

Building on the One Foundation

by T.P. Haley

The Church of Christ is founded on the truth that Jesus is the Christ, and those who believe and are immersed are built upon this foundation.

Scripture: Matthew 16:18, John 17:21, Acts 2:37, Acts 8:4, 1 Corinthians 3:10, Ephesians 2:20, Ephesians 4:4

Topics: "Church Unity", "Jesus Christ"

Description

T.P. Haley preaches about the importance of building the Church of Christ on the foundation of Jesus Christ. He addresses the divisions in the Church of Corinth and emphasizes the need for unity in faith and judgment. Haley highlights that the Church is God's building, with Jesus Christ as the singular foundation. He contrasts the foundation of the Church with other beliefs, showing that it is built on the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Haley stresses the significance of preaching Christ crucified as the foundation of the Church and the necessity for believers to hear, believe, and be immersed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Transcript

"According to the grace of God that is given to me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on this. But let everyone take heed how he builds on this. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 COR. iii: 10, 11.)

HERE were divisions in the Church of Christ, in the city of Corinth. One object of the Apostle, in the letter from which the foregoing language is quoted, was the healing of these divisions. In the tenth verse of the first chapter we find the following language: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you; but that you be perfectly united in the same mind, and in the same judgment."

The apostle again affirms (1 Cor. iii): "And I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to those who are carnal, as to babes in Christ. . . . For since envy, and strife, and divisions are among you, are you not carnal, and do you not walk as men?"

The apostle thus proceeds to present such considerations as are calculated to correct this evil. He says to them: "You are God's field. You are God's building."

He does not say: You, brethren, are God's fields, or [359] God's buildings; but employs the singular number. Having introduced the term building, he very naturally proceeds to speak of the foundation; and as God has but one building, there is but one foundation. The Church of Christ is, then, considered by him under the figure of a building or a house.

What, then, is the foundation of this house?

It has been affirmed that the Church was built in the days of Abraham, and that his family and immediate descendants were in it; that it was built on a "covenant of grace" that God made with Abraham. Of course, if this be true, then the "Church of Christ" has had a visible existence since the days of Abraham, and all his descendants have been members thereof.

When, however, the harbinger, John the Immerser, came, he cried to Israel, saying: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven--the Church of Christ"--is at hand (Matt. iii: 2), or comes nigh. Now if the kingdom had already come, if the Church had existed from the days of Abraham, how could the harbinger say it is at hand, or, it comes nigh? He could not have said it. Besides, the Savior, in speaking of John, says: "Verily, I say to you, among those born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Immerser. But the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. xi: 11.) If the Church of Christ, the "building," was founded in the family of Abraham, and embraced all his descendants, John, being one of them, was already a member thereof; and the Savior could not have said, "he that is least in the kingdom is greater than he." But the kingdom, or the Church, not being yet founded--being yet in the future--he could, with great propriety, say, that, notwithstanding John was [360] "more than a prophet," the least in the kingdom is greater than he.

Again: If the Church of Christ, or God's building, was founded in the family of Abraham, then, of course, it existed when Jesus commenced his ministry; and yet the burden of his discourse was, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," or, the Church is about to be established.

Again: "When Jesus came into the regions of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying: 'Who do men say that I, the son of man, am?' They replied: 'Some say that thou art John the Immerser; others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said to them: 'But who say you that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered and said to him: 'Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonas; for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to you, that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.'" (Matt. xvi: 13-20.) It is not difficult to see, from this passage, that the "Church of Christ" was yet future; and equally clear that it was not built, nor to be built, on a "covenant of grace." Whatever may have been organized or established in the family of Abraham, it was not the Church of Christ.

It would not be difficult to show that the Jewish Church differed, in many essential points, from the Church of Christ, to which Paul refers in the passage under consideration, under the figure of a building; and while we might readily grant that the Jewish theocracy was founded in Abraham's family, and on a covenant of grace, we should as promptly deny that the "Church of Christ" had an [361] existence at the time in which Christ said, "I will build my Church."

