

INTRODUCTION

As we go verse-by-verse through the book of Ephesians, we see so many beautiful pictures of what Jesus is doing. Last week we talked about how he dismantled so many of the walls of prejudice we build. Today we want to talk about just the opposite, about how he is in the business of building. As you drive around town, you'll see construction going on. And usually in front of a construction site you'll see a sign with the name of the construction company. That means there's progress; something is happening. That means there is excitement! In front of our church and around every individual's neck, there ought to be a sign that says something like, "Pardon our inconvenience construction in progress: Yahweh Construction Company." Now, if you don't know that name, "Yahweh" that's the Hebrew name for God in the Old Testament, the English word Jehovah. Yahweh is the Hebrew name. God is in the business of building a church.

It surprises me when people say, "Pastor, I love Jesus—but I just don't care for the church," as if they can make some kind of separation between the church and Jesus. You cannot make that artificial separation. To say you love Jesus, but you don't like the church is like saying, "I love to swim, but I don't like water." The church of the Lord Jesus Christ—as imperfect as it may be—is still His connection with human beings. In the New Testament, there are three pictures of the church and all of them start with the letter "B," so we can remember them. The church is pictured as a "body" and Jesus is the head of the body and you and I are members of the body. You may be an arm, a knee, you may be a little toe, but you are still important. You are part of the body. The second picture of the church in the New Testament is that of a "bride." We are the bride of Christ and of course, Jesus is the heavenly bridegroom, who one day will return to take his bride to his father's house. Not only is the church seen as a body and as a bride but the picture we are going to examine today is the church as a "building." Although the New Testament teaches it is a building; it is still not talking about bricks and mortar. Not this facility we are in, because this is not the church. PEOPLE are the church.

I know when I was growing up my mother taught me this little hand thing that says, "Here's the church and here's the steeple. Open it up and where are the people?" And then you changed your fingers like this and said, "Here's the church and here's the steeple Open it up and there are the people." when I taught this to my daughters I changed it. It doesn't rhyme, but it is a whole lot better theology and it goes like this: "Here's the church building and here is the church building steeple. Open it up and there is the church." Because the church is not a building: It is the people who make up the church and that's what this text is all about.

Ephesians 2:19. "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."

Paul is mixing metaphors here. You are citizens of heaven, meaning you are part of the household. What's the difference between a family and a household? When I ask, "Who's in your family?" You might say, "I have aunts and uncles and grandparents and cousins." but when I say, "Who's in your household?" That means "who pulls a chair up to your table?" That's your inner family. The Bible says that's what we are with God. We are part of God's household. That's how close we are in the family.

Then in verse 20 he begins to use this construction terminology: "Built on the foundation." That's a building word. "Of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises..." That's an interesting verb, because it's a picture of a continual action, the building (the church) is continuing to grow and rise "to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE BUILDING

Let's talk about this building the Yahweh Construction Company is constructing. Number one let's talk about the foundation the foundation of this building, because any good construction expert or any good architect will tell you, "If you want a good building, you have to have a good, strong foundation." If you have been to New York City, you have seen those two towers that rise above the skyline, the World Trade Center towers rise 1,350 feet into the sky—almost a quarter of a mile tall. What you do not see is before they ever built those towers; they dug down and laid a foundation of solid reinforced concrete seventy feet in the earth. The reason they had to build such a solid, strong foundation was to support the huge building that would rise on top of it. It is very important to have a proper foundation. Now, who is our foundation? It's Jesus Christ. Look at 1 Corinthians 3:11. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." Ephesians 2:20 says, "built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets." Some people say the apostles are the foundation of the church. Not so! The apostles and the prophets along with Paul *laid* the foundation, but the *foundation* is Jesus Christ himself.

