The Tower of Pisa was begun in 1173. Its original constructor worked twelve and one-half stories and then it began to lean — so much so, that he deserted the project, and eighty years later another builder came. He thought he could correct the defect and he built the tiers even straighter, he thought; but that did not solve the problem. Ninety years later, another builder put the dome on its top, but still, every single year, that tower leans a fraction of an inch more. One day, even though it has stood for 800 years, that 14,500-ton tower is going to fall because the soft, watery sub-soil will not support its weight. It is simply on a faulty foundation.

What percent of Americans build or live their lives on a faulty foundation? One of them is the foundation of self-sufficiency or individualism — I can do whatever I want. But no matter how smart, educated, or prosperous, or how "masculine" we think we are — none of us is self-sufficient. Another faulty foundation is the quick fix! We look for a remedy, a solution for everything; and it is supposed to come quickly. I think that is part of the reason why too many people look for a fix of cheap Christianity; ignoring the fact that it must cost us if it is to be authentic and life-changing. Life and faith cannot be built upon self-sufficiency or an effort to find the quick fix. There are many foundations on which you can build a life. You can build a life on greed and hedonism, power or fame. Throughout the Cold War between the U.S. and Russia (60's 70's), there were occasional defections by spies from Russia. The CIA came up with an acronym to describe the four top reasons why a Russian spy might defect to the West. The acronym was MICE, which stood for Money, Ideology, Compromise, and Ego. Any one of these things might motivate an agent to sell out his country. Today, look at how many Americans build their life on one of these. None of these foundations will endure, of course, but we are certainly free to choose them.

We don't know exactly when David wrote this psalm. Many writers connect it to the time when Saul chased David in the wilderness (1 Samuel 23:13-14), but we can't be sure. We know the psalm comes at a desperate moment when his enemies seemed to be closing in on him and his friends encouraged him to run away. The psalm breaks naturally into two parts. The first three verses describe David’s predicament, and the last four verses reveal his deep faith in God despite his circumstances. This psalm is best known for the question in verse 3: "When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Many preachers have taken this text and used it to show that when the foundations are destroyed, there is nothing the righteous can do. They are left in a hopeless situation. But that is not what David says. When the foundations are destroyed, there are many things the righteous can do, but above everything else, 1. WE MUST FIRST GET A RIGHT VIEW OF GOD! I chose this text to preach on today in light of the recent Supreme Court ruling that legalized gay marriage in all 50 states. It’s not that we didn’t see it coming. The larger culture has been trending that way for years. Perhaps the shock is the speed of the change. Many believers feel that this decision is a decisive attack on the very foundations of society itself and I agree! When a nation celebrates what God condemns, judgment will come! No one can say how or when or where that judgment will come. But as certainly as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, as certainly as the great empires of history have fallen, it will happen.

The first three verses describe David’s predicament: an unsure future. “In the Lord I take refuge. How then can you say to me, ‘Flee like a bird to your mountain.’” v.1 It is not wrong to flee persecution. Jesus told his disciples, “When they persecute you in one town, escape to another” (Matthew 10:23). The brave Christians in the Middle East who face beheading by ISIS are not wrong to flee. But sometimes you can’t escape, and sometimes the Lord calls you to stand and face whatever comes. We know that David hid from Saul for years until the time came for him to become king so there are times when it’s okay to flee and times when we must not flee. Sometimes you have to stand and fight. This is one of those moments. When David’s friends encouraged him to flee the country, he replied, “I have taken refuge in the Lord.” If God cannot protect him, then running to Egypt won’t keep him safe. I apply that same principle to the current moral crisis in America. I have no doubt that things will get worse in the near future. Open hostility toward Christians will increase. Some will lose their jobs because of their convictions. Others will find their careers stymied because of overt anti-Christian hatred. Some will face huge fines (like Aaron and Melissa Klein, the bakers in Oregon who refused to bake a cake for a lesbian wedding) for standing up for their convictions. Churches will face the loss of tax exemption. Increasingly believers will be ridiculed. Christians who dare to speak out will be blasted on social media. Some will receive threatening phone calls. They will discover that other Christians don’t want to be around them. We will no doubt be disappointed by Pastors who cave to the gay marriage position. Professing themselves to be wise, they will become fools. All of this was foretold in the New
Sometimes you have to stand and fight. You may lose the battle. You may be wounded. You may not survive. We have to stand and fight for what we believe. We leave the results in God’s hands.’ As they say in the Coast Guard, “You have to go out. You don’t have to come back.” This is no time to flee, and there is no place to go anyway. In verse 2 we see David writing: “For look, the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart” In this case David is being quite literal. At one point Saul tried to kill David with a spear. Later he sent his army after him. The arrows they were shooting were not metaphorical. When those arrows hit, they drew blood. It’s always good to know what you are up against. That way you won’t be surprised when trouble comes.

