

THE SURE FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed how some people are able to weather the storms of life while others fall apart during tough times? Have you wondered what makes some so strong while others are so weak? During times of uncertainty and upheaval in the world and in the Church, we are confronted with the need for a sure foundation. We can understand why things fall apart in the world, but it is hard to understand church splits and fallen ministers. However, these events should not dishearten us or cause us to wrongly judge others. Rather, we should examine our own lives to be sure we are stable. We need to answer the question, "On what foundation am I building my life?"

Laying the foundation is the first step in building a house. Since the foundation bears the weight of the whole structure, it must be laid well. When a firm foundation is laid in a believer's life, he can weather the storms of life. However, if this sure foundation is not laid, his house will fall during times of testing. Since the foundation determines whether we stand or fall, we are beginning **First Principles** with an emphasis on a sure foundation.

The apostle Paul stated that he was a masterbuilder who laid the foundation upon which each of us is to build our life (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). We know that Paul is not the one who laid the foundation of salvation based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ; God was. Paul's message was "...*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Therefore, the foundation he was talking about is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ as preached and taught by the apostles (Ephesians 2:20; Acts 2:42).

This foundation is laid in our lives when we are born again and is built upon by continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. In the life of the Church or individual believer, this foundation is the **basic Christian doctrine and experience upon which all later growth and development depends**. In other words, we must get the basics down before we can go on to maturity. We must learn to walk before we can run. We must learn the ABC's before we can read and write. Likewise, we must walk in the light God gives us before we will receive new light. Correct doctrine is not enough; we must **know and do**.

Matthew 7:24-27 Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.

The laying of a firm foundation is so important that we dedicate six lessons to each of the foundation stones: Repentance from Dead Works, Faith Toward God, the Doctrine of Baptisms, Laying On of Hands, Resurrection of the Dead and Eternal Judgment. The Book of Hebrews states that these are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 5:12-6:2). Our hope is to see these foundation stones firmly laid in your life so you will not fall during times of testing, but will stand victoriously.

VISION ONE

WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION?

The Greek word for foundation is "themelios," which means "to be grounded, established, made firm and unwavering."

The foundation of the Christian faith is a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other foundation that can be laid aside from that which is already laid, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). For years churches have centered around one doctrinal truth or another rather than around The Truth, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, truths separated from The Truth are divisive. Outside of an active relationship with Jesus, we will be bound in legalism and mere doctrine. No truth can be properly understood by a person who does not abide in Christ. It is not enough to know about Christ; we must truly know Him through intimate fellowship.

The foundation stones, according to Hebrews Chapter 6, are the elementary principles of Christ. Establishing these stones is a basic need in Church life. Throughout Scripture the Church is referred to as a building, a house or a holy temple. Every building needs a foundation that is secure, solid and reliable, or it will not stand. In prophecy, the Church has a sure foundation with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. In both the Old and New Testaments, we find that the Holy Spirit uses different words to speak of the Church which are rich in symbolism. One of the words that often prophetically symbolizes the Church is Zion.

1 Peter 2:6 ...Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious...

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily."

Within the life of the believer, each of these foundation stones is established as a result of intimate fellowship with the Lord. In order to build the foundation for Solomon's temple, great care was exercised to cut large, costly, solid stones. In like manner, every foundational stone is precious to our experience with the Lord and should be laid with the utmost care.

1 Kings 5:17 And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, and hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple.

As a wise masterbuilder, Paul laid the foundation in every church he established (1 Corinthians 3:10). He had a systematic teaching method for laying the foundation which included repentance, baptism, faith, etc.

1 Corinthians 4:17 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

ESTABLISHING THE FOUNDATION

We are surrounded today with a society of low morality, unstable economy, humanistic education, broken families and apathetic churches. The very seams of our society are coming undone, exposing things as they really are.

Everything that can be shaken is being shaken now. We must see through eyes of understanding because God's purpose is to shake and test all things. More importantly, He will establish those things which cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:27). The instrument He uses to shake will also establish. **The Word of God is the main instrument which He uses to test and establish.**

As God establishes these foundational truths in your heart, change will occur because His revelation demands response. When you begin to say yes to God's Word, you are then tested in every aspect regarding that decision. This is how truth is established within the believer's life. With testing, everything begins to be shaken and those things that cannot be shaken become established.

