

1 Corinthians 3:10-23: ¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — ¹³each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

¹⁶Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

¹⁸Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." ²¹So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

"Building Firmly on a Firm Foundation"

INTRODUCTION:

After the Ken Ham—Bill Nye Debate, a self-proclaimed evangelical Christian named Brandon wrote: "Every time Ken Ham repeated his position that 'Creationism is the only viable option...', my jaw dropped in awe at the arrogance of that statement. Because the version of Christian faith that Ken Ham espoused tonight is not the version of Christianity that I am a part of."

Brandon wants to have some form of creation, but he wants evolution, too, so he rejects the Bible. How could Brandon believe two things that are diametrically opposed? I believe this is happening because Christians aren't being established and built up in the Word of God—they aren't being taught the solid teachings of our Faith.

3. The Church is Founded on the Rock.

In His Parable of the Houses Built on the Rock and Sand, Jesus said (Matthew 7:24-27):

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

And then there’s Peter’s great confession in Matthew chapter 16 (vv 13-18):

[Jesus] asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The kind of rock that Jesus is referring to in these passages isn’t a rock you can pick up and skip across a pond. But a rock like the island of Manhattan—a solid granite foundation that supports some of the world’s tallest and heaviest buildings.

For example, June of 1964 a magnitude 7.4 earthquake that shook the city of Niigata, Japan. Now, there were apartments in that city that didn’t come tumbling down as you’d expect, because they were well-constructed of reinforced concrete. But because of their poor foundations, these apartment buildings quite literally tipped over like a child’s building blocks in

a sandbox because they were build on a foundation of sand—and the sand liquefied when the quake struck.

The confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God is the bedrock upon which the Christian Church is built—on this bedrock, nothing can shake the Church. But without this bedrock foundation, Christianity is just another worthless religion among the thousands of worthless religions out there. The prophets of old and Christ’s apostles laid the foundation of the Church on the solid bedrock of Christ through faithful preaching and teaching—and the faithful practice of God’s Word. If you noticed, it isn’t what you believe that gets you into trouble with the world, it’s when you put what you believe into practice, like Baronelle Stutzman for example. For years, she made floral arrangements for a particular gay man. But when she refused to make arrangements for his same-sex marriage—for to her that would be the same as approving same-sex marriage, he sued her. Now she’ll probably lose her business because of her faith. Jesus didn’t command merely the believing, but the doing, as well: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them—doctrine and practice—will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

2. The Building must be firmly built.

First and foremost, for the Church to be Body of Christ, God’s people must be established upon the teachings of Christ—His incarnation, life, death and resurrection is the Rock of our Salvation.

But that brings us to another point—the point that the apostle Paul is making in today’s text: Not only must the Church be firmly established on Christ, the Church itself must be firmly built, too—like the first two of the Three Little Pigs, who found out that hay and sticks were useless building materials when devilish winds blow.

Paul writes: “¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it.” Paul calls himself a master builder. The word in Greek for master builder is architecton—from which we get architect! Paul was a master builder because he established churches on the solid bedrock of Christ Jesus through the preaching and teaching of His Word and His Work.

Paul writes: Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Paul calls upon the teachers and preachers who follow Him to build firmly on his firm foundation, for what good is the foundation, if the house is poorly constructed? The Third Little Pig was safe within his house of bricks when devilish winds came blowing.

The Church may be founded upon Christ, but if the wisdom of human beings is used to construct the Church—here illustrated by Paul’s reference to wood, hay and straw—things that don’t stand the test of time or trouble or temptation. A church built on false teaching and practice won’t hold up against the attacks of Satan and the world, for the teachings of men aren’t the wisdom of Christ, who, like His Word endures forever and ever.

Several years ago in the Beliefs section of the State Journal-Register, several local clergy were asked about their religion’s teaching regarding living together before marriage. The only clergy-person who came out definitively opposed to cohabitation was a Muslim cleric! Most of

the Christian clergy interviewed were ambivalent regarding this sinful practice. One even said in essence that he doesn't make a clear statement against cohabitation because he doesn't want to lose members from his church. That's not walking by faith—that's not trusting God's Word. Rather, that's allowing sin to continue to destroy the foundation of human society—marriage and the family.

That's taking the solid foundation of Jesus Christ and setting upon Him a structure of wood and hay and straw. When the wolf comes, he quite easily blows the whole thing down.

1. Why? Because the Building is you—you are the Church.

So, why does Jesus insist that the Church be firmly founded on His Word and Work? Why does Paul insist that those who follow him build firmly on this firm foundation?

Because Jesus and Paul are thinking about you—about your life and your salvation!

Do you think it's beneficial to you or your children to be taught that the Book of Genesis is a myth? Do you think it's beneficial to you or your children if the Church stops confronting sin so it doesn't lose you and your offerings? Do you think its beneficial to you or your children if the Church waffles on Jesus as the only way to heaven? The answer is No!

Listen to these words of St. Paul in our text: ¹⁶Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. ¹⁸Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." ²¹So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours ... ²³and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

You are God's Temple—You belong to Christ! And He wants the best for you. After all, He has proven this by giving you everything He had—His own body and blood shed on the cross—so that you could be reconciled to His Father in Heaven through the forgiveness of sins. And so you endure as His people—a house of living stones—built on the firm foundation of the Prophets and Apostles—laid on the bedrock that is the only-begotten Son of the Living God!

FOR YOUR SAKE, THE APOSTLE PAUL BUILT FIRMLY ON THE FIRM FOUNDATION OF CHRIST AND HIS WORD; AND FOR THE SAKE OF SOULS, OUR LORD COMMANDS THAT WE CONTINUE TO BUILD FIRMLY ON HIS WORD AND WORK.

In Jesus Name. Amen.