1. Jesus is our foundational truth

Let me tell you two things it means. First, it means Jesus is our foundational truth. The truth about Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which we build all of our other beliefs. You've been around long enough to know that within the Christian church, all believers, there is diversity and a variety of doctrines and beliefs. That's basically why we have different denominations. I can fellowship with believers who may disagree with me on some non-essential doctrines, for instance, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I happen to believe in the pre-millennial return of Jesus. I think he is going to come back and rapture the church. I believe that with all of my heart. But some Christians believe Jesus is coming back, but not like that. I can fellowship with them and I can love them. They are not my enemies. There are some who do not believe the things I believe about baptism. I can still love them and fellowship with them. I don't say, "You're lost because you don't practice baptism the way I do." The problem is if somebody has a foundation that is different, that is an essential doctrine and the doctrine that we must never compromise is the person of Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus? Jesus was God in the flesh, he was born of a virgin, he lived a sinless life, he died a substitutionary death and he was buried, bodily resurrected and visibly he will return one day. That is the foundational doctrine. And I am sorry, but I cannot fellowship with anybody who does not believe that foundational doctrine about who Jesus is. There are some groups going around who do not believe what we believe about Jesus. We sometimes call them "cults." They may call themselves "Witness of Jehovah" or they may call themselves, "Latter Day Saints" or anything like that and they may claim to be Christians, but if they don't believe the foundational doctrine of Jesus, their foundation is cracked and the building—no matter how beautiful, no matter how moving their music may be, no matter how

slick their commercials may be, no matter how noble their emphasis on the family may be, the building is dangerous, because it is on a cracked foundation. Sometimes these people come to your door and knock and you don't know what to say to them.

I heard a funny story about a pastor who was confronted by one of his members, an ex-Marine, who said, "Pastor, I am having trouble with these people. What can I say to them?"

The pastor said, "Did you know these people don't say the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag and won't sing the National Anthem?"

"You're kidding!"

"No, that's right."

"What else can you tell me about them?" The man asked.

"They never donate blood."

"You're kidding!"

"No, that's true." The Pastor replied.

"What else can you tell me about these people?"

"They don't celebrate Christmas."

"You're kidding!"

So, this old guy got ready and sure enough a few weeks later on a Saturday morning here were these two well-dressed ladies with their satchels in hand walking up his sidewalk. DING DONG! He jerked the door open and said, "Ladies, come right in. The first thing I am going to do is hand you a Red Cross Blood Donor card. I want you to sit down and fill it out and volunteer right now." So the ladies took the cards and started writing. Then he said, "Now we're going to sing some Christmas carols" (It was July) They sang, "Silent Night," "Joy To The World," and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." The ladies were just sitting there singing and thinking, "This is pretty weird." Then he brought out the American flag. He said, "Now we're going to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Let's stand at attention and salute and say the Pledge." Then they sang every verse of the National Anthem. The ladies just stood there and after he finished he said, "Now, ladies. What do you have to say about that?" One lady said, "I just came to sell some Avon products."

If you want to know how to respond to these people who do not have the foundational doctrine of Jesus, the Bible tells us how to respond to them. Turn to II John 10. II John only has one chapter. Sometimes Christians think when some of these people come to your door it is your job to entertain them, to invite them in, give them Kool-Aid and cupcakes and maybe discuss doctrine with them. The Bible says, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching" (meaning the foundational truth about who Jesus is) "do not take him into your house or welcome him." The King James Version says, "Do not bid them Godspeed." Which means don't say, "Good luck. Have a good day. Hope you do well in your ministry." When others come to your house to evangelize you, that's not the time for you to try to evangelize them, there are other times and places for that. You are not to be rude or crude or unkind. Christians should never be that way. But you are not to invite them in and discuss this doctrine with them. Because they may claim to believe what we believe, but their foundation is cracked. Sometime ask them if they believe Jesus is God in the flesh, that Jesus the Son and Jesus the Father were equal, co-eternal and co-existent. They do not believe that. Jesus is our foundational truth and every other truth we believe is built on that foundational truth.

