

Recover the Foundations

Sometimes after the Lord's table, one senses that they should stand up and give the benediction. This was one of those times. The value of the Lord, the pricelessness, the preciousness of the Lord is to stop and set that reset button and be refocused. There is so much that grabs our attention each day which can neutralize that preciousness. Many times we do not even realize it. We are about good things, not realizing that what's really valuable is the Christ in each one of us. It is a little early for a fireside chat, and when you get my age, you think of just sitting down with the children and grandchildren and chatting. So it is too late for breakfast so we will have a spiritual brunch. I am not going to preach, but just share what is on my heart.

Psalm 11:3: "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Or, what have the righteous done? What can the righteous do? Well, there is an answer in Colossians 1:27: "Christ in you, Christ in me, the hope of glory."

Let's bow our hearts:

Father, we are thankful for the time around Your table. We do thank You that there is an answer to the days in which we live. It has always been the same from the very beginning and always will be the same to the very end, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ being all and in all. May we know it; may we experience it each moment of the day, readying ourselves for Your imminent return. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The foundations have been destroyed for the most part. I must add that because there are always people, as we experienced this morning, who know in their hearts and not just their heads, that Christ is all and in all. It gives us great hope as we think of all that is around us, all that is going on, on this globe. If we look too closely we become confused like the world. I do appreciate always the Lord's wisdom in bringing us back each Sunday morning to the Lord's table. It is kind of like the ending of the week and the beginning of a new week, and it focuses us on the one reality of life.

Ever since February of 1971, fifty-two years next month, this word 'reality' became very much a part of my life. I had been a believer already for over twenty years, but then, what is life all about? I would hear the Gospel Sunday morning and Sunday night, year in and year out, eighteen years, twenty-two years, until I was twenty-nine. But there seemed to be a missing link, and in February there was a shaft of light revealed to me that Christ is to be all and in all, and that began a journey.

I was in business at that time, and my center of focus was the reality of Christ in business. It was not too long after that that the emphasis or reality became my concern in marriage. Why was I kinder to the staff who I worked with than my own wife? And the Lord just hit me with that question. That followed with the reality of Christ in raising children, the reality of Christ in body life. It has been a wonderful journey as all of you have experienced. It is not an easy journey because God loves us too much just to let us selfishly go through life, not knowing that we even have a self-life that dominates our whole being. Yes, I knew I was going to heaven, yes, I knew I was forgiven, which are two very important pillars in our walk, but there was something missing.

And, of course, in that search the reality of Christ became more and more evident. That is what I would like to share this morning, this life of Christ is for the now, for the kingdom age and for eternity—His life in us.

God's Satisfaction in His Son

We see very clearly, particularly in the Gospels, this life of Christ and how unique it was, how perfect it was, how He traveled through those first thirty years in such a magnanimous wonderful perfect way that before He even ministered His department card (or we used to say in grade school, report card) was announced from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This Man pleases Me, this Man is the delight of My heart. This is God the Father saying this. This is of a Man who did the common things of life and did them right. As a Son, as a Sibling, as a Servant to His Father, everything was right. We have a religious word about the Biblical word 'righteousness,' 'righteous.' It makes more of a reality to me just to think of right. His eyes looked rightly. Everything that came into His eyes He covenanted with His Father, "I want to see right. I am going to hear right. I am going to use these hands for You. Yes, receiving a compliment from something that He might have said, but I am giving all the glory to the Lord for what He did." He walked in the path of His Father in all things, doing the Father's will, not saying one thing that was opposed to the heavenly standard of His Father. This is the righteousness of the Son's right heart through those thirty years in the common things. I emphasized that word 'common' because that is where you and I live. We live in the day to day tedious things of life.

