

“A Sure Foundation”  
Ephesians 2:19-20  
(Preached at Trinity, June 8, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, **Chapter 2** deals with God's glorious grace in saving dead sinners from their sin and in the union of Jews and Gentiles into one body, the church. Because of our union with Christ we are united to one another.
2. In **Verses 19-22** Paul speaks of Jews and Gentiles together as one body, the church of Christ. We find in these verses the nature of the church. It is made up of those who are chosen and brought into God's family through Christ, called to be saints, and uniquely joined together as the body of Christ.
3. Paul makes another important statement about the church in these verses:  
**Ephesians 2:20 NAU** - "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*"
4. As we saw last time, Paul is describing the church as a building—God's people uniquely joined together, fitted together like a building with each piece fitting together perfectly.  
**Ephesians 2:21-22 NAU** - "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."
5. But every good building needs a good foundation. Paul says the church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.
  - A. This raises an interesting question. Are the Apostles and Prophets the foundation of the church? Or is it Christ?  
Scripture is clear that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church  
**1 Corinthians 3:11 NAU** - "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
  - B. There is no contradiction here. Paul is describing the foundation of Christ here using a different metaphor. Jesus is the Corner Stone.
6. This morning I'll divide this sermon into two parts:
  - I. Jesus Christ is the Corner Stone – the ultimate and sure foundation
  - II. The Church is also built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets – what does this mean?

- I. Jesus Christ is the Corner Stone – the ultimate and sure foundation
- A. Scripture reveals over and over that Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone of the church  
**Acts 4:10-12 NAS** - "let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. <sup>11</sup> "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, *but* which became the very corner *stone*. <sup>12</sup> "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."  
**Isaiah 28:16 KJV** – “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.”
- B. The picture is of the cornerstone in the ancient building
1. The cornerstone was the most important stone in the entire structure  
It had to be perfectly square on all four sides.  
Every other stone was set with reference to this stone. The rest of the structure was dependent upon the accuracy of this one stone.
  2. Jesus Christ is that perfect corner stone
    - a. He is perfect in every way  
He was born sinless, He kept the Law perfectly – the perfect Lamb of God
    - b. Jesus is perfect, splendid, marvelous, precious, altogether lovely
    - c. The church rests upon Him. The church find’s its being in Him.  
He is the focus. Everything is directed towards Him.  
**Colossians 1:18 NAU** - " He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."
- C. Christianity makes a startling declaration – There is only one perfect Cornerstone. Jesus is the only way! He has been rejected of men, but He is the only way of salvation  
**Acts 4:11-12 NAS** - "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, *but* which became the very corner *stone*. <sup>12</sup> "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."
1. This rejected stone was raised from the dead and now sits upon His throne where He rules all men with absolute authority
  2. This Christ demands that all men repent and submit themselves to Him trusting alone in His righteousness
- D. He alone must have preeminence in everything
1. The chief and highest characteristic of our church must always be “Christ Centered.” If we lose this we have lost everything.
  2. This must also be true with your life as an individual. Are you Christ centered? Does everything in your life have Christ as its chief focus?
- II. The Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets – what does this mean?
- A. The Apostles and Prophets received direct revelation from God

1. The prophets were God's spokesmen – He spoke to them and they brought God's Word to the people.
    - a. The Prophet Joel began his prophecy:  
**Joel 1:1-2 NAS** - "The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. <sup>2</sup> Hear this, O elders, And listen"
    - b. The common expression of the prophets was, "Thus saith the LORD."
  2. The Apostles also received direct revelation from God  
Example of the Apostle Peter  
**Matthew 16:17-18 NAS** - "And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."
    - a. Peter recognized Jesus as fulfillment of the promise of God because of direct revelation from God
    - b. The Church was built upon Christ. But the Church was also built upon the Apostles as those who received the doctrines of the church. This was part of their apostolic office
  3. Paul knew his doctrine was revealed to him directly from God  
**Galatians 1:8 NAS** - "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed."  
**2 Timothy 2:2 NAS** - "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."  
**1 Corinthians 14:37 NAS** - "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment."
    4. Peter affirmed the divine writings of Paul as being equal with the O.T. Scriptures  
**2 Peter 3:15 NAU** - "and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, <sup>16</sup> as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."
- B. The church from the beginning recognized the teachings of the apostles as absolute truth which must be believed and obeyed. They did not yet have the completed Scriptures, but they did have the Apostles - Their teachings were the doctrines of the church  
**Acts 2:42 NAU** - "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."
1. The writings of the Apostles were recognized as having great authority. The teaching of the Apostles became the foundation of the church. The church was founded upon solid doctrine.
  2. Doctrine was the basis of the fellowship in the early church, the basis of their unity