2. Jesus is our foundational support

When I say Jesus is the foundation it means something else too. Not only is he the foundational truth, but number two, he is our foundational support. And this is in a real, personal sense. A good foundation supports the rest of the building. Every one of us has some kind of a foundation in our lives. Jesus said in Luke chapter 6 just about everyone in the world can be divided into two groups. One group is like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand and when the storms of life came upon him, his house (which means his life) fell apart and Jesus said it was a great fall. But then, Jesus talked about the wise man who dug down deeply, laid the foundation on a rock, so when the storms of life came, his house withstood the storms. Jesus did not say IF storms come—he said WHEN the storms come, because life is a series of storms: emotional storms, financial storms, relational storms...all kinds of storms, and if your life is founded on any other thing than Jesus Christ, when the storms come—you'll fall apart. Some of you may have built your life on the stock market or have built your life on your own ability as a businessman. Maybe you have built it on your own intellect: You are a self-made, self-confident person and that is the foundation of your life. When the storm comes, the security of your life is only as good as the security of those things and those things are temporary and not very secure, but if you have founded your life on Jesus Christ, when the storm comes, you will not fall. Storms do come. Difficulties come.

I read this true story in a newspaper from Minnesota. There was a lady who owned a parakeet named "Chippie." One day she was cleaning her house and she had the vacuum cleaner and she wanted to clean out the bottom of Chippie's cage. So she took the attachment off and was using the hose to get up all the debris. Suddenly, the phone rang and when she turned to answer the phone, she inadvertently pointed the vacuum cleaner up. SLURP! She turned around and there was no Chippie. Frantically, she hung up the phone, turned off the vacuum cleaner and unplugged it. She opened the bag and there was Chippie alive, but dirty and dazed, covered with dirt and soot. She did what any good pet owner would do: She grabbed that little bird, ran over to the sink, turned the faucet on full blast and started washing little Chippie off. Pretty soon she got him clean, but he was sitting there shivering like only a wet bird can do, so like any good pet owner, she did the next thing: She ran into the bathroom and took the hair dryer and started blow drying him—blasting him with that hot air. She put him back in the cage. He lived! A couple of days later the newspaper reporter was checking up and said, "How's Chippie doing? She said, "He doesn't sing as much as he used to. He kind of sits there and stares a lot." Have you ever had a day like that? Years like that? There are a lot of things in life that will try to rob you of your song and try to take the music out of your life. These problems come, and I want to tell you if your life is founded on Jesus, there is nothing and no one who can rob you of your song, who can rob you of your joy but, if your life is founded on anything else, you'll lose it in a hurry. Jesus is our foundational truth and support.

II. THE FRAME OF THE BUILDING

1. The cornerstone

The second thing about a good building is its frame, because once you lay the foundation, then you have to build the frame of the building. In verse 21 it says Jesus himself is the chief

cornerstone. 1 Peter 2:5. It talks about Jesus and us. It says, “As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.”

Jesus is both the foundation of the church and the cornerstone. The foundation is one thing and the cornerstone is the first block or brick laid that gives the dimensions and the directions for the rest of the building. How can Jesus be both? Because Jesus is both God—that’s the foundation—and he is man—that’s the cornerstone. He gives us direction and purpose. He is the one who defines the dimensions of our lives. He is the cornerstone. The Bible says the stone which the builders rejected becomes the chief cornerstone.