Characteristics of Christ

Recently a young man came to me. He had been in the work force two years. I said, "How are things going?" "Wow, this five to eight thing is something else." "Well, son, get used to it. This is life." Changing diapers, doing dishes, whatever, this is what makes up life. Actually, we can be a testimony of Jesus in this, and this is what the Lord was. He was a testimony to His Father, and righteous with everyone and diligent to His Father's will. He was diligent in everything He did, particularly when He got into His ministry. We see that in the book of Mark: "and immediately, and immediately;" there was no procrastination. "Do the next thing," as our dear sister, Elizabeth Elliott would say. Do the next thing—now. Do not wait, do not back off.

And not only being diligent but, of course, love. It is a love that none of us will ever have in ourselves naturally. Some are born with a personality, such as a motherly personality who can love the most unlovely person but with limitations. But not the Lord. His was a love that could reach out to a Mary Magdalen, could reach out to the woman at the well, the Pharisees, the religious type who could not even be in the vicinity of these people. Zacchaeus, Matthew, the tax collector whom the Jews did not really appreciate. This Man reaches down and demonstrates a love, a perfect love each day. But it was not only love, but there was that underlying foundation of humility, a humbleness, a lowliness that basically the Lord is working His entire life to bring us to that place of nothingness. In ourselves we are nothing. Even Jesus recognized this in His life and became that cornerstone for us when He said, "I can do nothing of Myself." Our strength is, of course, in the Lord.

Even when He went to the cross, we see that humility, not defending nor blaming someone or something. That, of course, we all have to overcome. Many of us get to be very old, and we are still blaming, still being critical or making excuses for whatever, but that was not the Lord.

Then there was the grace, a graciousness in our Lord that again we do not have naturally. He was disciplined in everything that He did, and truth, reality represented everything. Therefore, reality comes from one Person, the Lord Jesus. Otherwise, everything is virtual or unreal. What we say, what we think, what we possess, what we want, what we desire is actually all going to burn. But there is one thing that is going to last, and that is Christ in us the hope of satisfying the Father, the hope of pleasing the Father, of being His delight. So the Lord Jesus set the foundation for all of us so that we now can have His life, those very characteristics that we just talked about. Incidentally, those are the seven pillars in that little book of Proverbs. Wisdom is the foundation of building the church which is found in Proverbs 9:1.

The Lord's Dealing with His People

The followers of Christ which include us, are often ignorant of our condition, and the Lord has to deal with us. And one of the things that He uses, of course, is His Word and the Holy Spirit, but He also uses the environment in which we live, an environment that is often not pleasant. We use the word a Job-job. None of us like that. We think that was for Job which is the oldest book in the Bible. But you have to ask the question: "Why would the oldest book in the Bible be Job?" Why would that book be so long? Why would there be so many chapters on the discourse including Job and his friends, back and forth, back and forth. It is very important to understand this. It is representative for all of us. For when God does His dealings, a Job-job with each of us I have yet to see a person who did not squirm nor question, "What is happening? What did I do? What is wrong? I thought I was doing right. Why is this hurricane in my life? this tornado? Everything is being stirred up." It is God's love. God does not want us to remain infantile, childish, wanting our own way, being vindictive with everything that happens in our life, having to explain, making excuses, going on telling our spouse, "You cannot imagine what happened at work today. If you only knew what happened."

Brothers and sisters, we are in the devil's world. The confusion did not start two years ago. It started long before that, long even before Noah's time, and there was not much good happening in Noah's day. But there is an answer, and immediately when we come back to the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the answer for this day and the age we live in.

The foundations are Christ, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the living Word. This is the living Word, this is Christ living, Christ personified. God breathed His Son into us. It is not something that we just take when we read a verse and then say, "Oh, that is a good verse; I am going to try to obey that." Wrong.