That brings us to verse 3: “When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” The word translated “foundations” refers to the moral and spiritual underpinnings of any society. What can the righteous do when the foundations crumble beneath them? Do we quit? Do we despair? Do we run away? Do we become bitter? Do we resort to violence? For Christians in the Middle East, this is not a rhetorical question. What do you do when your community is destroyed by ISIS?

Christians in America now face that question in a completely different way. The foundations are being destroyed before our eyes. When you see the White House lit up in rainbow colors, you know we are seeing Romans 1 come true in our day. What will the righteous do? What can we do? What do you do when the foundations are destroyed? Answer: It all depends on how big your God is. If you’ve got a small God, you’ve got a big problem. If you’ve got a big God, you’ll be okay even when the bad guys seem to be winning. Why do I say this? Because of our confidence in the Lord! Notice what David doesn’t say. He doesn’t call for the army to mount an offensive. He doesn’t say, “Let’s run for the hills.” He doesn’t raise money for a big political campaign. He doesn’t organize a social media campaign.

For David (and for us) it’s not about the what; it’s about the who. To be sure, tactics matter. There is certainly a time to go to war to protect your nation. And we’ve seen clearly that it matters greatly who occupies the White House. There can be no doubt that social media played a big part in the recent changes in American attitudes about gay marriage. 2. WHEN FOUNDATIONS ARE BEING HACKED AWAY, WE NEED GOD FIRST AND FOREMOST! That’s what David does in verses 4-7. In verse 4 David highlights God’s Presence: “The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord is on His heavenly throne.” This is David’s way of saying God is everywhere. He’s on the earth (in His holy temple), but His throne is in heaven. I admit that it doesn’t always look that way. When you read the headlines, it can seem as if the whole world is spinning out of control. Lately we’ve been reminded that ISIS is planning attacks on America. With the rising spiral of violence in our world and our own slippery slide into the pit of moral corruption, it’s easy to conclude that God either is not on his throne or he doesn’t care what happens on the earth or perhaps there is no God at all.

But right at this point we see the fundamental difference between a believer and an unbeliever. We believe there is a God who sits on the throne of the universe, a God who is absolutely sovereign, a God whose ways are far above our ways, a God to whom the whole human race must someday give account. Was God shocked by the murders in Charleston?

Was God caught by surprise by the crisis in Greece? Was God unprepared for the Supreme Court decision? The answer to all such questions is a resounding no. Our God is never surprised, never asleep, never startled by evil, never shocked by natural disasters, and never astonished by Supreme Court decisions. I have been thinking lately of what one of my Greek teachers in seminary liked to say. He said that the hardest verse in the Bible to believe is Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” “If you can believe that, you won’t have any trouble with the rest of the Bible.” For a long time the truth of that statement eluded me. I couldn’t get it because I had never really thought about Genesis 1:1 in its larger context. But it is hugely important that the Bible begins with a declaration, not an argument. The Bible simply declares that God is, and that He created all things. Twenty years ago E. V. Hill preached a powerful sermon at a Promise Keepers gathering in Chicago. In his own unforgettable style, he preached for 40 minutes on just two words: “God is.” He said it over and over again. He whispered it and he shouted it. He illustrated it, declared it, proclaimed it, and dared anyone to deny it. You wouldn’t think you could preach that long on just two words but he did, and when you think about it, you could preach a lot longer when your topic is as profound as “God is.” Once you get it settled in your heart that “God is,” a lot of other problems will be
Perhaps we should keep Isaiah 6 in mind. That magnificent passage begins with the words “In the year that King Uzziah died.” That note is important because Uzziah was one of the best kings Judah ever had. When he died, the nation was plunged into turmoil. A golden age in Israel’s history was drawing to a close. Would the people continue to walk with God or would they return to idolatry? In that fateful moment, Isaiah came face to face with the living God. He says it this way: “I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). Where is God? He’s not nervously pacing heaven wondering, “Who will I get to replace Uzziah?” Not at all. At that critical moment, God is where He has always been. Seated on His throne.

In the last half of verse 4 through verse 6 we see God’s Judgment: “He observes the sons of men; His eyes examine them. The Lord examines the righteous but the wicked and those who love violence His soul hates. On the wicked He will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot”. No one gets away with anything. Though the wheels of God grind slowly, they grind exceeding small. Be sure our sin will find us out. These words of David remind us that there is a solemn and eternal difference between the righteous and the wicked. That difference is sometimes easy to see in this life, sometimes not so easy. Suppose you go to a football game and look up in the stands. It’s easy to tell who is rooting for the Cyclones and who is rooting for the Hawkeyes. *The fans let you know which side they are on.* But spiritual allegiance isn’t always easy to determine. Suppose you go to a cemetery and walk around. In that quiet, peaceful setting, saints and sinners rest side by side, six feet under the green grass. You can’t tell the righteous from the wicked simply by reading the gravestones. But God knows. That’s the whole point of these verses. God sees everything. He reads every heart. He knows every thought. He hears the words whispered in the darkness. He knows us better than we know ourselves. *A day of judgment is coming for those who mock God and reject his Word.* In an image that reminds us of Sodom and Gomorrah, God promises to rain burning coals and sulfur on the wicked. The scorching wind of judgment will wipe the smile off their faces. We dare not water down these solemn words. On June 26, the day the Supreme Court handed down its verdict, Chuck Swindoll *tweeted these words:* *Disobedience to God’s commands always results in serious consequences—eventually.*

