

## THE FOUNDATION

**“For no man can lay any foundation other than the one already laid which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).**

- This verse deals with Christian unity. Jesus is the one and only foundation for Christian unity!
- Just before he was crucified, Jesus prayed that all believers would be united, just as he and the Father were united (Jn. 17:20-21).
- Sadly, there was division in the church at Corinth. Paul mentioned this division in chapter one. **“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Cor. 1:10).**
- Paul was at Ephesus when he heard about this division: **“My brothers, some from Cloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’; another, ‘I follow Cephas’; still another, ‘I follow Christ’” (1 Cor. 1:11-12).** This news prompted him to write the letter.
- Christ, of course, is not divided! Therefore Paul continued: **“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you but Crispus and Gaius, so not one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanus; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) (1 Cor. 1:13-16).**
- It is important that everyone be baptized. Jesus as you know, commanded this in the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Even though Paul only personally baptized a few at Corinth, it is a fact that the Corinthians had **“all been baptized by one Spirit into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13).** Everyone needs to be baptized. Baptism, however, is not to be done in the name of Paul, or any other man. Baptism is in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Paul’s point is that “who” does the baptizing is not important. Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John the Baptist though Jesus himself did not personally baptize anyone (Jn. 4:1-2). Just as Jesus did not have to personally baptize anyone, neither did Paul.
- So Paul continued: **“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel – not with words of human wisdom, let the cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1:17).** Jesus, as you know, appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and said: **“I have appeared to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen of me and of what I will show you” (Acts 26:16).** Paul’s commission was to preach the gospel Jesus showed him in plain words without human wisdom and let someone else do the baptizing.

## DIVISION IS A SIGN OF IMMATUREITY

In the verses just before our text Paul pointed out that division in the church is a sign of immaturity. **“Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another, ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not mere human beings?”**

He continued that men like Apollos and Paul are only “servants”. It is God who is in charge and makes the church to grow: **“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.”** (1 Cor. 3:5-9).

#### JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION FOR UNITY

Paul, as an expert builder, knew that a house built upon the sand will not stand (Matt. 7:24-27). He therefore continued: **“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ”** (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

We are “God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). We are God’s temple (1 Cor. 3:16). God’s building is people that are built upon the rock solid foundation of Jesus Christ. True converts are like “gold, silver, and costly stones”. Those who are not true converts are like “wood, hay, or straw”. Note: **“If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”** (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

If some of Paul’s converts fell from grace, as they did in Galatia (Gal. 5:4), he would naturally suffer loss, but would still be saved.

The expression “in Christ” occurs 164 times in the letters of Paul. Everyone who is “in Christ” is saved and is in the family of God. Remember! **“There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1)**. Those “in Christ” have all been baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). This “one body” is also called the “family of God” (Eph. 3:15). Consequently we are brothers and sisters to everyone else who is “in Christ”. The “first Adam” began a physical race. Jesus is the “last Adam” and he began a spiritual race (1 Cor. 15:45-49). Just as the descendants of Adam received his DNA from a physical seed, the descendants of Jesus receive his DNA from a spiritual seed. **“Just as we have born the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:49)**. Peter agreed: **“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23)**.

#### THE CHURCH IS LIKE A FAMILY

When two men have the same father, they are brothers whether they like it or not. Sometimes children are born retarded or handicapped. If we have the same father we are still brothers and sisters in the same family. We are to receive one another in the same way that Christ received us! I was certainly not 100% when Jesus received me, so that is exactly how I must receive others. In fact, no matter how many mistakes I make, Jesus is not ashamed to call me his brother. The reason is because we have the same Father (Heb. 2:15).

Not only are there little children in the family, but also old people who suffer from dementia. Just because our brethren have special needs does not mean that they are not part of the family. Paul offers this inspired advice for those in the family of God: **“And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thess. 5:14)**. Some in the family need to be warned, others need to be encouraged, still others need to be helped, but we must be patient with everyone. When our “brother” sins against us we must forgive him, not seven times, but seventy times seven (Matt. 18:21-22).

Something miraculous happens to us when we are born again. In Christ we are a “new creation” and no longer see anyone, or anything, from a purely human point of view (2 Cor. 5:16-17). This is particularly true of our brothers and sisters in Christ. God has given us a special love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well” (1 Jn. 5:1)**.

Yes, Jesus Christ is the one and only foundation for our faith and our unity. Are you a part of God’s family? If not, you have a special invitation to be born again and become part of the family of God. Jesus said: **“Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30)**.

When this happens: **“You are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”.** (Gal. 3:26-29).