

Why Has the Salt Lost Its Flavour?

by Miki Hardy

Miki Hardy's sermon emphasizes the necessity of returning to the foundational truths of Christianity centered on Jesus Christ and the Cross to combat the issues facing the Church today.

Scripture: Matthew 7:24, Matthew 16:24, 1 Corinthians 3:10, Ephesians 2:20, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 2:11

Topics: "Christian Doctrine", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Miki Hardy addresses the prevalent problems within the Church, including division, hypocrisy, and legalism, emphasizing the need to return to the foundational doctrine of Christianity centered on Jesus Christ and His crucifixion. Hardy highlights the importance of building on the right foundation, as Apostle Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, stressing that any deviation from this foundation compromises pure doctrine. The sermon delves into the significance of being crucified with Christ, surrendering our lives, and following His teachings, ultimately leading to spiritual growth and obedience through His grace.

Transcript

A list of problems

The Church itself, appears beset by an endless series of problems: division and disunited leadership; separation and divorce; 'revivals' with little lasting fruits; sin, often swept or kept hidden under the carpet; legalism and religiosity; hypocrisy and judgemental behaviour; not forgetting the deceptive man-made doctrines that have infiltrated the Church... the list goes on! Many Christians today are living discouraged, defeated lives. Yet, Christianity is not about walking in defeat. When Jesus died on the Cross, God's plan was founded on the greatest victory ever known!

There is little need to discuss the issues themselves, it is more important surely to understand why the Church has gone so far off track, and see what has gone wrong. I can state without a shadow of doubt that the problem relates to the foundation of our doctrine. Slowly but surely, man has added things to the sound doctrine handed down by Christ Himself, and the Apostles of the Early Church. What we did not believe or accept previously, has today become part of our faith and doctrine.

Building on the right foundation

In 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, Apostle Paul says, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he

builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This statement couldn't be clearer: if the foundation itself is wrong, then everything built upon it is affected! Pure doctrine will be compromised. Therefore, we must ensure we understand what this foundation is, so as to stick within the right parameters and not add or remove anything. In Ephesians 2:20, Paul says that we, the Church, have been, "...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

What is the foundation?

The foundation of Christianity is not only the person of Jesus Christ; it is also the Cross of Jesus Christ, as Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 2:2: "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Like Paul, we come to know Christ's death on the Cross and His resurrection when we identify ourselves fully with what took place. If we look carefully, we will see that this is the foundation that the Church has strayed from.

Most of us can quote Matthew 16:24 off by heart: "...If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow Me." Do we believe we can follow Christ and obey His teachings, without surrendering and losing our lives? It is true that the language is spiritual, but it still requires turning away from our own plans and priorities; humbling ourselves, by laying our personal ambitions on God's altar.

One foundation, one doctrine

If we compare what Jesus declared to His disciples in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 to Paul's Epistles, we find the same doctrine; the same foundation; the same heart and spirit; the same gospel. Here is the evidence of just how far the Church has drifted from the foundation! We could call what Jesus spoke of as the foundation of the Doctrine of Christ...

He taught His followers how to live, how His Church would be a testimony to the world. He spoke on so many issues: being salt and light of this world; loving our enemies; praying for our persecutors; forgiveness and repentance; the narrow road; not judging each other; His disciples and their fruits; praying and fasting with a pure heart; seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Don't these teachings all refer to losing one's life in exchange for His? Can the Church today truly say that it is the salt and light of the world?

Being crucified with Christ

Paul laid the foundation in the churches as an Apostle. He describes the revelation he received in many different ways that are not contradictory. In Philippians 3:10-11: "sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings..." In Colossians 2:11, he talks about circumcision by Christ and not by the hands of man. In Philippians 1:29, it is about God's grace that equips us in times of suffering, which is not something that Christians today appear very keen to hear about: "...not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Let us be honest, it is painful, difficult and humbling, to be broken, to deny oneself, and declare that we cannot serve God as we should in our own strength. That is why Paul, whose life exemplified brokenness, could say, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Can you see any difference between this and Christ's own life and teachings?

Jesus Christ and Him crucified

It is not enough to say we are Christians. We demonstrate it by denying ourselves, by the surrender and sacrifice of our lives to Christ. How will we move forward in our spiritual life, if our lives are not based on this foundational truth of Christianity?

We may know the Bible and have the right language, but knowledge alone will not bring spiritual growth. First, the right foundation needs to be laid in our lives, and afterwards we still need to be careful how we build on it. When we stand on this foundation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and our lives no longer belong to us, we find it is possible to obey God's Word. Not because we are obliged to, or because it is written in the Bible; but because Christ has laid hold of our lives and we are enabled, by His grace, to obey. Otherwise, we end up feeling condemned, a failure; because of sin we cannot seem to get rid of. Let us face it, we cannot do this in our own strength, it is only by His grace that we can get there.

But first, we need to put off the old man. I am not speaking of confessing Scripture here, but rather of laying our lives on the altar, denying ourselves, putting aside our rights - partaking of Christ's death. It is amazing how when the Church is on the correct, solid, strong foundation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, everything comes right. Remove this foundation from the Church, and everything becomes shaky.

The consequence of a broken or distorted foundation is that we begin relying on ourselves instead of on the Lord. Today, in the Church, it is rare to find examples of people seeking to be made perfect in Christ. Yet we can see people struggling in many areas; bound by sin, all because there is little emphasis on denying ourselves and crucifying our flesh.

No longer by grace

Today's self-dependent Church talks about grace yet relies on worldly techniques and methods. That is not God's plan for His people. It brings a different spirit, another gospel or doctrine into the Church. When we serve God like this, it is no longer, 'I am what I am by God's grace.' It becomes, 'I am who I am because of what I know, because of what I can do,' often accompanied by the attitude: 'this is my due...'

Seriously though, what can we claim from God? Surely He is the one with a claim on our lives! He has prepared an altar for us to lay our lives upon.

Standing on the Rock

When the revelation of the foundation of Christianity seizes your heart, you are begotten in the Spirit of the Gospel. But if we stop at just believing what Jesus did on the Cross and avoid identifying our lives with its power, we are missing the whole point and are on a very shaky foundation indeed.

Let me end by reminding you of Jesus' words to His disciples in Matthew 7: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock... The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

We are called to deny ourselves and to surrender our lives. How will we grow spiritually, if our lives are not based on the foundational truth of Christianity?

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