There is an interesting story from Jewish history. It’s not in the Bible, but when Solomon was building the temple 3,000 years ago, he didn’t want there to be any sounds of construction on the Temple Mount. He didn’t want to hear the sound of a hammer on a chisel, so they quarried all the stones miles away. The master builder or the construction superintendent would send the dimensions for the stones to the quarry master. They were going to have them all cut and brought to Temple Mount before they began to assemble the wall. One day the master builder saw an unusually cut stone that was getting in everybody’s way. He didn’t recognize it, so he instructed his slaves to put long poles under this stone and they pried it up and rolled it down into the Kidron Valley and forgot about it. It took several years, of course, to quarry all the stones and get them ready to assemble. The time came to build the wall for the temple and the master builder said, “Where’s the cornerstone? I sent an order for the cornerstone to be quarried years ago. Where is it?” The quarry master sent back a message which said, “I sent that stone to you years ago.” Of course, he remembered that the oddly shaped stone they had rejected and neglected and rolled down into the bottom of the valley was the stone which the builders rejected and they brought it back and it became the cornerstone. That’s the truth of today. There are a lot of people who reject Jesus Christ. When we say to them Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven they say, “I reject that.” They neglect Jesus but for those of us who understand who Jesus is he is our cornerstone he gives us direction and dimension.

2. Living stones

So Jesus is the cornerstone. That’s part of the frame. The second part of the frame is this: We are the living stones that make up the wall the building, as it were, of the church. I am a living stone and you are a living stone. Think about stones for a moment. (not manmade bricks that are all the same shape and size) Think about a wall or a house you have seen that was built out of these natural stones, all different sizes of stones all different shapes of stones, yet a builder can take those different shapes and different sized stones and can build a wall that will be absolutely straight. How? He takes mortar and very carefully places them. One stone may dip down and he looks at another stone that has a protrusion going in the opposite direction and he puts these stones carefully together. That’s what God is doing with us today. I have some weak points in my life and God puts people in my life who have strength in those areas and we fit together. He uses the mortar of the Holy Spirit to bind us together. That’s the beautiful thing. No one stone makes up the wall. We are all built up together. I need you and you need me, because we are all different, but through the mortar of the Holy Spirit there is strength, power and unity in this building he is building. Sometimes it is painful, because a good mason will take a stone

sometimes and chip parts of it off to make it fit. God is in the process of chipping things off of our lives that shouldn't be there so we will fit in properly.

I heard about a building going up and the mason was doing just that: He was chipping away at a stone and then he would look up; he would chip away some more at the stone, and then he would look up. A man watched him for a while and asked, “What are you doing?” The mason said, “I am shaping this down here to fit in up there,” and he showed the man a place in the wall that needed a stone. That's a great parable about what God is doing for me and for you right now. He is shaping us down here to get us ready to fit in up there. I am a living stone. You are a living stone and we are making the building the church of the Lord Jesus.

III. THE FUNCTION OF THE BUILDING

1. It is a growing building

What is the function of this building? Number two, every building has a function, a purpose for which it is built. We learn two interesting things about this temple, this building God is constructing. Ephesians 2:21 says, “In him the whole building is joined together and rises...” That is a word literally meaning “it is growing.” Number one it is a *growing* building. This is where this analogy breaks down from your house or any building, because when we build a building, it usually stays the same size—unless at a later date you expand it—but this is a picture of the church ever-expanding, ever-growing. Do you know why your house doesn't grow? Because it's dead; it's static. But the building of God is growing, because it is alive. It is dynamic. Someone said the church is almost like coral. Coral looks like a stone, but it is actually a living organism and it keeps growing and growing and growing. That's a picture of the church. It is a *growing* building.

a. Numerically

How does the church grow? Any good Minister of Education will tell you the church grows numerically by adding new members. That's called church growth, numerical growth, and God is actively adding to the church those who should be saved. It's like God adds a new stone here, a new stone there, and you may be here today and if you are not a Christian you've never been born again that's what God wants to do to you today: He wants to change you and give you life and he wants to take you and add you to the building so it will get bigger.

b. Spiritually

Not only does it grow numerically, but the church also grows spiritually. This is where the analogy *completely* breaks down, because here's a rock and that rock stays the same size but the living stones that make up the building of Christ, these stones themselves, ought to be expanding, growing. The way the church grows numerically is by God adding to the church, but it grows spiritually as each individual stone expands. That's why the Bible says, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Are you a growing Christian? Are you a larger stone this week than you were last week? (and

I'm not talking about your weight) I'm talking about your spiritual progress. Can you honestly say you are closer to Jesus Christ today than you were a week ago two weeks ago a year ago? Let me just give you this simple little test: Do you have a desire in your heart to lead other people to Jesus Christ? Do you think evangelism training is something just for super committed Christians? A sign you are a growing Christian is you will have a growing concern for lost people and a growing desire to lead others to Christ. So, the way the church is a growing building is both numerically and spiritually.

