

I. Introduction

- A. When I was a missionary working in Moscow, Russia, one of the most common complaints that we had was the fact that we did not own a church building.
1. I cannot count the number of times that I had someone come to me, and tell me:
 - a. "The *building* is very important to Russians."
 - b. "As long as you do not have a building, Russians are not going to take you seriously - they are not going to want to be a part of your church."
 2. Truly, it should have been no surprise that this was the case.
 - a. Moscow was filled with grand and ornate cathedrals with their intricate towers, their multi-colored onion domes, and their ornate golden crosses.
 - b. When you compared such extravagant buildings to the simple, out-of-the-way, low-rent auditoriums and apartments where we were meeting, it is no wonder that the church paled in comparison.
 3. The building was very important in their eyes.
 - a. In fact, I was studying with one man who invited me to attend an Orthodox worship service, so that I could see first hand the things that he believed and practiced.
 - b. Since it was during the week, I agreed to go with the understanding that he might possibly attend a worship service with me - afterward we could sit down and discuss the differences and compare them to what the Bible teaches on worship and the church.
 - c. As we were leaving the Orthodox service, he turned to me.
 - (1) I will never forget his words.
 - (2) He said, "Can you not feel the power of God in this place?"

- (3) For him, the overwhelming splendor of the building and the pomp of the ceremony were proof that God must have been present!
 - (4) He never studied with me again.
 - B. When we look to the New Testament, we find a very different story.
 1. We find early Christians meeting:
 - a. In "upper rooms."
 - b. In one another's homes.
 - c. In whatever square or public arena they could find.
 2. For the early Christian, the building was not important.
 - a. In fact, for the early Christian there was no building!
 - b. For them, the church was not:
 - (1) The walls.
 - (2) The pews.
 - (3) The pulpit behind which the preacher stands.
 - c. For the early Christian, the church was about the people.
 - C. In **Ephesians 2:19-22**, Paul describes the church as being the building of Christ.
 - D. It is this image that we want to look at in our lesson this morning.
¹⁹ **Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,** ²⁰ **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,** ²¹ **in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,** ²² **in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**
(**Ephesians 2:19-22** NKJV)

II. The Church of Christ is Built on a Foundation of Doctrine

- A. It does not take an engineer to know that a solid foundation is important when it comes to building a building.
1. Even as little children, we love to sing the Bible school song,

- “The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock.”
- a. That song is taken from Jesus’ parable in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. It teaches us a fundamental truth.
 - (1) The wise man builds his house upon the rock, and when the storms of life come, the house stands *firm*.
 - (2) The foolish man builds his house upon the sand, and when the storms of life come, the house goes *splat!*
 - c. Even as little children, we can understand that when the foundation is bad, then the entire building is in danger of collapse!
2. When Devan and I were looking to buy our first house a few years ago, we turned down two houses that we really liked - because we learned that the foundations were bad!
3. So, from a practical standpoint, we understand the importance of building upon a strong foundation.
- B. The same thing holds true when it comes to the church.
1. If we are going to build up the church of Christ, then it is vital that we begin with the proper foundation.
 - a. That foundation must be Jesus Christ.
 - b. Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul said, “**For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**” (1 Corinthians 3:11 NKJV)
 - (1) In context, Paul has been dealing with divisions that had crept into the church in Corinth.
 - (2) At the heart of these divisions was the fact that the brethren had been more persuaded by the individual styles and personalities of various teachers than they had been by the gospel message.
 - (a) One said, “I am of Paul.”
 - (b) Another said, “I am of Cephas.”
 - (c) Another said, “I am of Apollos.”

- (3) Paul is trying to convince them that within the church everyone should be of Christ.
 - (a) Eternal salvation is found in Jesus Christ.
 - i) It is not found in Paul, Cephas, or Apollos!
 - ii) They did not die to save them from their sins.
 - (b) These men were simply messengers who were sent to teach a message - the message of Jesus Christ.
 - (c) Each of these men had played their own role in developing the faith of the Corinthian Christians.
 - (d) Far from speaking different messages, they were actually all building upon the same foundation - the message of Jesus Christ.
2. Brethren, I want us to understand, *doctrine matters!!!*
- a. Do not let any else tell you different!
 - b. What we believe, what we practice, and what we teach is important in the sight of God!
 - c. Paul tells us in our text (2:20), that the church of Christ has “**been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.**”
 - (1) Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.
 - (a) He is the beginning point.
 - (b) Everything else within the church must be brought into line with him.
 - (2) I want us to especially notice that Paul says that the church has been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.
 - (a) The apostles and prophets is representative of the Bible - it represents the teachings of the New and Old Testaments, respectively.

