

Text:

Big Idea:

INTRODUCTION

Church buildings dot the landscape of Calgary. Crosses and steeples, arches, and sanctuaries are seen in every quadrant. The reality is, however, that many are not thriving. Many are empty to emptying. There has been a rise and fall of churches in our city and in our country. In the book of Revelation, an exhortation is given to 7 churches. The first, Ephesus says, *"I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent"* (Rev 2:4–5). The lampstand was their light, their witness, their existence. The church at Ephesus died. It forgot its first love. This has been the case for other congregations.

We must remember our first love. We must remember the foundation of the church. We must remember what is primary, eclipsing all other priorities, and governing all other passions.

Jesus Christ and the gospel of him crucified and risen from the dead is the foundation of the church, and this must be, and by God's grace will be, the foundation of this church as we gather in this place.

1 Corinthians 3:10–11 says, *"According 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. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."*

The church here, representing the people of God, is likened to a building resting upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. This is an oft-used metaphor for the church. **Ephesians 2:19–20** says, *"you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone."* **1 Peter 2:4–6** says, *"As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'"* And Peter declared that to the world in **Acts 4:11–12** when he said, *"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

There is no other foundation. There is no other Savior. There is no other Lord. There is no other King. There is no other Christ. Jesus Christ is all in all, the cornerstone of the church, the solid rock, and our eternal foundation.

If the church forgets this, whether in word or deed, the church will decline. Cracks, divisions, failings, immorality, apostasy, and compromise will be inevitable. You cannot build a sound structure on a faulty foundation. This is vital. We must remember that the foundation of this church is Christ, and Christ alone. It is not shared interests, a common political vision, a passion for family or children or community, it is not a desire to show mercy and do acts of service, the only foundation is Jesus Christ.

(yes, but how) It's likely that we can all agree on this. But what does this mean? What does it mean to build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ? What do we build with? How do we do this? How do we know if we are doing it?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:9–15. Here we see that the church is God's building, and it is built by others upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. What is built with gold, silver, and precious stones will last, what is built with wood, hay, or straw will be found wanting when tested. Paul here speaks in metaphor, so what is he referring.

Go back with me to **1 Corinthians 1:20–25**. Here we see that the church is not built by signs nor man's wisdom, but the preaching of Christ crucified. This is repeated in **1 Corinthians 2:1–5**. It is the preaching of Christ and him crucified that is the foundation of the church. This is the word of the cross, the message of salvation, the preaching of the gospel, Jesus Christ and him crucified. This is not the wisdom of men, but the power of God.

Summary: So, the foundation of Christ is the message of Christ and him crucified. It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as central to the message of the church and the message in which we stand, we proclaim, and we live in.

Allow me to try and press further and get into more details about what this means for all of us.

FOUNDATION: CHRIST IS THE SAVIOR OF SINNERS

When Paul says in **verse 10** that he laid a foundation, and then in **verse 11** when he says that this foundation is Jesus Christ, he means that it was through proclaiming Jesus as Savior that people are added and built into the church. They were not added to the church because of Paul's eloquent wisdom, they were not added because of signs and wonders, they were not added because of a dynamic children's ministry—they were added because they believed in the saving message of Jesus Christ.

The church, our community, is built upon this foundation, the saving message of Jesus Christ. It is possible to have warm feelings toward Jesus and still not have him as your foundation. Every church will acknowledge this in word, but in practice the church can be built on another foundation.

1. A church built on the foundation of Jesus Christ will believe and teach that our biggest problem is sin.

(biggest problem is sin) If the foundation is to be Jesus Christ, you must know and believe that your biggest problem is your sin. Your biggest problem is not the government. It is not your spouse. Not your children. Not your finances, joblessness, suffering. It's not poverty or lack of education. Your sin is your biggest problem. I know it's your biggest problem **because your sin damns you to hell**. You can live under a wicked government and still enter God's presence. You can live with a wretched spouse and still enter the presence of God. You can be poverty stricken, never amount to anything in life, and still enter God's eternal presence. But your sin, if that is not remedied, your sin will damn you to hell. You can't live with your sin and enter the presence of God.