I know that we just had a January 1st New Year, and I hope no one hearing my voice this morning made a resolve in which you have already failed. The good news is that in about nine days there will be the Lunar Calendar year, and you will get another opportunity to make another resolve. But let me be quick to say, "It does not work." None of us have the discipline that the Lord Jesus had as He tapped into the Father's resources. But now we can take Ephesians 1:3, "All

the spiritual resources of heaven are yours and mine.” Are we laying hold of them? Is it reality in our lives? We need wisdom, we need joy, we need peace, we need rest, we need humility in our daily lives, and there it is. But anytime we think we can try harder, we fail. Try-hard Christianity does not work. It never has worked. But one of the key factors of failure in our walk with the Lord is that we read something and say, “Oh, that is good! I am going to try and do that.” But we cannot! The Word is living, so we take a verse like Psalm 119:11: “Thy word (Christ, the living Word) will keep me from sinning. Thy Word (Christ) I hid in my heart.”

Is the Lord Jesus hidden in our hearts this morning? Or is it just for two hours? The Word is the foundation. Christ is the foundation ministered by the Holy Spirit. Are we walking in the Spirit? Or are we walking in our own person? in our own self? in our own life? in our own desires? in our own wants? in that which pleases us?

The American Dream

You know, brothers and sisters, we are thankful for the American dream, but the American dream has undercut our walk with the Lord in so many ways. Materialism, things are wonderful. Our Constitution gives us those privileges and the freedom that we have. But there is a cycle in history, and it has gone over and over many times. When people are in want, when they are in need, when there is pressure, when there are problems, what do we do? We look up to the Lord. When we are full, we do not look so much to the Lord. We are not as dependent upon the Lord. We become independent. So the very thing that is a blessing becomes our Achilles heel. But the living Word, His foundation, Jesus is the light of the world, and this light is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. Oh, how we need that lamp today, Christ taking the step ahead of us with us following, denying ourselves and taking up our cross which simply means obeying as we go through that valley of the shadow of death or those problems that are mounting. Many times a person can be told that when they are going through deep, often chronic problems, one thing after another, maybe with children or finances, jobs, health issues, it could be said in one sense, “The Lord really cares for you, and He is shepherding you. He is strengthening you.” On the other sense, it could mean we are just very stubborn and he is having to clobber us over the head again and again because we are not sensitive; we are not repenting. Our repentance becomes one of the very keys of our walk with the Lord.

So even though the Word is being taught to us by the Holy Spirit, it is being made real in our lives, and we have this foundation, it is very easy to fall into a trap. We get up in the morning, and maybe we read Proverbs 23 with the thought of finishing it in one night, and it takes me six and a half minutes. Well, I have read it, and I am done with that. There is a sort of assuaging of the conscience. I have had my quiet time; but at best it has entered the mind only, a fallen mind instead of the heart. “Lord, speak into the heart,” and I dare say when the Lord speaks to you in that twenty-third chapter you will repent. I will repent because it refers to a fool. “Oh, that is not me.” How many times do we read the Bible, and anything negative, we immediately think of who that applies to, but not to ourselves. Why is there that word ‘fool’ and it is repeated again and again? Why do you have King Saul? Why do you have Peter who denied the Lord? Why the Pharisees? Have we ever read ourselves as being a Pharisee? I hope so. Otherwise, we will stay

in this religious, unreal world that most of us live in as believers when we have such an inheritance. How can we be His inheritance if we have not inherited?

I love that verse in Obadiah 17: “But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance.” We are under the throne of Christ; we are in His presence on Mount Zion. We have come to Mount Zion (Hebrews 12), and there shall be deliverance. Oh, how we need to be delivered from this world! It is not just people with additions. We are all addicted to this world, and there needs to be a deliverance. It can only happen in Christ, the hope of glory on Mount Zion, the fulness of Christ.

“And there shall be holiness.” It came up this morning a couple of times at the Lord’s table. Something is totally missing in our gatherings—holiness. And the grieving of the Spirit that takes place so often with idle talk, trivia, things that take us away from why we are here. We are to grow up and come into our heavenly position. We don’t live in the clouds; we are living down here, but we are to be heavenly people delivered from self, delivered from sin, delivered from this world. The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. That is Christ. That is the fulness of Christ, and it is to be reality today.

