

View

The Firm Foundation of God

by Homer Hailey

In every age the church has had some things in common with the church of preceding ages. There always have been things to discourage the strongest, and test the most steadfast. There have been false brethren within, along with bickerings and strife; false teachers without, historical epochs which have threatened the very life of Christianity, and waves of indifference to spiritual things. Some of these things Paul mentions as he writes to Timothy, encouraging him to steadfast continuance in his work in the Lord; making special mention of "profane babblings," "striving about words to no profit," and false teaching on the resurrection.

But along with these things, each age has had that which encourages, that to which men could lay hold with no fear of it giving way, or being shaken. In the very midst of these things discouraging in their nature, the apostle says, "How be it the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." (2 Tim. 2:19)

This age is little different from others that have come and gone. To be sure the specific details are different, but so far as problems are concerned, and changes taking places with regard to the preceding generation or age, it is no different. Today nations are passing, old ideals are changing, the security of those things in which men have been wont to trust is being questioned, and a new wave of infidelity is dashing itself out against the "Rock of Ages," "foaming out" its "own shame." But these things have happened before. They were happening in Paul's day, when he wrote as he did to Timothy. Howbeit, in the midst of all these, "The firm foundation of God" stood, and stands, a sure foundation upon which one can build, and feel secure.

In the midst of the vast uncertainty of today, and the near panicky attitude that some take, begetting a pessimism that is even being felt in the church at various places, there are three things set forth by Paul in 2 Tim 2 that need to be emphasized by Christians, especially preachers and teachers, everywhere: 1) The definite principle of the character of God as set forth by Paul in verses 11-13; 2) The fact that the "firm foundation of God stands," though all else may be perishing; 3) The Lord knoweth them that are His," and that His demand of them that are His, is that they "depart from unrighteousness."

When the apostle said, "If we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself," he simply stated a definite principle in the Character of God. God cannot act contrary to His nature, and His nature is definitely set forth in the revelation of Himself in the Bible.

It matters not how dark the hour, how hopeless the immediate prospects, how strong the pressure brought to bear; man is still without excuse for his sin,

Ecc 1:9 The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

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and should he deny God even under these circumstances, God cannot but be faithful to Himself, "he also will deny us."

The emphatic stressing of this principle in the Character of God will tend to build determination in the hearts of those honestly seeking heaven. It will likewise eliminate the necessity of so much "re-consecrating," "rededication," "restoration" of members in the meetings sometimes held. There are those who are "overtaken in a trespass," these are to be restored, certainly. There are those who "err from the truth," these must be converted, James urges it. But much of the half-hearted attitude that serves God "a little bit," and the devil "a right smart," oftentimes results from a lack of understanding of the character of God, and the principle that He "cannot deny himself." Once the principle is fully appreciated, greater care in conduct will be exercised.

But in the midst of ungodliness, troubles, turning away from God, and the denying of Him by those who should be faithful, the "firm foundation of God standeth." Here we have something solid upon which to build, and to which to hold, in the midst of any storm, internal or external.

God promised that in Zion He should lay for a foundation, a "tried stone" (Isa. 28:16), which Peter affirms to have been the Christ, (1 Peter 2:6). Christ built His church upon this very foundation, (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor 3:11); and every individual built into that structure, is builded upon it (Eph. 2:19-22). While old institutions were crumbling, and passing away, the apostle said of the Hebrews in his day, that they were "receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken." (Heb.12:28). Here we have something stable and certain in any time of uncertainty, doubt, or fear.

What is the point in all this? Simply this: that when those in the church fully appreciate the fact that the only things today which cannot be shaken are the things that pertain to the church, to the kingdom of God, then the church will become more precious to them. When it is appreciated that "the firm foundation of God standeth," regardless of all things else, the laying up of treasures in heaven will have greater prominence in the lives of its members, and the cares of riches and temporal things here, less.

But the "seal" of this assurance should not be overlooked. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Sometimes we become impatient, we feel that the Lord has forgotten us, and like Elijah of old, "I alone am left." But the Lord knows them that are His. It is He who calls them, through the gospel; and it is He who justifies. He adds to the church, cares for His own, and "knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

"One need not worry about the Lord forgetting him, for He will keep His part of the covenant. He will "in no wise fail thee, neither in any wise forsake thee." "He knoweth them that take refuge in him."

There is another side of the seal also, "Let every one that

nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." Although they never won a discussion on the subject, the Baptists used to debate that an individual once saved could not be lost. However, the doctrine seemed so attractive to the worldly minded, that some, while not actually believing it, yet live in the church as though it were so. They claim to trust God, while at the same time they depart not from unrighteousness. But the apostle said, "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself." Does Paul mean God will be faithful to save even though the individual does not continue faithful? Certainly not! But that God is faithful, "if we deny him, he also will deny us." The demand that those who know God depart from unrighteousness must be stressed today.

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How Does The Holy Spirit Lead?

by Marshall Patton

Obviously, the Holy Spirit does lead certain ones. "Sons of God" are thus led. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Rom.8:14). Jesus was "led up of the Spirit" into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (Matt. 4:1). Paul and his companions were being led on their journey by the Holy Spirit when they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, "having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia," and when "they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not" (Acts 16:6-7). The Holy Spirit led Peter to the house of Cornelius, and Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to the eunuch.