You must be set free from sin, and Jesus Christ is the only remedy for sin. He came to save sinners! He came to save his people from their sin!

So, if the church is to be built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ we **must speak of sin, warn of sin**, and declare sin's only remedy with clarity and courage. Today, the cardinal sin is to offend someone else. The best-known Bible verse is, "Don't judge." But while we're not the judges, God is, and he has a book, and he has defined holiness, righteousness, justice, and sin. If the church cannot speak about sin, warn of sin, hate sin, and call sinners to Jesus—that church is not being built upon Jesus Christ.

(consider your sin) You must reckon with your pride. You must be reminded of your lust, your anger, your laziness, your gluttony, and your greed. Sexual expression outside a marriage of one man and one woman is sinful. Lusting after someone else is sinful. Harboring hatred against someone is sinful. You must be warned of your selfishness, your avoidance of what is right. How many hours a week do you entertain yourself? How much of your money do you spend on yourself? How many relationships are strained in your life because of your bitterness, resentment, or unforgiving attitude? How often do you see yourself as a victim? How often are you excusing your own behavior? What sinful practice have you just made peace with? Do you see your sin? Sinner, do you see your wretchedness? We must know that we are all guilty of sin and that we're more sinful than we realized.

“But I’m a good person” you say. Are you? Really? Your motives are pure? Your thoughts pure? Your words uplifting and not cutting? Your judgments reasonable and not critical? You forgive rather than resent? You are a peacemaker? Jesus reminds us, no one is good except God alone.

A church has left the foundation or close to leaving if they do not speak about sin.

2. A church built on the foundation of Jesus Christ will believe and warn of judgment.

(consider the judgment) We appease our guilt by remembering that we’re all in this together. Nobody is perfect. Everyone has faults. But you are not judged based on everyone else. We all stand before a holy God who created heaven and earth. This is why we must hold to the teaching of creation and that we are made in the image of God. We are responsible, we are accountable to him. We will give an account of every thought, word, and deed to God. There is a judgment day—and we’re even reminded of it in this text in **1 Corinthians 3**. You sin, that you don’t think that bad, will be judged by the God who is perfect in righteousness and is completely just. If your thoughts and past were fully known to everyone here, you would never show your face here again. But God knows all, and there is nowhere to hide.

A church has left the foundation or close to leaving if they refuse to warn people of judgment and the refuge of Christ.

3. A church built on the foundation of Jesus Christ will plead with sinners to come to Christ.

(knowledge of sin leads us to Christ) But of course we do not end there. That is not the end of the story. The preaching of sin and judgment is like building a ramp so that stone can be placed upon the foundation of Christ. It prepares you, like the tilling of the soil, to receive the seed of the gospel and produce a harvest. When you see your sin for what it is, it prepares you to behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners. Jesus Christ came to pay the penalty for sin in his death. Jesus Christ came to face the judgment and wrath of God so that we could be delivered from it. Rather than running from your sin, and away from the foundation, run to Jesus Christ. Say to him, “Yes, Lord! I’m a sinner!” “Yes, Lord, I’m wretched!” “Yes, Lord, I’m greedy, full of hypocrisy, selfishness, lust, and resentment.” “Oh God, I deserve your just judgment but have mercy on me for Jesus’ sake.” “Jesus came for sinners! I’m a sinner Lord.” Jesus didn’t come for the righteous, and I’m not righteous.

(turn to Christ) Rather than running from the fact that we’re sinners, we gather because we are committed to the answer to our sin is Jesus Christ. We must believe and proclaim the excellencies of Christ. Do you see him as the Savior of all? Do you see his willingness to save the worst of sinners? Look at how he saved Paul who persecuted the church. Look at how he saved the criminal on the cross. Look at how he shows mercy to tax collectors and prostitutes. He is the merciful one.