Let us examine two passages of scripture to clarify this point:

Haggai 2:6-7 *For thus says the Lord of hosts: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," ...*

Hebrews 12:26-27 *... "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

The writer of the book of Hebrews quotes directly from Haggai by stating that in the last days we would see the shaking of all things for the purpose of finding those things which remain unshakable. As God spoke over Israel in the wilderness, the whole earth shook. Out of His mouth came a fiery law which caused the people to back away from His presence. They were afraid of being consumed, so they asked Moses to go before the presence of God on their behalf. God spoke from the mountain and His voice made the mountain tremble and the earth shake.

At that time God spoke from the mountain. Now He is speaking from heaven and His voice shakes both heaven and earth to separate what cannot be shaken. In these last days, He speaks to His Church and establishes her. His Church is and will be unshakable.

After establishing the sure foundation, the blessings of God will begin to fall upon the Church. Haggai, who prophesied the shaking and the glory that would follow (Haggai 2:6-9), also prophesied that when the foundation was laid, God's blessing would fall upon His people (Haggai 2:18-19). Their barns would be full, their vines laden with grapes, their fig and olive trees would bear a bountiful harvest. The blessing would begin on the same day the foundation was established. During Haggai's days as a prophet, the house of the Lord laid in waste (Ezra 6:14). As long as the foundation of the temple was in ruins, there was no blessing.

If the Church is yielding to God's Holy Spirit, she will see things shake that should be shaken, such as traditions, form, legalism and sin. She will also be established on a firm foundation in the unshakable truths of the Word of God.

Only then will she be able to handle the blessing and true prosperity which will follow. **The true Church will be established!**

Isaiah 2:2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

DANGERS OF NEGLECTING THE FOUNDATION

The book of James says that if we do not practice what we have heard we deceive ourselves. When one is not a doer of the Word, his foundation cannot be laid. Many today have insight into the Word, but do not follow the principles which they have learned. They can quote scriptures on repentance, but do not practice it in their daily lives. Therefore, they become lawless or workers of iniquity.

James 1:23-24 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

Hearing the Word alone is not enough! We neglect to lay the foundation when we do not do what we have heard. In the parable of the Wise and Foolish Men (Matthew 7:24-27), the only difference between the two houses was their foundations. Realize, the storm did not destroy the house; the lack of a foundation destroyed the house. Both men heard the Word, but only the wise man did it. His foundation was properly laid through **doing the Word** and his house stood.

If we neglect the foundation stones, our building will crumble and fall in the time of testing. Also neglecting the foundation stones indicates that we are unwilling to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

If we neglect the foundation stones, we will not know the freedom and life-changing experience that each principle of Christ provides.

2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

If we neglect the foundation stones, we will not be able to go on to maturity in Christ, but will continue to be a babe on milk.

Hebrews 6:12-13 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

Having a sure foundation in our lives is of absolute importance! We must be sure to be grounded in God's Word and in relationship with Jesus Christ. When our foundation is securely laid, we can stand victorious and go on to maturity.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is the foundation of the Christian life?

The foundation of the Christian life is relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Question 2: What is the foundation based on?

The foundation is based on the Word of God and our obedient response to it.

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Question 3: What does the foundation consist of?

The foundation stones consist of repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Hebrews 6:1-2 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Question 4: What are the results of a sure foundation

- a. Churches that are laying the foundation are seeing a steady, continuous growth of properly birthed and founded believers.

Acts 2:42, 47 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

- b. Having a solid foundation will produce unity in the house of God because all the members will be speaking the same thing, having the same mind and the same judgment.

I Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

- c. Laying the foundation will cause thanksgiving among the people of God.

Ezra 3:11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving things to the Lord: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel." Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

VISION ONE

- d. Having a foundation will prepare and train the church for solid ministry.

Ephesians 4:14-15 ...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ... .

- e. Church leadership properly functions in ministry when a firm foundation is laid.

1 Timothy 4:6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

- f. When the foundation is properly laid, it will cause the building to be structurally sound so that it will stand firm during times of testing.

Matthew 7:24-25 Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.