- a. It was the duty of every church leader to maintain and promote this unity.  
Paul told Timothy to maintain doctrine as foundation of his ministry – as is the ministry of every pastor  
**1 Timothy 4:16 NAU** - "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." - διδασκαλία – “doctrine”  
**1 Timothy 5:17 NAU** - "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." – διδασκαλία – “doctrine”
  - b. Doctrine should always be the basis of true unity within the church  
One of the seven distinctives of our church is “Sound Doctrine”
- C. Throughout history the church has been strong or weak in direct proportion to the purity of its doctrine.
1. Early in the history of the church councils were convened for the purpose of clarifying doctrine
  2. The great Protestant Reformation began as a movement to restore the church back to Biblical doctrine. The great banner became Sola Scriptura.
  3. Since the Reformation the church has written great confessions of faith to direct their doctrine  
The Helvetic Confession of 1536 & 1566  
The Belgic Confession of 1561  
The Westminster Confession of 1646-1647  
The Savoy Confession of 1658  
The London Baptist Confession of Faith in 1644 & 1689
  4. The Church has also made great use of catechisms to train and instruct believers and to maintain the doctrinal purity of the church.
    - a. In 1529 Luther composed his Small Catechism. He said, “I have brought about such a change that nowadays a girl and boy of fifteen knows more about Christian doctrine than all the theologians of the great universities used to know.”
    - b. John Calvin wrote a catechism in French in 1537.
    - c. In Germany, Zacharias Ursinius and Caspar Olevianus wrote the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563 which has been called the sweetest document of the Reformation.
    - d. In England, the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms came off the press in 1647.
    - e. Baptists have adopted their own catechisms
  5. The people of God throughout history have seen the importance of doctrine.

- D. Doctrine must continue as the bedrock, the sure foundation of the church today  
**John 8:31 NAU** - "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine"
1. One of the greatest problems in the church today is that professing Christians do not know what they believe. They have no Theology. Catechisms have been abandoned. Confessions have been declared legalistic. Historic confessions are being modified.
    - a. Salvation has been reduced to asking Jesus into your heart. Doctrines once held dear by the reformers like Justification by faith alone have lost all meaning
    - b. For many today, one church is about as good as the next. Churches are chosen according to size or location or music or programs – seldom for soundness of doctrine.
    - c. Churches even call themselves reformed without really understanding what it means.
  2. Worst of all, it seems that for many in our generation the whole concept of truth has given way to relativity. We are living in the “Post Modern” age where truth is whatever is true for you. We see it in our schools, in our government, and sadly even in the church.
    - a. Today, the thing of greatest importance is our feelings, our experience. Everything is subjective. Nothing is absolute.
    - b. Church music is often chosen on the basis of how it makes us feel
    - c. Sermons focus not upon doctrine or the demands of the Christian faith but upon what is termed as “felt needs – what we see as our self perceived needs.

**Al Mohler** wrote: “In many churches there is very little reading of the Bible in worship, and sermons are marked by attention to the congregation’s concerns, not by an adequate attention to the biblical text. The exposition of the Bible has given way to the concerns, real or perceived, of the listeners. The authority of the Bible is swallowed up in the imposed authority of congregational concerns.”

“How can so many of today’s churches demonstrate what can only be described as an impatience with the Word of God? The biblical formula is clear: the neglect of the Word can only lead to disaster, disobedience, and death. God rescues his church from error, preserves his church in truth, and propels his church in witness only by his Word.”
  3. Paul warned Timothy that the day would come when many would forsake sound doctrine replacing it with things consistent with man's carnal desires  
**1 Timothy 4:1-2 NAU** - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup> by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron"

**2 Timothy 4:3-4 NAU** - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."

4. Unity of doctrine is so important that Paul commanded the church to depart from any who cause division by teaching contrary doctrines  
**Romans 16:17 NAU** - "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them."  
**Titus 3:9-11 NAU** - "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. <sup>10</sup> Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, <sup>11</sup> knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned."
5. God designed the church to be the steward of His truth upon the earth  
**1 Timothy 3:14-15 NAU** - "I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; <sup>15</sup> but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."

#### Conclusion:

1. A commitment to the Apostles' Doctrine is foundational to the health and growth of any church. This is what Paul meant that the church was founded upon the Apostles doctrine.
2. This must be a priority in our church
  - a. That the preaching ministry focus upon the whole counsel of God
  - b. That Sunday School and Discipleship Training focus upon the Word of God
3. This must be a priority in each of our lives
  - a. All of us must make the study of God's Word a priority
  - b. We must seek to learn from God's Word daily  
 MacArthur – "A believer should count it a wasted day when he does not learn something new from, or is not more deeply enriched, by the truth of God's Word."
  - c. God's Word is our food for growth. Feast upon it and you will grow strong. Neglect it and you will waste away in weakness which leads to sin.