

Love Series IV

**BUILD
ON THE
LOVE
FOUND-
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BUILD ON THE LOVE FOUNDATION

March 6, 2016

Sermon in a sentence: It is of the highest importance that we build our lives upon the foundation of God's love.

Congregational reading: Mark 12:28-31

Scriptures: Mark 12:28-31; Matt. 7:1-5,12 (*12); John 13:34-35; Matt. 18:1-35 (*15-17); (2 Pet. 1:12-15)

Mark 12:28-31 NKJV Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" 29 Jesus answered him, "**The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.**"



Back in 1173, the good folks of Pisa, Italy were doing quite well economically and militarily and decided to show off a little bit. Being very religiously inclined, they built the Campo Dei Miracoli (Field of Miracles), which comprised a cathedral, a baptistery, a bell tower and a cemetery. Five years into the construction of the tower as they began to build the third floor, they realized they had a big problem. They had picked a bad spot for it, having laid its foundation stones on soft earth that was a combination of clay, sand and seashells. As they built, the foundation began to shift. They stopped construction for over 100 years, by which time the ground firmed up enough for them to continue building their crooked tower. Over time they tried a number of strategies to straighten the tower – all to no avail. At completion, it was 5.5° off-centre, and through a concerted effort in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, engineers have been able to straighten it to approximately 4° off-centre. Still, it's not even close to what it should be, due to its bad foundation.

Today, people come from all around the world to look at it, smile, shake their heads and ask: "What were they thinking?"

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Building a strong, lasting structure demands a solid foundation. Jesus said (speaking of Himself):

Matt. 16:18 NKJV ... on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Jesus Christ Himself is the rock, the unmovable substratum upon which the foundation of the church is built. Then the apostle Paul expands our understanding, speaking of the composition of the foundation that is built upon the rock:

Eph. 2:19-22 NKJV 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 fitted 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.

So we find that Jesus Himself is the key element, the cornerstone of the foundation.

As we do a little calculus, we have previously learned that **Jesus is God, and God is love. Therefore, since He is the cornerstone of the church's foundation, its cornerstone is love. Therefore, as part of the church of Jesus Christ, the foundation of my Christian life must be love!**

Now I ask myself the question: “Am I in the church (this earthly body of Christ)? If so, everything I say and do must be based upon the foundation of love. If this is not the case, I am building my life on the wrong foundation.”

As we have established, Jesus is the substratum *and* the cornerstone of the church’s foundation. He is also the “head” into which we build and grow.

Eph. 4:15-16 NKJV ... but, speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

We must grow personally, and edify the body of Christ corporately - in love.

1John 4:7-21 ESV Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation [*i.e. the atoning sacrifice*] for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God

abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. **God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.** ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because **as he is so also are we in this world.** ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ **And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.**

Now let us listen to the teaching of our Lord Jesus as He demonstrates the practical outworking of love in our interactions with each other:

Matt. 7:1-5,12 NKJV "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. ³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye"; and look, a plank is in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

And let us not forget His 'Last Supper' instruction to His disciples:

John 13:34-35 NKJV A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Here is another key example of how the Lord expects love to be demonstrated in our relationships:

Matt. 18:15-17 NKJV “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *“by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”* ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

If this is not how we are living and acting, then we are Christians in name only, without substance or strength. We may look strong on the outside, but be totally rotted or hollowed out on the inside.



Termites did a really artistic job in the middle of this tree trunk. It looked perfectly normal on the outside, but it was totally devastated on the inside. When the logger cut it down, thinking he would have some good lumber to work with, this is what he found.



Sometimes the termites are not quite so artistic.

If a little adversity comes against a tree like this, it has absolutely no strength to stand. (But it sure looks good on the outside.)

Thank God, our situation is not irreversible; there is hope!

We can ask ourselves a few simple questions to see if we have been infested by parasites that are rapidly eating through our love foundation.

- **Am I treating all of my brothers and sisters the way in which *I* wish to be treated?**
- **Do I go directly to a brother or sister in private if I have a dispute with them, or do I shame them publicly?**
- **Do I ever say things like: “I can’t worship in the same church as Sister so and so?” Or, “I can’t sit beside Brother so and so.”**

- Do I ever speak to others against the leaders of our church without first speaking to them?
- Do I use the phrase “they should” vs. “we should” or “I should” when speaking about correcting issues in our church?
- Do I ever feel superior to a brother or sister in our church?
- Is there anyone in our church I cannot go and speak to because I can’t stand him or her?
- Do I work willingly and harmoniously with my leaders, or do I only get involved if I am the leader?
- Do I ever say: “I won’t help him because he doesn’t deserve it? Look at what he did to me.”
- Can I be trusted? Do I ever reveal secrets that were told to me in confidence?
- Am I unable to sincerely apologize when I know I have wronged a brother or sister? (A sincere apology is only effective when the *recipient* deems it to be sincere.)
- Do I ever justify sin to myself rather than confessing it to my brother or sister?

There are many similar questions we can ask ourselves to get a good personal assessment of where we stand in the Love department.

The corrective measures are the same for all of our love failings: repentance and turning away from our sins; confession to God and the ones we have wronged; and asking for forgiveness from God and the ones we have wronged.

It is of the highest importance that we build our lives upon the foundation of God’s love.

Appendix:



This mighty oak in Charleston, SC appears to be approximately 200 years old. The experts are trying hard to save it since they found that termites have begun their deadly work, and have eaten their way through a good portion of the trunk's interior. "Silently and secretly, termites do more damage to American homes every year than fire, floods and all other natural disasters combined." (Approx. \$5 Billion.)¹

¹ <http://www.palmettoexterminators.net/termites-barking-up-the-wrong-tree/>, accessed March 2, 2016.