Paul came into it when he wrote Philippians. What was his environment when he wrote the Philippian letter? Rejoice, rejoice in all things, joy, joy. Is this a pipe dream? Are we on planet earth confused? As our brother said, “Right has become wrong and wrong has become right.” Why? Because we have lost the source, we have lost the beginning. We will never come to the right end if we lose the beginning, if we lose the foundation; that is where we are. But we have foundations, we have Christ, we have the Word, we have the Holy Spirit, and we have body life.

Loving One Another

No one will ever come into the fulness of Christ without loving one another, without being built together. That word ‘built’ is just two words really, love and life, resurrection life and love. When you have two people who are one with one another, you have the body of Christ; those pillars are inside a person. And they come into relationship with another person with humility, with God’s love, with God’s truth, with God’s diligence, God’s righteousness, God’s holiness, and you have something very precious, *very precious*. It is what God has counted on always. There is only really one thought on God’s mind, and that is a people as we find in Matthew 22:35-40: “Love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, mind, sou,l and love one another.” That is the one thought that God is possessed with. Nations come and go, what we see, what we read about, they come and go.

Then there is Paul who was so clear. It is interesting that he never talked about Rome. Instead, “I preach Christ and Him crucified.” Rome was not on his radar. He had one thought, the house of God, God’s people. That is where there is covering, that is where there is protection, that is where we are tested. That is where we learn to pray because the house is spiritual. God is Spirit, His house is spiritual, and you and I cannot fix spiritual things. We cannot counsel spiritual things. We cannot even stand up here and minister spiritual things; God has to do it. So why do we pray at the beginning? God has to do it. Man cannot do it. I cannot even take care of my own problems. God has to do it. So how do I do it? I pray; we pray. This house is not a house of evangelism; it is not a house of preaching; it is not platforming. It is a house of prayer. Out of that

comes ministry, out of that comes evangelism. But that is not the cornerstone. It is a house of prayer where we are totally dependent upon the Lord to do this, inch by inch, three inches forward, two back, and not quitting, but staying in the race, going forward. This is the foundation that God has given us, and we can come into the fulness of it. And those various characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ become ours by faith by laying hold of that. It is a matter of repenting, turning from that. Thank You Lord, You are love. Forgive me for not being compassionate to that person, overlooking that person, thinking I am better. Instead, we should be saying that You are love. It is to be Your love being expressed through me, through us. This is the foundation, but it takes perseverance, brothers and sisters. God has to do it, but He will. He wants to, and it is His heart. All that He is looking for is a people who are abandoned to Him, that are given to Him moment by moment. I cannot emphasize that enough.

The Little Foxes

There is great opposition, brothers and sisters. There is a verse in Song of Solomon 2:15: "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vine." I appreciate that word 'little.' If you have ever seen little foxes frolic, that is all they can do. They either sleep or they are frolicking. Here we have these little foxes that are opposed to this inheritance we have in Christ. Each one of us could make a list of the things that we are faced with. I am surrounded by my family, all the things that are happening with me, and it would be a very sobering list. But there is an answer, and it is the Lord. However, the enemy is ever waiting, looking, prowling around, trying to deceive, trying to devour, trying to swallow up what God is doing.

What are these little foxes? Well, when we get to Luke 17 in the days of Noah, it was food. They were eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage. In the days of Lot they were eating food. So something as necessary as food becomes the potential for drifting. Just go out to dinner with someone and as they are bringing in the food, what is the conversation for the next hour? Food, eating; "Have you gone to this restaurant? Have you tasted this?" We become occupied with it. Is there anything wrong with food, with eating? Of course not, but it had become important in the days of Noah, in the days of Lot, and today. Food becomes a little fox, so subtle.

When Jesus came off the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples had been trying to exorcise a demon out of a child. Jesus rebuked them and said, "This comes out only by prayer and fasting." But fasting is not only food. I am going to make a list of things just to leave something in our minds in order for us to see the seriousness of these little foxes which really keep us from coming into the fulness of what God intended.

