and ways. That is why he has given us a book we can trust. We must now use that book in the proper way to gain understanding.

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. II Timothy 2:15

There are two key elements for understanding scripture. First, we must study God's Word. Second, we must study it in a particular way; *rightly dividing* the Word of Truth.

We live in a time when most people, including believers, have little interest in the study of God's Word. Most are satisfied with a light devotional study of the Bible. Some may even read a few verses in their Bible each day. Very few however, view the Bible as a book to be labored over in intense study. Just as we can never understand Physics simply by casually reading through a Physics book, we can never understand the Bible with just a casual reading. We must hasten to add that we are certainly not opposed to daily

Bible reading! Daily reading in God's Word familiarizes us with the terminology and flow of Scripture and is an important part of our spiritual lives. It is not however, what Paul had in mind when he told us to *study* the Word of God. A good explanation of studying God's Word is found in the book of Nehemiah, as the Levites taught God's Law to Israel and called her to repentance.

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. Nehemiah 8:8

The study and teaching of God's Word involves more than just reading. It involves learning the *sense* and *understanding the reading*. The *sense* of a passage is the context in which it is written. We must look at a verse in its context as it relates to every other verse in God's Word. It is only through this careful study that we truly *understand the reading*. The practice of closing your eyes, opening your Bible, and putting your finger on a verse is simply not a valid way to study God's Word.

For our study of the Bible to be effective we must rightly divide the Word of Truth. The words *rightly divide* mean just what they say. There are divisions in God's Word that we must recognize and consider in order to understand any verse. To illustrate, contrast a statement made by Peter in Acts with a statement made by Paul in Romans.

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. Acts 3:19-21

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: Romans 16:25, 26

Notice that Peter is proclaiming things *made known* by the prophets since the world began. In contrast, in the book of Romans, Paul is proclaiming things *kept secret* since the world began. Something *made known* cannot be a secret and something *kept secret* has not been made known. Peter and Paul proclaimed two different messages.

This is further illustrated by understanding that they were preaching to two entirely different groups of people.

But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me [Paul], as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision [Israel], the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Galatians 2:7-9

The key element of rightly dividing the Word of Truth is understanding the distinctive and unique nature of Paul's ministry. Paul's writings alone reveal the origin, walk, and destiny of the church of this age, the Body of Christ.

A Life You Can Live

Once saved how does God want us to live? How do we please Him? In the final analysis, if your theology doesn't tell you how to live your life, then it is of little value. Living your life is "where the rubber meets the road".

The Bible has differing and sometimes seemingly contradictory answers to this question. To live a life pleasing to God, we must recognize that our instructions for this Age of Grace are found in the writings of Paul.

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: Romans 11:13

In Paul's writings we find a system of living and dealing with God and one another that the Bible calls "grace."

In order to fully appreciate grace we must understand the contrasting principle of the law. In the book of Deuteronomy God explained His dealings with Israel based upon the law.

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. . . . But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Deuteronomy 28:1,2,15

Notice that the law was an *if-then* system. That is, *if* Israel obeyed, *then* they would be blessed but *if* they disobeyed, *then* they would be cursed.

Paul makes clear that in the Age of Grace we are no longer under that law system.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Romans 6:14

Blessing in the Age of Grace comes not because of what we do, but because of the fact that we are "in Christ". Our blessing rests in a person, not our actions.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: Ephesians 1:3 (Emphasis mine.)

The fact that we are no longer under the law but under grace means that our motivation has changed. We no longer serve the Lord to get blessing, we serve because we have already received blessing in our salvation. It is common today for people to proclaim salvation by grace but then immediately put converts under the bondage of the law. Just as we are saved by grace, we *serve* the Lord by grace. We do not serve the Lord hoping for salvation or any other blessing in return. We serve knowing that He has already given us salvation and blessing in Christ.

We please the Lord not only by *what* we do, but the attitude with which we do it. Service pleasing to God is produced by a heart of gratitude for all that He has done for us in Christ. Good works done to earn blessing or to escape God's wrath, no matter how well intentioned are not pleasing to God.

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