Do you see his love? He knows your sin in more detail than you do! And yet he stands to forgive. Do you see his love as he takes on human flesh and goes to the place of execution for you? Do you see him cry out in pain, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” He was forsaken for you, sinner. He bore your sin and suffered God’s wrath in your place. Will not that love melt your resistance? Will it not soften your heart? Will you look lightly at his grace?

We must stand upon the foundation of Christ’s love, his saving work, his sacrifice, mercy, and grace. And follow him, love him, seek to please him, live for him, worship him. Oh, we have been bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and so we are not our own and now glorify God in our bodies. We’ve been set free from sin and death and so we live for righteousness.

This, knowing that Christ is the Savior and we, along with everyone, needs saving, is building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners. Jesus Christ saves sinners.

Summary: This is our foundation for the church. This is our foundation for unity. This is our foundation for brotherhood and community. This is what we preach and invite others to join us. **Jesus Christ came to save sinners.** We must commit together that the message of this church will be centered upon Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Is he your foundation for salvation? Is he your forgiveness? Is he your hope for eternal life? Are you resting upon the foundation of Jesus Christ? All other ground is sinking sand.

BUILDING: LIVING LIFE ON CHRIST

Read v. 10. Christ is the cornerstone, and the foundation has been laid by the apostles through preaching the good news of Jesus Christ and him crucified. And then he says, *“and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.”*

The church consists not of inanimate bricks, mortar, and wood, but living stones—men, women, and children—established upon the Lord Jesus Christ by becoming his disciples. We must continue to labor and build this building, later called God’s temple in **verses 16 and 17.**

This building upon this foundation is important and requires careful attention, careful building. It is important in several ways, let me give you three.

1. Built to Stay Upon Christ

As one follows Jesus and is added to this eternal temple as a living stone, it is not as if no more work needs to be done. Jesus is not just an entrance ticket that afterward is tossed aside because it is no longer needed. But the Christian life is to be established upon the foundation of Christ and ensure we do not shift from it. Jesus Christ came to save sinners, not just to save us from hell and get us into heaven, but to **live for him in all our lives all the time.**

He is to be our motive, our theme, our strength, our wisdom, our guidance, our refuge, our protector, and our Lord. Jesus’ work on the cross is not just a message for unbelievers, but for believers.

(grow in faith and repentance) We don’t repent once and turn to Christ once. We grow in repentance. If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you should be more repentant now, have greater faith now, be more committed now than when you first committed your life to Christ.

(grow in dependence) We ought to grow in our awareness of sin, grow in our dependence on Christ, grow in our need for grace. You ought to know that you need Christ more today than you did yesterday. That you’re weaker than you realized. That you’re more sinful than you realized. And so, you more quickly confess. You more quickly seek forgiveness. You more quickly repent. The same message we preach is the same message we need.

2. Built Together Upon Christ

(together) The second implication of careful building upon the foundation of Christ and him crucified is to recognize that we are built together upon that one foundation. Stones in a solid structure will be placed upon a firm foundation and be properly connected to one another. The picture of living stones built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ is a picture of unity. We are not meant to live as scattered stones but tightly interconnected, stronger, and more stable together. Together forming God’s temple in which God’s presence is manifest to bring his blessings to earth.

(unity? Identity crisis? doctrinal) When built properly and Christ is our foundation that we will have unity that is strong and will last. It is easy for churches and other groups to experience mission drift or an identity crisis. The group that started this church in 1960 had a clear vision and mission based upon shared beliefs about Christ and the gospel. In the last number of years, the same group has sought to pen interdependence documents, vision statements, and sought to

define unity. But unity is doctrinal, it is convictional, it is shared values, and the living stones of God's temple are together unified on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(gospel unity) We may disagree on a wide number of issues, but we will be a family, brothers and sisters, who will serve and stick together to serve Christ if it is the gospel of Jesus Christ that is our foundation. Cracks, divisions, disunity that threaten the very existence of the church must be prevented by making sure Jesus Christ is the center of all that we do and all that we share.

