

Christ Our Life

Chapter Three

On Christ

Any architect or builder will tell you that it is essential to have a good foundation for whatever you are building. No matter the good quality of your building materials or how pleasing the design, a building with a bad foundation is destined for trouble.

During the terrible earthquake in San Francisco in 1906, buildings on the solid rock hills of the city saw little to no damage at all. But the structures on the landfill by the bay and on the softer soils between the hills were devastated.¹ If the stability of buildings rests upon their foundation, then so too does the stability of our lives.

In our society today old, familiar moral standards and guidelines for relationships are being struck down. Standards for what is right and wrong and good and bad are being abandoned. In some ways this is nothing new. There have been moral and cultural earthquakes in every society. In fact in Psalm 11:3 David lamented, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" And speaking about the people of his day, the psalmist Asaph penned these lyrics,

They do not know, nor do they understand;
They walk about in darkness;
All the foundations of the earth are unstable.
(Psalm 82:5)

So, how should we live in an unstable world? We are given a hint in the Book of Hebrews. When speaking of Abraham, we are told,

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise
as in a foreign country...for he waited
for the city which has foundations,
whose builder and maker *is* God.
(Hebrews 11:9, 10)

¹ Peter Yanev, "Peace of Mind in Earthquake Country," Chronical Books, San Francisco, 1974, p.70.

Hebrews 12:28 tells us that like Abraham we too are waiting for “a kingdom which cannot be shaken.” So as we patiently wait for the unshakable Kingdom of God. Right now the solid rock upon which to rest our hearts and build our lives is our Lord Jesus Christ.

A number of times in the New Testament the Greek preposition *epi*, translated “on” is used in reference to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus is the solid ground upon which we stand, the foundation upon which we build, the bedrock on which we rest.

In our last study of Christ our life we saw that God's initiative of grace to us is “through” Jesus Christ. The preposition “on” deals with our response. In other words, God has acted through Jesus Christ, now we are to rest and build on what He has done. When we rest upon Christ we are saved, when we build on Christ, what we build is secure.

In Acts 16, Paul and his companion Silas have been arrested and put in jail in the city of Philippi, for preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. And at midnight there was an earthquake. Let's read what happened.

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

²⁷ And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.”

²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."
(Acts 16:25-31)

The Greek preposition *e*pi is translated "on" – "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." This is an assurance, a guarantee of salvation. If you rest on this rock, you will be safe. In Acts 11, the apostle Peter is defending his sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with Gentiles. He spoke to a Roman Centurion named Cornelius. And when Cornelius and his family heard the Word of God about Christ they believed. Here's Peter's explanation of what happened.

And as I began to speak,
the Holy Spirit fell upon them,
as upon us at the beginning.
¹⁶ Then I remembered the word
of the Lord, how He said, 'John
indeed baptized with water,
but you shall be baptized with
the Holy Spirit.'
¹⁷ If therefore
God gave them the same gift
as He gave us when we believed
on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was
I that I could withstand God?"
¹⁸ When they heard these things
they became silent; and they
glorified God, saying, "Then God
has also granted to the Gentiles
repentance to life."
(Acts 11:15-18)

To gain salvation and the gift of the Spirit Cornelius and his family had to believe "on" the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe on Christ is to rest the whole weight of your life upon him. It means to trust in nothing else, but on him. You do not trust your morals to be saved. You do not trust upon your good works to be saved. You do not trust on your heritage. You believe and trust and rest on him completely.

When you go into a room and sit down on a chair, you put your whole weight upon that chair. Normally, you do not look at the chair and then bolt

some additional supports to it. You simply place your whole weight upon it and the chair supports you.

There are Christians today who will tell you that you cannot know if you are saved until the end. They assert that your salvation depends on your faithfulness and good works. This is simply misguided and wrong. I strive to be faithful and to do good works. But, I will be the first to tell you that I am not perfect. If I had to rely upon me to be saved, I would be lost. Our Lord Jesus Christ told a parable about depending on ourselves to be saved rather than upon God's mercy and grace.

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

When I believe on Christ for salvation I place my whole life on him. I recognize, as Romans 7:18 tells us that in me alone dwells nothing good to save me. But when I rest and believe on Christ I am sure of my salvation. In Romans 10 we are told,

that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto

righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."
(Romans 10:9-13)

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be unquestionably saved. You will never be put to shame. Resting on Christ you will never be disappointed in your expectation!

Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,
²To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:
(1 Corinthians 1:1, 2)

Calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you rest upon him, you are sanctified. You are set apart from a doomed world and you are destined for glory. In 2 Corinthians 1:22 we are told that believing on Christ you are "sealed" and given the Spirit "as a guarantee" of salvation! And you are called, not "*to be*" saints, but a saint! You are a holy one of God. Your salvation rests upon the firm foundation of Christ.

If anyone could say that he was saved by his own religiosity and righteousness it would have been the apostle Paul. But when he came to understand the gospel, he understood that he was on shaky ground and only Christ could save him.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show

all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.
(1 Timothy 1:15-16)

Paul was not saved by his good works, but he was saved on the merits of Jesus Christ and so are we. An old hymn put it this way,

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
No merit of my own I claim,
But wholly trust in Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid Rock I stand –
All other ground is sinking sand.²

Now, just as we are secure in our salvation believing on Christ, so our lives can be stable and fruitful as we build our lives day by day on Christ. Here is what the apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians.

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

¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
(1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

² E. Mote (1797-1874)

Jesus Christy is the foundation upon which we build our lives. There is no other secure, steady and unshifting foundation. Now, how shall we build? Shall we build a shack made of wood, hay and straw? These are activities and pursuits that will have no value in the age to come. These things refer to endeavors that are not done for the glory of God and the good of others.

Or shall we build a castle with gold, silver and precious stones? These are any and all activities done with a view to become more mature in our faith and more loving in our actions. And these are not just church activities. Working at your job as unto the Lord, raising a godly family, these are building with good materials.

Both structures are built on Christ, both builders are saved. But one person waisted his or her life on temporary pursuits, while the other worked and lived with eternity in mind. One person will stand at the judgment seat of Christ and be rewarded the other will suffer loss. Jesus made it clear that each person needs to decide how he or she will build a life.

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: ²⁵ 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.

²⁶ "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: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. (Matthew 7:24-27)

This parable underscores the truth that hearing the words of Christ can be in vain if it does not result in obedience. Knowledge of God's Word only benefits us when it is put into action. But when we build our lives on the solid foundation of Christ, we can withstand every storm. The hymn I quoted earlier says it all: "On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."