Family—Is family important? It is very important. But it can become our life—children, grandchildren, and we become occupied with them. We can become so occupied with family that we miss gatherings. And what is our foundation? Gathering together.

Friends—Friends are wonderful, but they can become a little fox. I have to answer this, I have to do this. Oh, this is going to interfere with my quiet time. Nothing is more important than spending time in the Word, morning, noon and night. Always coming back, letting the Lord minister to us in the thick of the battle.

Fame—Oh, how we like to become famous. It can become the desire of our heart instead of desiring to be loved by the Lord and to love Him, to be captured by the preciousness of the Lord. We do see through a glass darkly, but there is a shaft of light. When He sees the desire of our heart, He opens a window, then a larger window when there is that desire, and fame is not out there. I hope there is no one who wants to become famous in any way. We hear, “He was famous in ministering the Word, counseling, or whatever.” We are to be a humble people, Christ’s humility, not a pious phoniness, but His piety in us.

Fortune, finances, money—Phones and wallets are two deadly things that have done more to hinder our growth than maybe anything else. This can be a wonderful slave, but the sad thing is the information here mainlines, not to the mind, but to the heart to each one of our children. This becomes a substitute for the Bible. This has to become a slave of Christ, not us being a slave to these other things. Our slave is to be hidden in Christ.

Football—Much time is spent with sports, entertainment, all the things that we deal with, monetary things, possessions. Everything in this world has a spirit behind it. That is why we get excited. When we look at a game, you do not care who it is, but within two minutes you are glued. It is supposed to do that. There is a competitiveness, and you are drawn into it. The commercials are to do that because it is the spirit of cosmos; it is the spirit of the world that pulls, that draws. We have to be so careful. I am not talking about being legalistic here. We are free, but if our freedoms are not sanctified, if our minds are not sanctified, our emotions and desires are not sanctified, we move into an area that compromises, grieves the Spirit, even quenches the Spirit. So the liveliness, what we glimpsed this morning around the table, all of a sudden at 4:00 this afternoon, it is the last thought. Dinner is precious because we have friends coming over, and we become occupied with secondary things that move us ever so slightly. The little foxes are just frolicking; it is very innocent, but they are damaging those little petals, those little buds, those little flowers that are so tender in that developmental stage that the fruit becomes obsolete. There is no fruit; it is blighted by entertainment, by these various things.

Fun—Let’s have some fun. What are we doing? Hanging out and having fun.

Fashion—Again, the world has learned it. Fashion pulls at our heart strings. We do not have to dress like a bag lady; that is not the point. The point is nothing is to be more important in our lives than the Lord Jesus. We are drifting, as it says in Hebrews 2:1: “We are drifting away, not even knowing Niagara Falls is before us—and boom.

Fads—trending fads. It has a spirit and it will grab. You say, “That is not my problem. Something in this list is our problem, and if you do not think so, then You have a bigger problem, I have a bigger problem. This is for me; I am talking to myself this morning. This is something that the Lord is dealing with. These things, as was said yesterday in a letter, we saw a little flicker in our life, just a flicker, and it is not a testimony. The world does not know what Christ looks like from being around us. They cannot tell because we blend in to the surroundings, a friend of everybody. We do not want to upset the apple cart.

Fomo—fear of missing out. Fear is more than just a little fox; it is sin. Anytime we are fearful of anything coming down the pike, we have forgotten “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”

I think we could use that little phrase as a great thesis for a spiritual PHD, “the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” It is a tremendous statement. It is of course a thesis statement for the gospel of the Old Testament. What is the Gospel of the Old Testament? Psalm 23; it is all there, everything, even to the end; “Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” What is God’s purpose? What is His plan? That we dwell with Him.

