

Foundations to Build Your Life On, part 4, RESCUE
January 17, 2016

This occasional series of sermons is titled Foundations to Build Your Life On. Jesus explains the importance of a foundation in one of His parables.

Luke 6:46-49 (NIV) "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

Here are some pictures of foundations. The bottom (**picture 1**) part is called the footer. This column that sits on the footer is the foundation. Some buildings have only one foundation, (**picture 2**) that runs around the edge of the building. Taller and/or wider buildings need a series of foundations (**picture 3**).

This series of sermons is about the foundations that will help you to survive the crises of life. One day you are likely to face a crisis of some kind. It could be when you fail to get the promotion you were counting on. Or you may experience a crisis when you don't get into the college you wanted to attend. I know one young woman who faced a crisis after she started college and then realized she didn't need or want it. What do you do then?

Some people face the crisis of a parent dying. Others face a crisis when a child dies. Some face a crisis when they become unemployed. I met a woman this week whose job ended a few months ago. She was supposed to start a new job, but her security clearance had not come through yet. She is hoping the new company will hold the job for her until she gets her clearance.

Some people experience crisis when they develop a chronic change in health. A student at my seminary faced a crisis when he developed diabetes in his mid 20's. You may experience something like that, that alters your life permanently.

When such a crisis happens, what do you do? Life suddenly does not make sense and you are left wondering what you can count on. You see, we all have assumptions about life. We all have beliefs about how life is supposed to work, or at least how we hope it will work. Then something happens that shows our assumptions are wrong. Such an experience becomes a crisis for many people.

This series is about those foundational beliefs that you go back to in a crisis to reboot your life. These are the basic truths of life. You go back to what you know to be true so you can start again on a right foundation.

This is the fourth of five sermons in this series. We have looked at three other foundations. The first foundation is that **God is real**. If there comes a point in your life that you question the existence of God, go back to this time, to this foundation. Remember then why you believe in God today. This foundation will help get you back on track.

The second foundation of life is that **God is the creator of all life**. Everything we see was made by God, or the materials to make it were provided by God. God did not make my shirt, but all that was used to make my shirt, God provided. This is His planet. There is an old joke about God and the devil. The devil proposed that he and God have a contest to see who could make the better planet. God agrees to the contest, but then tells the devil he has to make his own dirt. Only God can make dirt, rock, water, and all the other elements that make up our planet and the life on it.

Our third foundation of life I will re-emphasize today. It is that... **We are all sinners**.

Today's sermon is titled RESCUE. I want to begin with a story that Joe McKeever wrote about on his blog. He was pastor of a church in Louisiana. Every year they did a big Christmas pageant that covered the life of Jesus--but this one year they decided to focus only on the events surrounding Jesus' birth.

A few days before the first performance, the church receptionist took an unusual phone call. A woman wanted to know if the church was presenting the pageant again this year. The receptionist assured her that they were. Then, the woman said, "May I ask if you're going to include the part about the crucifixion of Jesus?"

"I don't think so," answered the receptionist. "I think they're just doing the part about Jesus' birth this time."

"Good," the caller said. "You see, though we're from another faith, we always enjoy your Christmas program. But the part about Jesus' crucifixion offends us and makes us uncomfortable. We would prefer the story without the crucifixion."

I can understand her comment. The cross offends many people. To a non-Christian the story of Jesus' death, and why He died, is often perceived as an insult. That is because... **The message of the cross is that none of us are good enough to earn heaven**. Instead, the Bible teaches, and Christianity preaches, that we are all sinners deserving of hell.

We need someone to rescue us from the penalty of our sins. And it has to be a special person. Can't be someone sinful like us.

Jesus is that person. He is the only person good enough to earn heaven. Yet, Jesus died for our sins. **This is called substitutionary atonement**. Jesus atoned for our sins as a substitute offering.

The last foundation I gave you was that we are all sinners. We all need saving. **The fourth foundational truth is this: Jesus is the rescuer we need**. His death can rescue us from going to hell.

Jesus saves us, not by His birth in a stable, not by His parable teachings in Galilee, not by His healing touch. Jesus saves us by what He did when the day Roman soldiers nailed Him to a cross. What He did was to die for us, on our behalf.

Seven centuries earlier, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah had been given a glimpse of the Savior on the cross. He wrote,

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NIV) "... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Jesus is the one who was pierced when they nailed Him to the cross. He died in our place, to free us from the consequences of our sins. Only Jesus has done this for us. Only Jesus COULD do this for us, for only Jesus was a suitable substitute. And so after Jesus returned to heaven after the resurrection His followers preached the following message...