It is affirmed by Papists, with great confidence, that the Church of Christ was founded or builded on the holy Apostle Peter." When Paul was considering the Church under another figure, he says: "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the

household of God; having been builded upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." (Eph. ii: 20.) With this declaration of the apostle before us, may we not ask, Why should it be affirmed that the Church is builded on Peter, rather than on Paul, or James, or John? It would, indeed, be far more consistent in the Romanist to affirm that the Church was built on Paul, since it is certain that Paul did minister in Rome; and equally certain that Peter never saw the Papal city, which was to be so prominent in perpetuating his memory.

In the language quoted above from Paul, he is considering the Church of Christ under the figure of a house, composed of living stones, each member being a lively stone, as the apostles and New Testament prophets were the first admitted. The Church is said to be "builded upon apostles and prophets, Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone." But, even from this point of view, Peter is the foundation in precisely the same sense as were all the other "apostles and prophets."

Paul has, however, settled the question definitely in the following words: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii: 11.) Considered, therefore, as a house composed of living stones, Jesus the Christ is the foundation. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a [362] precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. He that believeth shall not make haste." (Isa. xxviii: 16.) Considered as an organized association or society, the truth confessed by Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," is the foundation; and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid."

The question may be asked, How does a "truth," couched in a proposition, become the foundation of an organized association or society? We can not better answer this question than by presenting several illustrations. We have, in this community, an organized society, called a "Temperance Society." The truth upon which this organization is founded is stated in the following words: "The use of intoxicating drinks, as a beverage, is unnecessary, and injurious." Every person embracing this truth, and willing to act in conformity therewith, is ready to be admitted a member of the society. He who denies the truth of the proposition can not be a member thereof. Since all within do believe this proposition, and do act in conformity therewith, the society rests upon, or is founded upon, the truth couched in this proposition.

Again: Mohammedanism is an organized religion, or Church of Religionists. The proposition containing the supposed "foundation truth" is, that Mohammed was a prophet of God. When one is convinced that this proposition is true, and is willing to act in harmony with his convictions, he is a Mohammedan. Since all Mohammedans believe the proposition, and since no one can be such who denies it, we say it is the foundation proposition.

Again, we have, across the waters, organized governments, called monarchies. The truth, or supposed truth, on which they are founded is, that kings rule by Divine right. Every man who believes the proposition, and is [363] willing to act in harmony therewith, is a monarchist. He who denies the proposition can not be a loyal subject of such government. All loyal subjects believing the proposition, and living consistently therewith, it may be, with great propriety, affirmed that the government rests on this proposition as its foundation.

So the Church of Christ, as an organized association or society, is founded on the truth of the proposition, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Every one, therefore, who believes this proposition, and conforms his life to it, is a Christian. No one can be a member of this body, can be in this building, who rejects this proposition, or who will not "show his faith by his works." Paul says: "As a wise master-builder I

have laid the foundation, and another builds on this."

How did Paul lay this foundation? He founded the Church in the city of Corinth, and the Holy Spirit has caused to be written a history of this transaction in the following words:

"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and finding a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had lately come from Italy, with Priscilla, his wife (because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome), he went to them; and because he was of the same trade, he made his home with them, and worked; for by trade they were tent-makers. But on every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul was roused in spirit, and earnestly testified to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus," or, as the old version rendered it, that "Jesus was the Christ."

Paul, then, laid the foundation "as a wise master-builder," not by preaching a "covenant of grace," nor the Apostle [364] Peter, but by preaching Christ, remembering that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus the Christ." In referring to his labors among these brethren, Paul says: "For I delivered you, among the first things, that which I also received, 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, and that he was seen by Cephas, then of the twelve," etc. (1 Cor. xv: 3.) And again, referring to his first entrance among them, he says: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellence of speech, or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. ii: 1, 2.) Thus we learn not only how he laid the foundation, but precisely what the foundation is which he did lay.

It is manifest, from these Scriptures, that Paul laid the foundation for the Church of Christ in Corinth, by "testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ," by preaching "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." What a lesson to preachers of this generation! How many would now be content, in establishing a church, to preach as Paul preached--no more, no less? Not many, we fear!

But the apostle says: "Another builds on this, but let every man take heed how he builds on this." How, then, may we ask, did Paul build on this foundation? He did it as a master-builder, a skillful architect. The Holy Spirit tells us in the following words: "But Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house, and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were immersed." (Acts xviii: 8.) Thus were they builded on the one foundation, and the apostle has solemnly warned every man to take heed how he builds thereupon. [365]

Those who thus build now--lay the foundation by preaching Christ and him crucified--and teach the multitudes to hear, believe, and be immersed are surely building as did Paul, and will secure the approbation of God. But, alas! for those who build on this foundation any material not thus prepared! This proceeding of Paul was in precise harmony with "the Great Commission" under which he was acting. "Go preach the Gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned." (Mark xvi: 16.)

On the day of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension of Jesus from the brow of Olivet, the Holy Spirit came down, and inspired the apostles to lay the foundation, or to set forth the foundation which God had laid in Zion. They did this by "preaching Jesus." The waiting and anxious multitudes, among whom were the murderers of the "Holy One, and the Just," already conscience-smitten, heard. The natural and necessary result followed. They believed. "They were pierced to the heart, and said, Brethren, what shall

we do? Then they that gladly received his word were immersed; and on that day there were added to them about three thousand souls." (Acts ii: 37.)

The foundation, "Jesus is the Christ," was laid. Three thousand were builded upon it by hearing, believing, and being immersed. The single article of faith presented to that audience was the foundation-truth. "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." They heard this proposition, with the evidence presented, and the foundation was laid. They then obeyed the commands given, and were builded on the [366] foundation. Thus was the Church of Christ in Jerusalem founded.

The Church of Jesus Christ in Samaria was founded precisely in the same way: "Then they that were dispersed went every-where preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached the Christ to them; and the multitude with one mind gave heed to the things which were spoken by Philip, when they heard and saw the signs which he did." (Acts viii: 4.) Thus was the foundation laid in Samaria. The people were builded upon it thus. But when they believed Philip, who preached the good news concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were immersed, both men and women.

It will be seen that, in order to found a church of Jesus Christ in apostolic times, it was not necessary to discuss the questions of original sin; of total hereditary depravity; of justification by faith only; of the abstract influence of the Holy Spirit. So far as preaching was concerned, it was only necessary to preach Christ and him crucified. Nor was it necessary, in order to build upon this foundation, that men should understand any of the philosophies mentioned; nor was it necessary that men should "labor under conviction" for a long season--that they should ask the intercession of good men, pray, and be prayed for. It was only necessary that they should "hear, believe, and be immersed into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." When they did so, they were recognized by the inspired apostles as Christians, and soon afterward addressed as such. He who accepts Jesus as the Lamb of God, slain for sinners, and yields to his authority expressed in the commandments given to the Gospel, is a Christian. [367]

Whenever these truths shall be perceived by the religious parties in Christendom--when faith in Jesus Christ and submission to his authority shall be the test of Christian character, and the bond of Christian union, communion, and fellowship--then shall that earnest prayer of the blessed Savior be answered: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John xvii: 21.) Consummation most devoutly wished! when all who love our Lord Jesus Christ shall be united in one body--built upon one foundation; when it can again be said: "There is one body and one Spirit, even as you have been called, in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one immersion, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. iv: 4-6.)

Then shall Zion arise in her might. She shall put on her beautiful garments, and go forth to battle against sin and uncleanness, "fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Then shall the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of God and his Christ.

"Then shall righteousness prevail, even as the waters cover the channels of the great deep. The lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them."

How sweet, how heavenly is the sight,

When those that love the Lord,
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfill his word.
"When each can feel his brother's sigh,
And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart." [368]

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