

FOUNDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE: PART I THE BOOK OF ACTS SERIES

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TEXT: Acts 2:37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” **38** Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” **40** And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” **41** So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. **42** They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...

46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, **47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

INTRO: As your pastor, I love you very much. I want each one of you to be successful in life. I want all of you to finish well. I love what Paul said near the end of his life, in his second imprisonment in Rome, right before the Roman Emperor Nero would execute him through beheading: **2 Timothy 4:7** **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.** Paul is saying that by God’s grace he is finishing well. I want all of you to finish well. *Loving and obeying Jesus* until the very end of our lives.

How do you finish well? It begins with how you start. You need a good foundation. Throughout Scripture, God uses the metaphor that the Church is like a building. And our foundation is Jesus. Ephesians 2:20 says that He is our cornerstone that holds everything together. **Ephesians 2:20** **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together**

into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. In Hebrews 6:1, it talks about laying a proper foundation in our Christian life. The writer talks about baptisms, repentance, faith, etc.

I believe that Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he was preaching the Gospel and the crowd cried out, “What must we do to be saved?” He shares the foundational truths of how to be a successful follower of Jesus. In our text, I want to share eight foundational truths to help you to have a successful Christian life and to finish well. This message is so important that I want to take two weeks to cover these eight points. I will cover the first three this Sunday and finish the rest of the points next Sunday.

I. TRUE REPENTANCE

A. Acts 2:38a “Repent, and each of you...”

1. Repentance appears 70 times in the New Testament. It means to change directions. You were going your own way—turn and follow God.
2. John the Baptist began his ministry by preaching repentance, and Jesus began the same way.

B. I emphasize *true* repentance because there is a lot of counterfeit repentance in our society.

1. Repentance is not feeling sorry for your sins (e.g. the rich young ruler).
2. Repentance is not being convicted of your sins like Governor Felix (Acts 24:25) and King Agrippa (Acts 26:28).
3. It is not just confessing your sins. People confess to priests and counselors every day but do not go through the inner transformation.

C. Repenting is hating, confessing, and forsaking your sins.

1. The deeper the repentance, the deeper and stronger the foundation for your walk with Jesus.
2. When you humble yourself by acknowledging your sins, you position your heart to receive the grace that will save you.
3. **God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5)**
4. Jesus said about Mary: **Luke 7:47 “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”**
5. You may think you are a good person, but compared to God’s standard, we all “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Paul had a true perspective that he saw himself as a chief of sinners.

6. **1 Timothy 1:15** It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*. **16** Yet for this reason I found mercy...
7. **Luke 18:9** And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and viewed others with contempt: **10** “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ **13** But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ **14** I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

II. BE BAPTIZED IN WATER

- A. **Acts 2:38b** “be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...” This is in the imperative, a command, because Jesus commanded us to baptize new converts in the Great Commission.
 1. **Matthew 28:18-20** “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...”
 2. Jesus set an example for us to follow and commanded John to baptize Him (Matthew 3:13-17).
- B. **Water Baptism is an outward demonstration of the inner commitment that you have made and of the inner transformation that takes place in conversion.**
 1. **Romans 6:1** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? **2** May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, **6** knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; **7** for he who has died is freed from sin.
 2. The picture of being buried with Christ and identifying with Jesus in the new resurrected life can’t be captured by baptism through sprinkling.

3. The word *baptize* connotes a picture of a sunken ship totally immersed with water.
4. We are not dogmatic about this because baptism doesn't save you. You are saved by grace through faith. E.g. The thief on the cross. But it is the foundation and the pathway of walking victoriously over sin.
5. That is why at Harvest Rock Church and our HIM churches we baptize through immersion. I don't think that God gave us a building surrounded by water as a coincidence. We are going to need a lot of water when the great harvest comes in! But I want to give you another metaphor of baptism: being clothed with Christ. The early church, depending on the situation, would not take off their clothing before going into the water, because they were modest, and they would put on new dry clothes after being baptized. So, too, Paul talks about being clothed in Christ.

C. Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

1. **Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh regarding *its* lusts.**
2. **Ephesians 4:24 and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.**
3. **Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.**
4. C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* talks about being clothed with Christ. He uses the illustration when children dress up in their parents' clothes and act like adults, that this is an important part of the maturing process. So, too, if we pretend that we are like Jesus, we will find that we are more like Him.
5. Here is what I want you to visualize each time you wake up and put on your clothes for the day. Pretend you are putting on Christ and you are like Christ for the day. That you will walk in love. That you will heal the sick just like Jesus would do. See what happens. I do this all the time. I put on Christ, and I find myself acting and behaving like Jesus.

III. BE BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. Acts 2:38c "you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit..."

B. Baptism in the Holy Spirit – you are filled inwardly, but the Spirit also comes upon you.

1. This can happen at salvation, like Cornelius in Acts 10. But most often this encounter happens after salvation. The disciples were saved after

encountering the resurrected Jesus in John 20:21-22, but they still had to wait until they were empowered by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1.

2. **John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”**
3. In Acts 8, Philip goes to Samaria and revival breaks out. People are healed, saved, and baptized in water, but they had not received the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. **Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**
5. This has brought about the greatest change in my life. My testimony of being baptized in the Holy Spirit on Palm Sunday 1974.

C. BE CONTINUALLY FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. **Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.**
2. Dissipation comes from the word *disappear*. When we get drunk, our spirit man shrinks. Instead, God wants us to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. The word *filled* is in the continuous present tense.
3. The monastic orders were created to starve the flesh, but without the Spirit, it was a massive legalistic order. Salvation by works.
4. **Luke 11:13 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”**

D. A WORD ABOUT PRAYING IN TONGUES

1. **Mark 16:15 And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. 17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues...”**
2. **Romans 8:26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.**
3. **1 Corinthians 14:4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.**

FOUNDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE: PART II

IV. PERSONAL HOLINESS

- A. Acts 2:40 “Be saved from this perverse generation.”
- B. “Bad friends corrupt good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33). A companion of fools suffers harm (Proverbs 13:20). Come out and be separated.

V. READING AND STUDYING THE BIBLE

- A. Acts 2:42a They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching...
- B. 1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word...

VI. FELLOWSHIP – LIFE GROUPS

- A. “fellowship, to the breaking of bread...” The word fellowship is *koinonia* in the Greek, and it means social participation, community, a life in common.
- B. Fellowship starts with church membership. “There were added 3,000 souls.” The Jewish people knew about covenant. Covenant with God and covenant with the people of God. Family is founded on the marriage covenant. So, too, is the family of God.
- C. God’s family according to the words of Jesus: Matthew 12:48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.” He uses strong language to emphasize this point.
- D. Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”
 - 1. This is so misunderstood. Jesus of course wants us to love, honor, and obey our parents. What He is saying is that your love for Jesus must be so great that it is like hatred toward your family in comparison.

VII. PERSONAL AND CORPORATE PRAYER: “devoted to the prayers”

- A. “My house will be a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17)

VIII. EVANGELISM AND SERVICE

A. Acts 2:46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.