

Calling Upon the Lord

*Out of a Pure
Heart*

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2 Timothy 2:19-20

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Forward

It is hoped that the ministry in this paper may prove to be of much help to each reader as to their collective associations in these last days. And that we may be enabled not only to be true to “The Truth Of The Gospel” but also to “The Truth Of The Church” and its order and associations. We now commit its republication to Him Who alone can bless.

It has often been noticed that the First Epistle to Timothy instructs the man of God as to the conduct that becomes him as belonging to the house of God; the second epistle, on the other hand, is instruction that is to govern him in respect to the confusion and disorder in the house of God that have resulted from not heeding the apostles exhortation. This Second Epistle to Timothy has special importance in connection with the times in which we live. Let us consider a few thoughts as to this epistle.

First, I think we need to get a clearer understanding of what the apostle means when he says, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon" (1 Cor. 3:10). Was his thought that he, in the first century of the Christian era, had laid the foundation; that the second-century builders would add a story to it; and that in each succeeding century another story would be built, until now we are building the twentieth-century story? If such has been our conception, we have wholly missed his idea, or rather, the idea of the Spirit in him. What the apostle really expressed is this: "I have given form to the Church fundamentally. I have, by the truth given me to administer, formed the Church in its internal character and its external order. I have ordained its government and discipline; I have appointed

*This graphic word—rarely used today—means, "an abnormal or disfiguring outgrowth or addition." Ed.

its internal arrangements. The form and character which I have given to it by the entire range of the truth, of which I have been made minister, abides. No man can lay a different foundation. Others are to carry it on in the form I have given it. They are not to modify either its internal character or external order. They are not to make any change in any of its arrangements. To do this is to add excrescences* to it. I have formed it to be 'the epistle of Christ' (2 Cor. 3:3). Any addition to my foundation_to that character and form I have given to the Church_will be a display of man, not of Christ. It will be work that will be in vain, for only what is of Christ will abide. Let those, then, who are charged with the responsibility of carrying on my foundation take heed how they build in connection with it." This is plainly the apostle's meaning.

In this understanding of the statement, "I have laid the foundation," I affirm that the truth of God with respect to the Church abides; and when we speak of "ruins," we are not to be understood as meaning that the Church, either in its internal character or external order, has passed away. What we mean is this: the not minding the exhortation to take heed to build in connection with the apostle's foundation has brought in results which make it difficult to recognize the Church amid all the excrescences that have been built onto it. Paul's ecclesiastical system abides; it has not broken down. Additions have been built onto it. These additions have made confusion. They are disorder. This disorder is what we mean when we speak of "ruins."

We hear it said sometimes that the one body of Christ is a fact subsisting all the time, no matter what human confusion there may be as to it. So, too, it is said that the house of God as built by the Spirit is ever a subsisting fact, in spite of the human confusion. Both statements are true, but it is not all the truth. It is equally true, and necessary to affirm, that the Church's external order—that order given to it by the apostle under divine guidance and sanction—is ever a subsisting fact. Its divine government and discipline are ever a subsisting fact. This is true even though it is not always recognized.

Let us now turn to 2 Timothy 2:19-22. In this epistle we find the wisdom of the Spirit for our guidance in circumstances which are the result of failure in building in connection with Paul's foundation. Innumerable excrescences have been built onto it. There is difficulty in recognizing the original pattern and form; yet we are told that the foundation of God is "firm," and "stands." The house of God abides, is a subsisting fact. It exists, and can have no other internal character and external form than God gave to it at the beginning. Its government—its discipline—abides. All the human additions to it have not altered this, although the difficulty of recognizing it is great.

What a comfort to be assured that the foundation of God is firm, and that the Lord knows His own, and sees them not only as in Christ, but in the collective relationship He has given to them as His Church. Now we must

ask, does that fact make any demands upon us? If it does, what are they? The apostle must tell us. He says, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." If the foundation of God remains, its claim on us is that we should be still carrying it on. But to do this we must depart from iniquity. We must turn away from all the human excrescences that have been added to the original foundation. We must "cease to do evil" and "learn to do well." Let us seek to realize what is here pressed upon us. If apostolic truth assures us of the faithfulness of the Lord, it demands faithfulness from us. Are we, then, prepared to be faithful to the truth God gave at the beginning? Are we ready to carry out that truth practically? Let us own it as our responsibility. May God give us the purpose of heart to honestly respond to the claims the truth has upon us.