- (b) The prophets prepared the way for the coming Messiah.
- (c) After the Messiah left, the apostles were charged with the Great Commission to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28: 19, 20)
 - i) The apostles were charged with preaching the message of Jesus Christ.
 - ii) The message that they preached was not their own message, but the message that Christ had given to them.
 - iii) To insure that it was Christ’s message that they were preaching, John tells us in John 16:12-15 that Jesus promised the apostles that God would send His Spirit to guide them “into all truth.”
- d. When someone tries to tell you that they just want to preach Jesus Christ, and they do not worry about all of doctrinal things in the Bible, they are not giving you the full gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - (1) The first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) only give us a part of the gospel message.
 - (a) They teach us about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ upon this earth.
 - (b) The rest of the New Testament is written to teach us what the message of Jesus Christ means to us.
 - (c) Jesus Himself said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

(John 8:31-32 NKJV)

- i) It is the truth that frees us from the bondage of sin.
- ii) If we leave out *any* part of the gospel message, then we do not have the full truth of salvation.
- (d) Brethren, any church that is not built upon Jesus Christ *and His message* is NOT the church of Jesus Christ - because it is not built on the proper foundation!
- (2) Doctrine matters!

III. The Church of Christ is Built from Individual Members

- A. One of the most beloved children’s stories of all time is the story of “The Three Little Pigs.”
 - 1. In that story, three pigs set out upon their own to build their own houses.
 - a. Two of the pigs were more interested in having fun, so they quickly threw together houses made of straw or wood.
 - b. The third pig took the time to do it right, building his home of bricks.
 - 2. When danger threatened (in the form of “the big, bad wolf”), the houses of hay and sticks were destroyed.
 - 3. But, the house of bricks stood strong.
 - 4. The story is intended to teach our children about the value of hard work and a job done right.
 - 5. It also teaches us that the materials that we use to build will go a long way in determining the strength of the building!
- B. When it comes to building up the church of Christ, the materials matter!
 - 1. Paul tells us that we are the materials - the church of Christ is

built from individual Christians!

- a. **2:19-20:** Paul tells us that we are “members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation...”
 - b. **2:21:** “...in whom the whole building, being fitted together...”
 - c. **2:22:** “...in whom you also are being built together...”
2. As Christians, we are the church of Christ!
- a. The church of Christ is not a physical building - with its walls, its stained glass windows, its pulpit and its pews, and its sign out front proudly proclaiming the title “Church of Christ”!
 - b. The church of Christ is built from individual Christians who have been knit together by the word of God.
3. Just as with the story of “The Three Little Pigs,” the type of materials that are used matters!
- a. The stronger in faith, knowledge, and commitment we are as *individual Christians*, the stronger we will be as the church of Christ!
 - (1) If we are a congregation that is weak in our knowledge of God’s word and our dedication to living lives of faithfulness, then we are like the house that is made of straw or sticks.
 - (a) We may look like a church on the outside.
 - (b) At the first sign of trouble, the church will collapse.
 - (c) In the Parable of the Soils (**Mark 4:3-20**), Jesus uses the illustration of seed that falls on rock soil.
 - i) At first, it may spring up and show signs of life.
 - ii) Eventually, it will wither and die under the glare of the summer sun - because its roots

have no depth.

- iii) Jesus compares it to the person who initially hears and believes the gospel; at the first sign of trouble or persecution, he takes off.
- (2) If, on the other hand, we are a congregation whose individual members all have a love for God, a deep knowledge of His word, and a zeal for doing His works, then this congregation will grow and thrive.
 - (3) When the storms of life assail us, it may sting, but the church will survive.
- b. Brethren, I want you to understand that the strength of this congregation depends upon *you*!
- (1) Your knowledge, your faith, your zeal, your efforts will determine the success of this congregation.
 - (a) I can teach you.
 - (b) The elders can lead you.
 - (2) Ultimately, the success of this congregation is in your hands.
 - (3) The church is only as strong as the faith and knowledge of its individual members!

IV. ***The Church of Christ is Built into a Temple of the Lord***

- A. Notice the language Paul uses in **Ephesians 2:21-22**, “in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
1. Sometimes, I think it is very easy for us to completely lose sight of the *purpose* of the church of Christ.
 - a. One of man’s shortcomings is that we tend to become selfish in our outlook of life.
 - b. We tend to think in terms of:
 - (1) How does that affect me?

- (2) What do I receive from it?
- c. Sometimes, we approach our Christianity with the same outlook.
 - (1) We only see Christianity as a path to our own personal salvation.
 - (2) We lose sight of the fact that God has a greater purpose for the church.
- 2. Paul says that we are being brought together to become “a holy temple in the Lord” and “a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
 - a. God has a purpose for His church!
 - b. We have been brought together to become His temple - to shine forth His glory to the world around us!
- B. What does that mean on a practical level?
 - 1. In **1 Peter 2:5**, the apostle Peter said, “...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
 - 2. Our purpose, as the house of God, is “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
 - 3. Our mission, as the church, is to sacrifice ourselves in service to God.
 - 4. Brethren, we do not become Christians to serve ourselves; we become Christians to serve our God!
 - a. We are to be *His* temple!
 - b. We are to sacrifice of ourselves in service to *His* glory!

V. Conclusion

- A. That is why Paul told the Roman Christians in **Romans 6:1-6** that we must die to the man of sin through being buried with Christ in baptism.
 - 1. When we rise up, we are supposed to be new spiritual

- creations.
- 2. We are no longer concerned with our own selfish interests.
- 3. Rather, we have become slaves of righteousness - slaves of God.
- 4. We dedicate ourselves to His service.
- B. This morning, have you died to yourself to live in service to God?