Finally we get to verse 7 where we see David referring to God’s Deliverance: “For the Lord is righteous; He loves justice; upright men will see His face” The Lord stands up for those who stand up for Him. He takes the side of those who side with Him. David stands on the peak of faith and says, “Though the battle may be hot and we may be surrounded, God will win in the end.” These are bad times because our leaders are spiritually corrupt and morally blind. But we don’t have to despair because God is on the throne! We don’t have to ask, “What will America be like in a hundred years?” because none of us will be alive in 100 years. All we need to do is worship and serve the Lord who is eternal. He will still be on the job long after I go down to the grave. *That’s David’s final answer to the many perplexing problems of this life.* Those who know and love the Lord will see His face. We will behold the Lord in the most personal way possible. Today we walk by faith and we may stumble or struggle as foundations are crumbling around us. But today is not the last day.

Let’s go back to that question in verse 3 for a moment: *“When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”* 3. **WE NEED A FRESH VIEW OF GOD AND A LONG VIEW OF HISTORY.** One thing I believe we need to remember is:

- **God doesn’t love straight people more than He loves gay people.** Who were the kinds of people Jesus ministered to and welcomed? Prostitutes, etc. God’s love is perfect and profound.
- **John 3:16 says:** “For God so LOVED THE WORLD” Then the verse that follows, v. 17 says: “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be rescued.” **John 3:17** God’s goal is not that we as Christians would condemn people but that we live a life He wants us to where we show others that He wants to rescue us.
- **We need to reject moral superiority.** Do you know what moral authority is? It’s when you and I live faith and the gospel perfectly. We don’t have any moral authority as Christians because we have misrepresented God’s love over and over again in the area of sexual expressions. Countless young people have been told in our churches that their sin was the worst sin and God could not love them and they were heading to hell. One of our former members who went became an LCMS pastor had a son who has chosen the gay lifestyle and this
man has rejected his son by saying “I no longer have a son”. His legalistic approach drove his son away. When you tell someone they are going to hell because of a sin, you are misrepresenting God because you better be perfect. I am not better than anyone and neither are you!

✓ Should homosexuals be kept out of church until they change? If changing is the requirement of coming to worship here – none of us should be here. Jesus never said: “Come to Me but first of all get your life in order.” He said, “Come to Me dirty and filthy so I can cleanse you.” Jesus allows church members who are hypocrites, gluttons, gossipers, people who show too much skin, those who judge those who show too much skin to be here.

As I reflect on this question, I keep coming back to the same conclusion. I can summarize it this way: We need: 

**Tenacious Winsome Courage.**

- Tenacious means we don’t give up…we keep on walking in faith.
- We keep on praying.
- We love people anyway.
- Winsome means we face life with a smile, not a scowl.
- We don’t lose our temper and say things in anger.
- Winsome means we are cheerful when others attack us. We display grace under pressure.
- Courage means we do what needs to be done.
- We take our stand for the truth and do the hard things without complaining.
- Courage means we speak up instead of wimping out.

The Holy Spirit empowers us with all three qualities together to face what life throws at us.

**Mariano Rivera** is a professional **baseball pitcher** who played 19 seasons in **Major League Baseball** (MLB) for the **New York Yankees**, from 1995 to 2013. Initially a starting pitcher, he was converted to a relief pitcher late in his rookie year. Rivera primarily threw a sharp-moving, mid-90s mile-per-hour cut fastball that frequently broke hitters' bats and earned a reputation as one of the league's toughest pitches to hit. Rivera spent most of his career as a relief pitcher and served as the Yankees' closer for 17 seasons. A thirteen-time **All-Star** and five-time **World Series** champion, he is MLB’s career leader in **saves** (652) and **games finished** (952). He has an incredible strong faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In talking about the importance of prayer in his life he writes in his autobiography: “I rarely pray for specific outcomes. When my agent is negotiating a contract, I never get down on my hands and knees and asked the Lord to make me wealthy. I don’t pray for a new car or for a good MRI result (this is coming from a pitcher), or a strikeout in a big spot. For me, the most meaningful prayers are when I ask God for wisdom!