

May 8, 2016

BUILDING A HOUSE

Matthew 7:24-29

"Jesus is Lord" is the foundation of the Christian faith. Many who want to claim Christianity will profess, nominally, that Jesus is Lord, while in reality they do not truly practice the relinquishment of Self necessary for allowing Jesus to actually *be* Lord *in* their life. If you want Him to be Lord *in* your life, He must be Lord *of* your life. And the only way for Jesus to truly have lordship over us is to be obedient to His Word, to do what He says!

Listen to what Paul had to say with respect to this issue of having the right foundation: *"No one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done."* (1 Corinthians 3:11-13) Everyone probably knows that if the foundation of a house is flawed, no matter how well-built the house may be, no matter what quality of craftsmanship went in to the construction process, the house will, in time, develop severe problems and, virtually, become worthless.

When I think of a *house* in Scriptures, I think of *the House of God*. A Church is supposed to be built on faith in Jesus Christ. So are our lives. Very few of the founders of this Church are known or mentioned any more. Are any of the names of our charter members the names of any of our active members today? ... Generation after generation, it is Jesus Christ who has been the ultimate reason for the existence of this congregation. No one can rightfully say, "This is *my* Church!" because this is Christ's Church. It is *His* Body. When we name names other than Jesus as the reason we are a part of this congregation, what we should be considering is the fact that they helped lay an individual foundation for us. The Church should never be seen as a personality cult. In the passage from First Corinthians, Paul says earlier in Chapter Three, *"For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, 'I belong to Paul,' and another, 'I belong to Apollos,' are you not merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building!"* (v.3b-10) ... And then Paul says that the only legitimate foundation is Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ is the source upon which a Church is built. At least, He should be. But a congregation can only continue if the spiritual lives of the members who make up the church are built on the foundation of Jesus Christ as Lord. Pastors may come and go, issues may encourage or discourage the members; but the people who make up the church must have Jesus Christ as their reason for being here. Or..., for not being here: if ever a pastor came who did not offer the Christ of the Gospels, you should do your best to always seek out Christ for the foundation of your faith. And it should be the same Christ as the Gospels reveal. Not the Christ of Joseph Sprague, or, John Shelby Spong, but the Christ of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!

Foundations are like roots. In the parable of the Sower in Chapter Eight of Luke. Jesus tells of the seeds that fell on rocky soil and withered as they sprouted... *for lack of moisture*. (v. 6) In Matthew, the seeds that fell on rocky soil had no *depth* of soil and were scorched when they sprang up because they had no *roots*. (13:5-6) Roots are the foundation of the plant. They need depth (and moisture) in order to grow. And then they will have a good foundation.

Jesus tells how the builder of a house must dig deeply in order to lay the foundation on the rock. That way the adversity of the world will not ruin the house. Jesus begins this parable by saying that it takes more than just *hearing* His words....you have to *act* on them. Hearing without action is like trying to build on a shallow, feeble foundation. The fact of the matter is that a faith without deeds, without fruit, is in fact no faith at all! Just as the tree is known by its fruits, and the plant is able to grow because of its roots, so can we build well because of the solid foundation that undergirds our faith.

Why would someone build a house on a poor foundation? I think it's because they wanted to take a short cut. But there really are no short cuts in God's Kingdom. There are no short cuts with faith. If we want to profess Jesus as Lord, we need to do what He says. We need to let Him be lord over every aspect of our lives. We can hold nothing back. He must be in control. And with respect to knowing how He is to be in control: we need to know what He expects, and therefore, we need to know what He has taught, stick to it, and act on it. But remember, knowing what Jesus has taught is not the same as doing what He has taught. Knowing we should love is not the same as loving others. Knowing we should not judge is not the same as showing mercy. Believing Jesus is Lord is the beginning of a good foundation. But belief without practice is like a tree with no fruit. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "*If you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free!*" (8:31b-32) But...there is an *IF* there!

Why do we call Jesus Lord? Because He *is* Lord. He is the *savior*. He is our *King*. He is supposed to reign in our lives and reign over our lives. But another thing happens sometimes. Sometimes, we may have a good solid foundation and then never build anything! We've all got work to do!

JAMES 1:22-25 – *Be doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves, and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget, but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing!*