But suppose now we start to put into practice the truth of God as it was revealed at the first. We are resolved to own the Church in its internal character and external order as this was delivered to the saints by the apostle. We have formed the purpose to maintain the government and discipline the apostle ordained for the Church. Well, will we find any peculiar difficulties—difficulties special to the circumstances in which we are? We surely will. Alas, how much has come in since apostolic times! Not only have unregenerate men been recognized as belonging to Paul's foundation, not only has worldliness been allowed, but clerisy, legality, formalism, ecclesiasticism, individualism, sectarianism, and a host of similar

things. In the great house—the house as man has built it—there is a great mixture: The saved and the unsaved are associated together; scripture doctrines and the doctrines of men commingle. There are in it, both in persons and things, vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor. “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” demands of me to separate myself from things as well as persons. It is not alone from unsaved persons I must separate, but also from sectarianism, formalism, ecclesiasticism, individualism, and the like, that are not of the Spirit of God, are not a part of Paul’s foundation.

Suppose, then, I start in to separate myself from clerisy; shall I find any beside unregenerate persons identified with it? Are there any real saints connected with it? Alas, how many! But must I separate myself from them? Here is a difficulty peculiar to the circumstances in which we are. Here is an excrescence that has been added onto Paul’s foundation, and there are not only unsaved persons but real saints involved in it. It has been asked, Where is there any scripture for separation from saints? There is no scripture for separation from saints simply as saints; but if saints are involved in evils, separation from these evils involves separation from them. If this is not so, then one’s hands are hopelessly tied to what is evil, to iniquity; and here is a scripture, which the Spirit of God has given us for our guidance, that is impossible for us to obey. If then there are iniquities that saints are linked with, I must separate from them if I obey, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

But we are told that the word “purge” in the expression, “If a man therefore purge himself from these,” and in the one other case of its use elsewhere in this form (1 Cor. 5:7), is a divine call to self-judgment, not to judge others. An assertion is not proof. All the facts are against this assertion. In 1 Cor. 5:7 the word is in the plural, not singular. Then too, the apostle is not addressing saints as individuals, but he is writing to a company. He is addressing them in then-collective capacity. Again, the word “lump” refers to the company, not the individual. The leaven is to be purged out of the company. The lump, looked at according to what it has been divinely constituted, is holy; therefore it is responsible to see to it that its practical fellowship be holy. The company, divinely constituted holy, in order to preserve itself in its holy character, must not allow unholy ways in those who form the company. Hence they are told to purge out the leaven, to put away the wicked person from among themselves. However necessary self-judgment is, that is not putting away from among ourselves the wicked person.

Let us look now at the use of the term “purge” in 2 Tim. 2:19-22. It is clear that the thought of association is in the apostle’s mind. Vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor are associated together in the great house; and this is true whether we speak of persons or things, as we have already seen. Now he says, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” We are gravely told that we must not make iniquity mean the children of God. Who does? Who ever did? Is it denied that any

children of God are involved in iniquity? If they are, how can I depart from iniquity in such cases unless I purge myself from them? Are they then vessels to dishonor? According to what they have been divinely constituted, they are vessels to honor, but according to their practice they are vessels to dishonor. Their participation in iniquity makes them practically vessels to dishonor. Obedience to “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” requires that we should purge ourselves from them. And only so is it possible to preserve the foundation, laid by the apostle, from human excrescences.

If now I have submitted to “depart from iniquity,” if I have purged myself from the vessels to dishonor, have I met my full responsibility? Is my path now to be an individual one? No. Individualism is a vessel to dishonor. If I am to be a vessel serviceable to the Master, I must separate from this also, I must look for and find those who “call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” I must return to apostolic associations. I must assemble with those who hold to and practice apostolic truth.

But two questions are asked us. First, Are only separated brethren used in ministry? The question is thought to be unanswerable, but the answer to it is simple. Those brethren who have separated themselves from all false systems of teaching on justification, and who teach only the doctrine of Scripture on that subject, are serviceable to the Master in ministry as regards that doctrine; but if they have not separated themselves from all false systems

of teaching on church government and discipline, they cannot be serviceable to the Master in ministry on this subject. Do we not want to be serviceable to the Master in ministry on every truth? Ought we not to be ready to minister the whole truth—all that God has revealed? To be at the Master's disposal in this way, we need to get back to the foundation laid in apostolic times. We need to free ourselves from all the human excrescences that have been added to it.

Again, it has been asked, "Do not all saints equally call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart?" As is well known, the word is "unmixed," or, "unadulterated." We should read then, "unmixed," or, "undivided" heart. How many hearts are divided between Christianity and some ecclesiastical system! how many between Scripture and theology! No, it is not true that all saints equally call on the Lord out of a pure heart. The human additions to the apostle's foundation have a large place in the hearts of many. It is this that constitutes them in practice "vessels to dishonor." It is this that makes it necessary to separate from them, if we desire to own and practice only apostolic truth.

May God teach us to value His truth. May He work in our hearts the sense of the claims which the truth He has given us has upon our obedience. May it displace in our hearts every other object, every other interest, so that we shall indeed call upon the Lord with single, undivided hearts!