Acts 4:12 (NIV) Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Mankind needed to be rescued from the consequences of our sins. Jesus volunteered for the job and came to earth as God-become-flesh. Jesus came for the purpose of being our rescuer. Jesus died on the cross to save us. **The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are the heart of the Christian religion.**

In the city of London, in the nation of England, there is a street named **Charing Cross Road**. Londoners refer to Charing Cross Road simply as "The Cross." One dark wintry day, the London police found an old man who was lost. When they offered to help him, he thanked them and said, "If you will take me back to the Cross, then I'll know where I am and can get home from there."

That is our job. **It is the responsibility of all Christians that we bring people to the cross of Jesus.** It's the only way that leads to heaven.

It isn't good enough that we get them to the manger. Jesus in the manger did not save anyone. It isn't good enough that we get them to the moral teachings of Jesus. His teaching did not save anyone. However, Jesus dying on the cross and being raised from the dead has the potential to save every person.

Many people today have adopted a cultural Christianity. The Japanese celebrate Christmas kind of like a Valentines Day. The more prosperous Chinese have begun celebrating Christmas. These are not religious celebrations. They don't use the nativity. But we can use whatever Christmas they observe to tell them about the manger. But we have to go on and tell them why Jesus came. We have to get them to the cross for them to be saved of their sins.

Yet, many people, once you get them to the cross, will be offended. For the crucifixion of Jesus to do them any good, they have to understand themselves to be sinners and needing a rescuer. This will insult many good people, many successful people, many educated people, many upstanding people, many hardworking people. People find lots of things in themselves to take pride in and here you are telling them they are a sinner deserving of hell. It is no wonder they are offended.

We understand that. However, I believe that even as they are offended the Holy Spirit is whispering to their spirit that the message of the cross is true. Then some of them will admit their sin, humble themselves before God and receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Until that happens, they will not be saved.

Some of Jesus' critics complained because He welcomed sinful people. Jesus pointed out that it was only for sinners that He came. He did not come to call non-sinners into the Kingdom of Heaven. He came to call sinners to confess their sins, turn away from their sins, and rely on Jesus for entry into heaven.

Unless you also do these things, you will still be in need of rescue. Jesus came to rescue you from the consequences of your sins. The place to meet Jesus is at the cross, in full admission of your sin and need for His rescue.

However, the world, for the most part, doesn't want to hear or accept that truth. Instead, they want to believe lies. There are many lies being told today.

Cigarette smoke only harms the one who is smoking.
Smoke alarms don't save lives.
Seat belts don't save lives.
There is no God (atheism).
There is some god, but unknowable (agnosticism).
There is a God, but He is not involved in our lives (deism).
There is only a god-like force that inhabits the universe (pantheism, the "force").
But **one of the worst lies is this: Most people are good and good people go to heaven.**

That is not the message of the Bible. That is not the message of Christianity. No the message we preach is that we are ALL sinners in need of rescue and that Jesus is the only rescuer available to help us.

Every person on earth needs to be rescued from the consequences of his or her sins. You will never be able to overcome that need or fill it with something other than Jesus. You will never be so smart that you do not need a rescuer.

You will never be educated enough that you do not need a rescuer.

You will not be talented enough, or rich enough, popular enough, loved enough that your sin will not matter. You cannot do enough to be forgiven of your sin. You cannot sacrifice enough.

You cannot help others enough. Even if you could solve every problem on earth so that there is peace, health, and long life, it would not be enough to outweigh your sins. Nothing you do can replace what Jesus can do for you.

Whatever you are good at, do not let it fool you into thinking you no longer have a sin problem. Do not let yourself think that you do not need a rescuer, a hero, a savior. You need Jesus. We all do.

Jesus is the rescuer we need and there is no other. There is no other person who can save you from the consequences of your sins. There is no other rescuer from Hell. In order to be saved you MUST receive Jesus as your personal savior and Lord.

This must be a personal decision. Having Christian parents does not make you a Christian. Attending a Christian church does not make you a Christian. Reading the Bible does not make you a Christian. Believing in God does not make you a Christian. Believing that Jesus is everything He said does not make you a Christian. No, but you must personally receive Jesus as YOUR Savior and turn your life over to Him as YOUR Lord in order to be saved from the consequences of your sins.