We're not here because we have the same political vision, the same position on vaccinations, the same position on homeschooling, but we have a common trust in Jesus Christ. Now we may have agreement on politics, vaccinations, and education, but that is downstream and a result of a shared commitment to Jesus Christ. Political movements that share our values but do not have Christ are doomed to fail. Educational choices that share our values but do not have Christ are doomed to be corrupted. Jesus Christ must be our unifier and the common blood that runs through our veins.

3. Built Up in Christ Likeness

(temple, Jesus as temple) What is the **goal or the point** of building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ? The result is found in **verses 16–17** and is to be God's temple. Do you know who called himself the temple of God who would destroy it and raise it up again in three days? Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ in whom the fullness of God dwells bodily. This language is used in **Ephesians 2**, and **1 Peter 2** to refer to Christ's body, the church.

(a holy people) We are to be God's presence in the world. Individually and collectively, we are to be built up into Christlikeness. We are to be holy, pure, righteous, and devout. We are to put away what is fleshly, earthy, demonic, carnal, and immoral. Together we speak truth in love to be sanctified by the Lord Jesus Christ. As we grow to be established upon him, we become increasingly like him.

To be built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ is to be part of his body, to be God's temple, and be filled with the fullness of God. **The point, the goal, the end, is to be united with God.** To be reconciled with the Creator. Not to be forgiven and live a life for yourself. To be forgiven and brought into the fellowship of Father and Son for all eternity and have joy with him.

CONCLUSION

Let me leave you with four exhortations. Four commands as your pastor based upon the authority of God's word as we begin a new phase in the life and ministry of this church.

1. Trust in Christ and Live.

Have no other hope. Lay hold of the promises of God. He stands to forgive you sinner. He bled and bore the wrath of God, dying for sinners who deserve God's judgment. He promises forgiveness, adoption as sons, new bodies, eternal life, entrance into his kingdom, the end of sin and death, the end of pain and suffering. Bow your knee to Christ.

Will you continue to live for yourself? Will you continue with blinders on and just focus on your own life in ignorance of the God who made you? Will you excuse your sin? Will you blame God or others for your plight? Will you drown your sorrow in entertainment? Will you hope for retirement or a vacation? Is that how you will waste your life?

Or will you come to Christ? Believe upon Christ? Trust him? Will you say, God be merciful to me a sinner, I'm coming to you for forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ, the lover of my soul. He stands to save you. He stands to forgive you. He is the only Savior, there is no other.

Children? Young people? Backsliders? Visitors?

2. Live for Christ.

Don't use Christ for a ticket to heaven or a crutch to get through life. The lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world deserves your allegiance. He is your Lord, your master, your guide, your counsellor, your wisdom. Listen to him! Know his word. Be absorbed in his precepts and teaching.

Be quick to come to him for forgiveness. Continue to grow in repentance. Say to him, *"Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."* Say to him, *"Lord, increase my faith!"* Live for Christ. Let him be the sun of your solar system. Wake up and seek to serve him. Go to be exhausted being his servant.

3. Live Together in Christ.

You are brothers and sisters. Live together in Christ. Be united. These are people for whom Christ died. Should you not love them with the same self-sacrificing love? Do you love Christ? Then love his body! Love his bride!

Practice hospitality. Greet each other warmly. Get to know, care for, pray for, and provide for one another. Use your home, your talents, your money, your resources, to give to the body, building up God's temple. Love one another.

4. Live to be Holy

Put away all malice, greed, hypocrisy, bitterness, resentment, lust, immorality, and anger. My brothers and sisters, put away corruption and sin which is unbecoming for the body of Christ. Live for purity. Live for love. Live to be holy. Be set apart for your master. Hate sin, love righteousness. Make no peace with your sin. Give the devil no room or foothold. Let us stir up one another to love and good works!

Brothers and sisters, this is life upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Let us be careful how we build. When people come to visit, may they see Christ. May they see his glory dwell here. May his saving grace extend out from this place.

This church has been claimed for Christ. May Christ be honored and glorified in this place, now and forever. Amen.