2. It is to be a God-filled building

There's a second thing about the function of this building: It is to be God-filled. Verse 22 says, "a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." God does not live in this building we are in, but God *does* live in the building comprised of us as living stones, and there's a sense in which God, the Holy Spirit, is present and he dwells in the church collectively when we gather together. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am right in the middle." In other words Jesus says whenever you gather as the church, he is right there indwelling the body the building the bride, but it is also true individually, because the Bible says our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

There is so much misunderstanding about what it truly means to be a Christian. There are people out there who think going to church, taking communion, reading the Bible, giving money...doing all of these religious acts think that's how you become a Christian. No. Becoming a Christian is inviting Jesus Christ through his Spirit to come and live inside of you. That's what being a Christian is. That's why Jesus said in Revelation 3:20, "Behold! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in." That's the picture of a building. He's talking about the door of your heart. I always think of Holman Hunt's beautiful painting of Christ at the door where Jesus is standing there with a lantern in front of a wooden door. The thing you notice immediately is that there is no doorknob on the outside of the door. Some people have said Hunt made a mistake when he didn't paint a doorknob. It was intentional! There is no doorknob on the *outside*. Jesus will not force his way into your life. The doorknob is on the inside. You must open the door of your heart from the inside and just like a person walking into a building say, "Lord Jesus Come and live inside of me." That is the secret of the Christian life. It's not you trying to live the Christian life it's not you doing something for God; it's Jesus coming to live in you and Jesus doing things through you. It's Jesus loving people through you. It's Jesus forgiving people through you. It is Jesus drawing lost people to himself through you. He never wanted you to imitate him; he just wanted you to contain him and to release him. That's what it means to be a Christian. I'm afraid so many Christians are going to stand before God on Judgment Day and are going to be disqualified because they did not understand that simple little truth that the Christian life is Christ in you.

CONCLUSION

The Texas State Bass Fishing Tournament was held on Lake Conroe almost two years ago. A man named Ben Wofford had been fishing in a lot of the professional fishing tournaments, but hardly had enough money to pay his bills. The first prize for the largest bass caught that day was over \$30,000. Ben went out there and made a few casts. About halfway through the day, he

pulled in a big fish. He weighed it and saw it was a bass weighing over seven and a half pounds. He didn't know for sure, but he suspected it could be the big bass of the day. He was already thinking about how he was going to spend that \$30,000. Sure enough, they came back and had the weigh-in at the end of the day, which is always an exciting time. Sure enough his seven-and-a-half pound bass was the biggest fish of the day! He was so excited about getting all of that money...until one of the tournament officials brought up the guidelines and he was disqualified, because the guidelines clearly stated every contestant must wear the tournament cap. Ben had tossed that cap into the boat and he was wearing his "lucky" cap. I wouldn't call it "lucky" would you? He was disqualified because he did not follow the guidelines. What a shame! But it is not nearly as tragic as it will be when thousands of people stand before God and think going to church and doing all these religious acts will get them into heaven, because they do not understand that the Bible clearly says the Christian life is "receiving Jesus into your heart" and they will be disqualified! Dear God I pray he won't let that happen to you or someone you love!

OUTLINE

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE BUILDING

Jesus is our foundational

1. Truth
2. Support

II. THE FRAME OF THE BUILDING

1. The cornerstone
2. Living stones

III. THE FUNCTION OF THE BUILDING

1. It is a growing building
 - a. Numerically
 - b. Spiritually
2. It is to be a God-filled building



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes