

Part 5: Finding a Foundation in the Goodness of Jesus

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I remember the first time I saw pictures of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, I was captivated by it. Here is a building that was so out of place with everything around it, literally falling over. And it has been falling over since its construction in the second century.

Yet as I grew older and more familiar with seeing the tower, I was no longer shocked that here stands a building slowly falling over. And I grew to simply accept the fact that this is the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and this is what it should look like.

And I imagine that even with my current mindset, if I were to travel to Italy and see the tower myself, I would still find it far more of a novelty than those who live in its shadow. To them, that's the way things have always been.

Yet, we know who designed the Sistine Chapel, the Eiffel Tower, and the Statue of Liberty. But history debates who designed the Tower of Pisa. Why? Because despite the value the tower now has in tourism, the builder knows that the building leans because he failed, and in that is a shame no one volunteers to take.

We are working through a book of the Bible called 1 Peter, and we have reached a portion of his letter where he is reminding Christians of what their foundation is and why it's so important to be aware of it.

Because the truth of our world is that for many of us, it is easy to see the off tilt foundation of our world and find it, just like the Tower of Pisa, to be something normal. We don't see its oddity, instead we see its assumed universal nature. And yet we remain blind to the truth, that faulty foundations almost always fail.

And what Peter wants to do in this text is to zoom out and show the foundation of the world in contrast with the foundation of the gospel and his point is really simple. If the gospel is not your foundation, nothing about following Jesus will make sense to you. But if the gospel is your foundation everything fits in its place.

We are all being built upon something, we want our lives to amount to something of stature. But it's only the gospel which satisfies the needs and desires that lurk in our hearts.

In other words Peter is going to shape the whole of our lives by showing us the surpassing goodness of Jesus. We are going to see this in three ways today. First we are going to see **The goodness of Jesus is what satisfies the Christian**, then we are going to see **The goodness of Jesus is what establishes the church**, and then lastly we see **The goodness of Jesus is what drives the church's mission**.

Let's begin by looking at the first few verses of our text today: **1 Peter 2:1-3**. It's here where we see our first point today: **The goodness of Jesus is what satisfies the Christian**.

Last week we talked about how the Jesus cared for us so effectively that Christians can love one another with a sincere brotherly love. And here Peter transitions into his next point by calling those same Christians who are capable of loving to put away the love killers in their life.

Get rid of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander.

But if you've ever been one who wrestles with malice, deceit, envy, slander and hypocrisy, you've probably realized that "putting these things away," is not as simply as it sounds. It's hard work to fight against the sin in our own heart and if we think that it will always be easy, somewhere we have allowed the foundation of our expectations to be tilted towards the ease of the world.

But this is why Peter's call to put away these sins is secondary to the primary and only imperative in this text: **1 Peter 2:2-3**.

How are we to do the hard work of resisting sin and loving others? How are we to subject ourselves to the necessary growth of a Christian in a world where it seems growth is often hard and complicated?

We are like newborn infants to long for, to desire, to crave, pure, spiritual milk. A few verses ago in 1 Peter 1:23, Peter says that God's word has made us born again, and here he picks up on that metaphor once more and says that as newborns we crave spiritual milk.

I never fully grasped the weight of Peter's metaphor here until I had kids. God was gracious to Sarah and I, and all of our kids took to nursing pretty quick. And they quickly were enamored with it. When they were sleepy, they wanted to nurse. When they woke up, they wanted to nurse. When they were sad, they wanted to nurse. They wanted to nurse until they puke, so that they could nurse again.

Why do most babies love to nurse? Why do they crave milk?

For two reasons. First, biologically they are wired to do so because they need to grow, and milk is what gives them the nutrients needed to grow. Secondly, they are enamored by the goodness of the milk. Sometimes they drink for nourishment, and sometimes the drink for joy.

As Christians we are commanded to have this kind of longing towards our own spiritual milk. What is that milk? Peter is using a bit of word play here which is lost in the English. His word for "spiritual" is "logikon" which sounds like the word "logos" which mean "word". In 1:23, it is the "logos" of God which makes us reborn, and Paul defines that word in verse 25 as the good news, the gospel which was preached to you.

It is in the gospel that we find all the vitamins we need to grow as a Christian, and it is in the gospel we find the immense joy of God for we encounter full force his love for us. When it comes to the Christian life, believers are to look often to the gospel for both nourishment and joy.

There is a weighty challenge and a wonderful promise inside this text. The challenge is this: You will not be able to adequately put off sin, and grow up into salvation unless you taste and see the goodness of Jesus in the gospel.

There's no room for Food Network Christianity when it comes to biblical Christianity. Food Network Christianity relies on other people describing to you the taste of the food, and it's dangerous because it

can make our mouths water, it can even give us the longing for the food. But at the end of the episode you've tasted nothing.

But the gospel is not something to be described, it is something that must be experienced. Tasted, savored, enjoyed.

And here is the promise in this text. The gospel is good. Jesus is good. Remember the language Peter uses in his book: **1 Peter 1:3-5, 8-9, 18-21**.

Have you experienced the goodness of this Jesus? It is so freeing, so captivating and so lovely. And how might you taste it? By you yourself resting from the works of your own and putting your faith and your hope in the completed works of Jesus. And once you've tasted that goodness, you will find yourself wanting to go back again and again.

Christianity is faith in the good news that Jesus did everything required to save sinners and restore us to God, but to actually believe that is to taste the goodness of Jesus. To taste this doesn't mean we always long for it as we should. But to taste this means that we know Jesus is good because we have tasted his goodness already.

Peter understands how essential it is to have tasted the goodness of Jesus in your salvation. Because at this point Peter begins outline the foundation and function of Jesus' church and for the church to be what Jesus has called the church to be, it must rely on the experience it has in the gospel.

Read with me, **1 Peter 2:4-8**.

Peter says that it is imperative that you taste to goodness of Jesus so that you might grow up and here he shows what that looks like. It looks like being built up as the church.

This is our second point today: **The goodness of Jesus is what establishes the church**.

In this passage Peter shows us the ways in which the church is united to Jesus. He does this by moving away from the milk metaphor and instead uses one of construction.

He calls Jesus the cornerstone, or more literally the headstone or keystone. This stone was the stone that set the trajectory for the whole foundation of what was to be built upon it. It was the nature of the headstone which determines if the structure will look like the Empire State Building or the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

And in light of that Peter says two things. First he says that just as Jesus is the living stone, you Christians are being built upon him as living stones. The expectation of your salvation is that it pulls you out of isolation, out of individualism and joins you as part of God's church.

There is no salvation apart from being added to and participating in God's collection of living stones, the church. Belonging to the church doesn't save you, being built on Jesus by faith saves you. But to be built on Jesus is to find yourself participating in the life of Jesus' church. That's one of his assumptions.

But there is a second assumption Peter makes here. That is this: just as Jesus was the living stone, rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves are living stones.

To be built on Jesus is to find yourself with a different foundation than everyone else, and to therefore be rejected at some level by the world.

Look at what Peter says in **1 Peter 2:6-8**.

God, the creator and sustainer of the world, who knit us together in our wombs, who created us in his image and created us for a purpose has chosen to build all of that identity and belonging on this cornerstone: Jesus Christ.

This stone is chosen by God, it is exclusive there is no other stone. And it is also precious, it will not fade, break or crack and is of infinite value. And yet people have chosen to reject Jesus as the means by which we find our identity and belonging.

What does that rejection look like? Disbelief. Idolatry. We reject God's cornerstone because we don't think that God can actually make sense of us. We believe that there is something better than what God provide for us.

This is what we see the Jews doing in the New Testament, they chose to not believe Jesus as God's messiah. But this disbelief has not ended there. And those who refuse to see Jesus as the way in which our greatest needs are solved will always find foolish those who build upon that foundation.

People who refuse to build their lives of Jesus' saving work in the gospel will always find your foundation as an odd sort of competition to theirs. We feel that tension. We feel the war of foundations and we are left to wonder, which foundation works?

As people we don't like being duped, we don't like being shamed. So we want our lives to be based on something which truly, actually brings us the meaning or the contentment we desperately want. Each and every one of us finds a cornerstone and begins to build our whole lives off of it.

If we aren't careful we will see the cornerstones of the world, tilted and leaning as they are, and we will look to those for comfort. Or maybe we might look at those and say, I can certainly find a place to plant my Christian flag somewhere on that building.

But Peter's point is that if this Jesus has saved you, salvation and life as a Christian is not window dressing on the foundation of family, or wealth, or adventure. It is the very foundation of life itself.

This tension isn't new. King David felt this. He saw how different his life looked in contrast to the other kings around him. Look at how he describes this: **Psalms 73:3-5**.

David saw kings who seemed to make it very well without God. He saw people fat and happy who cared more about their own glory than God's glory. He saw people who seemed satisfied with the pleasures of the world and he wondered if he missed the boat.

Why is it that we wrestle to set apart time as the church to love others and worship God? Why is it that we wrestle to see our primary end as being built up to offer praises to God through Jesus? Because we see the foundations of Pisa and we think them to be normal.

We need a vision correction. Look at what David says, **Psalms 73:16-18**.

What David needed to see, what we need to see, is that there is only one foundation to bank your life on, and that is the foundation of the church, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Look again at the language of security and peace Peter gives: **1 Peter 2:5-8**.

Do you see that? Jesus, was chosen and precious, God chose to establish Jesus as this chosen and precious cornerstone. And for those who believe in Jesus, that precious value, that chosen stone, that honor is yours and you will not be shamed. All the value of security and a foundation which will last is yours in Jesus Christ.

And for those who disbelieve, they will be the ones put to shame.

Let's face it. Is there anything more embarrassing than tripping? Don't you know the gut churning sensation of when you trip in a crowd? The fear not only that you might yourself get hurt, but the fear that everyone else will see your folly?

This is what awaits those who refuse to see Jesus as the sure and steady cornerstone for all of life. Only Jesus and his gospel which deals with our sin provides a foundation which endures. Because it's only Jesus who actually gives us what we lack: restoration with God.

Do you understand that this is what the Bible paints as our biggest need, the primary lens through which we should view everything? And if you don't see it, then you will always see the world's foundation as normal and the call of the gospel as foreign.

But the church refuses to be duped, even if it means we are called fools by the world's standards. Our identity is not in our acceptance by the world, for the world cannot justify us. Our identity is in our acceptance by God, and it's Christ as our foundation which gives us that and far more.

I love how Peter defines the Christian life in verse four: "As you come to him." That's the life of the church isn't it? The life of the church is a life of coming to Jesus. When Peter says this, he doesn't envision us as earning our salvation by coming to Jesus. Jesus earned our salvation by dying for our sins and living in perfect obedience with God.

Jesus earned our salvation by being accepted himself by God for us.

But we come to Jesus as a bride walks down the aisle. In the gospel, in our faith, Jesus has put a wedding ring on our hearts but it's only at the altar that we become truly married. And so the church learns to walk down that long aisle of the world but we do so as we together stare into the value of the groom who awaits us.

We know that however long that aisle may seem, it's worth it. However foolish it might look, we are smitten with his beauty. And so we come to him because we have tasted that he is good.

It is on this foundation that we build the whole of our lives. This is Peter's final point today: **The goodness of Jesus drives the mission of the church**. Read with me **1 Peter 2:9-10**.

Because we have tasted the goodness of Jesus we have learned to handle the tension of being built on a foundation that looks different than our world. It is to be built up on the precious and enduring cornerstone, the only cornerstone which will not fail.

To be built upon Jesus Christ is to find a new identity. It is not to think of the world as we used to think of it. We are now a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.

You see all the other foundations of this world seek to be built up on something so that they might be seen as something. But it's only the gospel of Jesus Christ that starts with the reality that you are already loved and accepted. You are already possessed and precious to God because of what Jesus has done for you on the cross!

And because of that the church participates by proclaiming to the watching world, the beauty of their identity in Jesus.

Do you see how the foundation of the goodness of Jesus changes everything in our life? If we have tasted the goodness of Jesus in the gospel, we will long for more gospel change because we see it as wonderfully satisfying.

If we see the precious value of Jesus as the cornerstone rejected by men, but accepted by God, we will realize that even though the world might find us odd, we don't need to fear failing foundations. We will not be disappointed or put to shame.

And if we see the precious value of Jesus Christ and his immense love poured out for us we proclaim the wonderful work of this God for all the world to see.

Now, admittedly, most ideologies that start with the notion of "a chosen race." Don't end up in good places. Typically it is wrought with arrogance and exclusivity.

But this is not true of this chosen race. Why? Look back again at what Peter says: **1 Peter 2:9-10.**

What makes this foundation so special? The truth that Christians were not special. We were once in darkness, we were once those who like this world stumbled over Jesus. We were once not a people, but in Jesus we have received mercy!

We make much of Jesus because anyone can get in on this. If Jesus saved me by grace, he can save you by grace too!

Evangelism is not only part of the church's mission, it is part of the church's identity. We were saved because we were called out of a darkness and into God's marvelous light. We used to think like the world and live like the world. But like the world our sin kept us from seeing the beauty of God and the danger of sin, but in a moment of mercy, we heard the word of the gospel and we tasted his goodness.

Why are you saved? Because Jesus is good. Why will you endure? Because Jesus as a foundation is precious and secure. And why do we do make costly sacrifices of praise as the church? Because Jesus' goodness is for the world to see.

So let us apply this text in the way Peter wants us to. Let us find assurance, endurance and excitement by longing for the pure milk of the gospel.