No one denies the fact that the Holy Spirit leads or guides. Many, however, differ on the matter of how he leads. Some believe and teach that the Holy Spirit acts miraculously in leading to salvation and sanctification, without means or instrumentality. These fail to recognize a difference in ordinary and miraculous manifestations. They want to make every action of the Spirit toward the sinner or saint miraculous. Some who claim to be Christians feel that the Holy Spirit dwells in them personally and leads them to speak in tongues, heal, make utterances (preach) as the Spirit gives it

to them, and even directs them in various experiences in life. One told of the Holy Spirit leading him to a parking space when he sorely needed one. Some seem to feel that the Holy Spirit in them serves like a radar beep leading, guiding, and warning always. We need to look to the Bible and see what it reveals about the leading of Deity.

Each member of the Godhead is said to lead just as each is said to dwell in us. Learning how Deity leads and dwells in us should clear up the confusion in the minds of many about the "how."

Some speak of the dispensations of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. They are referring to the times when God spoke directly with man or led by direct contact, when Christ was here on earth, and after Christ ascended and sent the Holy Spirit. Looking at how God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit led during these periods should help answer the question of this article.

God led Noah to build an ark wherein he and his family were saved from the flood (Heb. 11:7). The Genesis account tells us that God "said unto Noah . . . make thee an ark of gopher wood . . . and this is the fashion which thou shalt make it" (Gen. 6:13-16). "And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him" (7:5). How did God lead Noah to build the ark? He spoke to him in a language Noah understood, giving detailed instructions, and Noah followed (did) all that God commanded.

God led Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. How? Abraham received instructions from God and his faith resulted in obedience (Heb. 11:8-9; Rom. 10:17; Gen. 12:1-4). God led Abraham by speaking to him and Abraham obeyed.

God led Israel out of Egyptian bondage, and through the wilderness (Deut.8:14-15; 29:4-5). In doing this he used the instrumentality of Moses and Aaron. "Thou ledest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Psa.77:20). He confirmed his leadership and his appointed agents by many miracles (plagues, parting waters, pillar of cloud and fire, etc.). God led them by choosing and equipping Moses who spoke God's will to the people and they obeyed.

Christ made disciples by teaching instruction. He commanded and they obeyed (Jn. 1:43). No mysterious or supernatural power possessed the individuals to make them follow Jesus. Miraculous proof that Jesus was from God, and was God, was given to induce faith in the individual to accept the instruction Jesus gave, and to follow him. People became followers of Christ by being taught - hearing, learning, and coming (Jn. 6:44-45). Jesus led people by speaking truth to them (taught in a way that they could understand) and they followed him. This is the same way that God led Abraham and Israel in their day.

The Spirit's Leading

We have already pointed out that the Holy Spirit led Jesus

into the wilderness to be tempted by divine instruction and led Paul in his journeys by divine instruction. The word of God teaches that the Holy Spirit leads sons of God today (Rom. 8:14). Does he do it differently from other examples of the leading of Deity? A careful study of Scripture shows that the Holy Spirit, an intelligent speaking person, also speaks to people and they hear and obey.

There were different manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-7). The apostles were promised baptism of the Holy Spirit for revelation and confirmation of the word of truth (Acts 1:5; Jn.14:26; 16:13-15; 1 Cor.2:12-13; Mk. 16:20). There were "gifts of the Spirit" (miraculous powers) used in revealing and confirming truth (1 Cor. 12:1-11,28) that were bestowed on certain ones by the laying on of an apostle's hands (Acts 8:17-18; 19:6). These gifts of the Spirit were temporary and would vanish away when maturity (complete, finished revelation and confirmation of truth) was reached (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

The Holy Spirit led three thousand souls to be saved on Pentecost. How? The Holy Spirit came to the apostles with miraculous demonstrations, giving proof that these men were truly messengers of God. Peter spoke "as the Holy Spirit gave utterance." Many were convicted by the truth spoken and asked, "What shall we do?" The Holy Spirit, speaking through Peter, said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2). Thus about three thousand were led by the Holy Spirit to salvation, when they heard, believed and did just what the Holy Spirit said for them to do.

This is exactly how the Holy Spirit leads Christians today. Redeemed people need the leading of the Spirit in living the Christian life as much as they did in coming to Christ. In leading, guiding and edifying the Christian, the Spirit uses the instrumentality of truth - the revealed, confirmed word of truth. The word of God is said to be the "sword (instrument) of the Spirit" (Eph.6:17).

The Holy Spirit "speaks expressly" (1 Tim. 4:1-2) giving instruction, warnings, exhortations through the New Testament. The Holy Spirit has never laid aside the agency of truth, substituting fleshly feelings, emotions, or imaginations, in the guidance of Christians. Sons of God are led by the Spirit of God as they hear the Spirit revealed message of truth, believe and obey it. This is the way that Christians walk after the Spirit, "mind the things of the Spirit," are in the Spirit, "live in the Spirit," and are "led by the Spirit of God as they hear the Spirit revealed message of truth, believe and obey it. This is the way that Christians walk after the Spirit, "mind the things of the Spirit," are in the Spirit, "live in the Spirit," and are "led by the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1,4,5,9,13,14).

Deity has always led by the agent/agency of revealed, confirmed truth (God's will) being made known to man, coupled with man's faith and obedience. The leading of Deity never overrides the will (free moral agency) of man, so that he cannot choose to do or not do the will of God.