Facebook—I am not being legalistic; I am not saying you cannot have Facebook. Facebook needs to be a ministry, not your face. God works our entire life to get our face out of the picture. The world comes in and gives us Facebook; I need to be seen. I want people to see where I have been. Taunting, oh I hope people can tell what I have, what I possess, where I have been. And the Lord comes along and says, “No, I do not want that; I just want Christ seen in you. I want you to disappear.” That is what He is saying to us. And we come along and come up with something like Facebook, the whole social media promoting man.

The firm, the factory—where we work. Do we bring our work home or are we making tents? We are to make tents; we are not to make a million bucks. We are to pay the rent, buy some gas, buy food and shelter, and the Lord will provide those things. The righteous do not beg bread; we do not have to sell our soul to the workplace when we seek first the king, His Kingship. You know, it is amazing how we just stumble over the simplicity of the Gospel. That is why I entitled this the simplicity and profoundness of the Gospel; to seek first the King. What does it say? Shelter, transportation, food are all being taken care of. These other things are taken care of. It is simple faith, but how we would dodge the King, how we would do anything other than seek Him. We will google every answer, seek every way to make more money, kick out this, live in a bigger, higher place, and we disobey. We do not seek the King first.

Feelings—Oh, how easy it is to get our feelings hurt. We can walk out of here today, and someone may not have looked at us or noticed us. “Well, I am not going back there anymore.” It can be the simplest little thing, real or imaginary, that offends us. Maybe the person is shunning you, so what? Suffer for Christ; it is a privilege, but it is not easy for the flesh. The flesh will come up with excuses, and then we gossip to our spouse, or the family about it, and then you will have a forest fire as James says. All of a sudden someone is gone over the most ridiculous thing, but it is a little fox. A little fox has crept in and neutralized our relationship with the Lord.

Fretting—and if fretting is not enough, form, we fall into a form. The Lord came up this morning with the word ‘common.’ I do not care how many times you come around this Lord’s table, there is not one of us that does not have to go to the Lord and cry out: “Lord, make this table real.” We need the Spirit, otherwise we are just going to do as the universal church is basically doing, “Let’s have the Lord’s table at Christmas or Easter. It says, ‘We have to have it.’” And it probably means nothing.

It is through repentance, brothers and sisters, admitting where we are and then coming into reality. But it is a day to day thing. These foxes are here this afternoon, this evening. We just cannot ride off and say, “We had a good time. We have done our God thing, and now we are free.” It does not work that way. It is a relationship; it is an intimacy, it is a moment by moment just talking to the Lord. Even when booting up on the computer, you can talk to the Lord. While

driving and you are pouring out your hair with another driver instead of praying for that person. What did Paul mean when he said, “Pray without ceasing”? What does that mean? It means to pray without ceasing. It is just that simple. We talk to the Lord all the time.

I see a lot of gray hair, a lot of haircuts like mine this morning which means we have children, grandchildren, some great grandchildren. They have been brought into a very similar age to the days of Noah and Lot, and that is not a stretch of imagination at all. What are we going to do? Well, I have to kill a lot of foxes. We have to restore those foundations that it may become real—not by you.

Now I am going to read tomorrow morning and I am going to read from my heart. No! I have to say, “I can’t.” You and I do not have a spirit to do that. That is when we come empty, totally bankrupt. Every morning, at noon, at night, bankrupt, spiritually bankrupt. Lord, You are the answer for me, for my marriage, family, children, grandchildren, the body of Christ. You are the only answer. It has always been that way. That is what we are created for to be His body.

Let’s pray:

Father, we are thankful that Your Son is all and in all. He is, and we declare right now, He is the all and in all. We are a worm at best. We are dust, but Lord, we are thankful that You breathed into that dust. Hour by hour as we submit to Thee, as we recognize our need, our total dependence upon Thee, You breathe life into us, and we do not have to be a slave to this world. We do not have to be a slave to the enemy. We do not have to be a slave to sin, the self-life, this flesh, but Lord, You lift us above it. Thank You that You are the foundation of our faith in Christ. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.