

"The Foundation"
Pastor Wally Contreras
February 2, 2020

"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." (Matthew 16:13-21)

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Pastor Wally said that Peter's confession is "the point where everything changes". The true identity of Jesus is openly declared by Peter and "[f]rom that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Matthew 16:21). Dr. R.C. Sproul wrote in his commentary: "The church stands strong and unconquerable as long as it remains committed to its confession that Jesus is the Christ. . . . A loss of confidence as to the identity of Jesus does not disrupt merely the external trappings of the church; it disrupts the church's foundation. We who confess the name of Christ must remain firm in our conviction that He is God in the flesh." What was the point in my life where everything changed?

R.C. Sproul said that "we who confess the name of Christ must remain firm in our conviction." In Romans 10:8-9, Paul declares, "... 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33 that "...everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." Webster's 1828 dictionary defines "to confess" as "To own, avow or acknowledge; to declare publicly a belief in and adherence to." How easy or difficult is it for me to "publicly" confess that "Jesus is Lord" and why?

How important is it for me to publicly confess that "Jesus is Lord" and why?

Pastor Wally pointed out that the church is built on who Jesus, the Christ (the anointed, the Messiah) is. Scripture pointed out some the “rumors” that were being thrown around by first-century Jews (Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah and Jeremiah). What are some of the 21st century rumors of who Jesus is?

Pastor Wally stated that eternity hinges on the answer to Jesus’ question, “[b]ut who do you that I am?” Does the way I live my life day-to-day truly reflect who I say Jesus is or does it reflect something or someone else? Explain.

Pastor Wally said that our church must be built on the foundation of the identity of Christ (Matthew 16:13-15), the reliance of God’s grace (Matthew 16:17) and on the Apostles (Matthew 16:18-19) and their teachings (Acts 2:42). Which of these three elements of the church’s foundation needs my immediate attention and why?

As Pastor Wally pointed out, some churches preach that I can receive more of God’s grace if I only have more faith, saying that such preaching is rubbish, but that it resonates with a “merit based” worldview that those who work harder and longer will achieve more than those that don’t. How am I to view God’s grace?

Philippians 3:8-9 tells me “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith”. When someone suffers “the loss of all things”, the world says, when you’ve lost everything...when you’re bankrupt, your life is ruined. You’re a failure – file for bankruptcy and call it a day” – because their life is based on the accumulation of “stuff.” How important has the “stuff” in my life become over the last several months and why?

John Piper said regarding “count[ing] everything as loss” – “This is what it means to be a Christian. It is not advanced discipleship; it is basic Christianity. This is confirmed in Jesus’s words, “Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). Renouncing all we have is the same as “counting everything as loss.” You can’t be a disciple without it. Jesus said this...Renouncing all (counting all as loss) means that, if we

must choose between Christ and anything else, we will choose Christ. Renouncing all (counting all as loss) means that we will deal with everything in ways that draw us nearer to Christ, so that we gain more of Christ, and enjoy more of him, by the way we relate to everything. Renouncing all (counting all as loss) means that we will seek to deal with the things of this world in ways that show that they are not our treasure, but rather that Christ is our treasure. Renouncing all (counting all as loss) means that if we lose any or all the things this world can offer, we will not lose our joy, or our treasure, or our life — because Christ is our joy and our treasure and our life.” So, do I need to “renounce all” one more time? If so, why so? If not, why not?

Regarding “the rock” upon which Jesus will build His church, Charles Spurgeon in his Exposition to the Gospel of Matthew said, “Thou art Peter,” a piece of rock; and on that rock of which thou art a piece “I will build my church.” He [Peter] had, by the revelation of the Father, come to know the Son, and to be identified with him: thus he was a stone of the one Rock. Christ is the Rock, and Peter has become one with him, and “upon this rock” is the church founded. If there had been no Romanists to twist this passage, it would have presented no difficulty. Jesus is the Builder, and he and his apostles make up the first course of stone in the great temple of the church, and this first course is one with the eternal Rock on which it rests. In the first twelve courses or foundations are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14). We are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” Apostles are not the foundation of our confidence meritoriously; but they underlie us as to date, and we rest upon their testimony concerning Jesus and his resurrection.” The assembly which Christ gathers he builds together; for he says, “I will build my church.” He builds on a firm foundation: “Upon this rock I will build.” What Jesus builds is his own: “my church.” He makes his rock-founded building into a stronghold, against which the powers of evil lay continual siege, but all in vain; for “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Pastor Wally said that Jesus is the chief architect (“the Builder”) of His church, which “He makes...into a stronghold, against which the powers of evil lay continual siege, but all in vain.” So, how strong is my stronghold and why?

In the end, I’m called to 1) share the truth that open doors through my actions, my confession that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” and through my prayers for the lost and 2) to defend the faith through a Holy Spirit led study of Scripture. What will be my response?

“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen” (Jude 24-25).