

Foundations 17: How Does the Church Get Ready for Christ's  
Return?

June 28,2009

I Corinthians 3:10-23

**Introduction:** Jack Hayford, a California pastor, recently said in an article, "They come for the show, but they refuse to grow." I think that says what all of us are experiencing. People breeze through our churches as though they are at a salad bar, selecting the items they want, taking nothing that is unpleasant or challenging and, at best, paying only the minimum.

In any city there are churches saying in like manner:"Come to our church. Our preacher doesn't wear a tie. Our preacher wears golf shirts and jogging shoes." "Come to our church! We wear shorts and sandals." "We're fundamental." "We're liturgical." "We're liberal."

"We're moderate." "We're denominational." "We're mainline."

"We're dispensational." "We have video." "We have snare drums and screens." "We're into political reform." "We have a religious superstar preaching today."

Everyone is out front, just like the carnival barkers were, pushing their style, their religious product, but when we get inside we find- just like the carnival-that no one knocks out the balloons or knocks down the bottles. No one wins the prize. No lives are changed. The

church of the big idea, the church of the big action, and the church of the big deal somehow leave us empty. Something is missing.

That is the issue Paul was addressing in this letter. Churches that are built only on ideas or actions or style are doomed to die. Paul said,

*<sup>10</sup>By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. <sup>11</sup>For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup>his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. <sup>15</sup>If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.*

*<sup>16</sup>Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? <sup>17</sup>If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.*

*<sup>18</sup>Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. <sup>19</sup>For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"<sup>[a]</sup>;*

*<sup>20</sup>and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are*

*futile.”<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>21</sup>So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours,  
<sup>22</sup>whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas<sup>[c]</sup> or the world or life or death or  
the present or the future—all are yours,<sup>23</sup> and you are of Christ, and  
Christ is of God.*

Unless a church's foundation is Jesus Christ, there is no substance, no power. It is sound and fury. It is chaff. If Jesus Christ is the foundation, walks the halls, sits in the pews, and is in our classes, if he interprets the Bibles and sings our hymns, preaches our sermons, then we will know and do our mission effectively. If he is not there, no gimmick will make it happen. Jesus here and now is how we ready to meet him at the Second coming.

### **I. Heaven is a gift that God freely gives His children.**

There is equality in Heaven on the basis that no one is there on their own merit. In Heaven no one will boast that they are there because they deserve to be. Heaven is the result of our faith in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Heaven is based on our acceptance of the fact that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross of Calvary.

Our sins merit eternal Hell but because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ we are washed white as snow.

Perhaps the most correct view of Heaven would be to see it as an inheritance. Inherit means to come into possession of or receive

especially as a right or divine portion. *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:29—NIV)*

An inheritance is something of value that is given to children who are rightful heirs. We do not earn an inheritance it is freely given to those who are considered to be heirs. Through what Christ has done for us we are adopted as children into God's family and made heirs of His Kingdom. So the bottom line is that Heaven is not a reward but it will be a place of rewards.

## *II. God's justice demands that His children be rewarded for their faithfulness.*

God has called each of us to active service in His Kingdom. God will never judge us according to what another person does; we will be rewarded on the basis of what we have done in this life for Him. All of us should have the same goal, which is to lead others to a

growing relationship in Jesus Christ. Perhaps the best way to understand this is to see that we are co-workers who belong to God and are working together with one another. We need to see the different ministries in the church as essential and of equal worth. The purpose of the different ministries in the church is to bring glory to God and to benefit the whole church.

A concept that is problematic for many is the fact that all will be called to give an account before the judgment seat of Christ. The fact is that if we are clothed in Jesus Christ then our sins were judged at the cross. The matter however that remains unsettled is the fruits of our faith. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10—NIV)*

Before the Judgment Seat of Christ all service for the Lord will be reviewed.

God's justice will not allow all of us to be treated identical based on the merits of our service to Him. Each of our ministries for Him will be evaluated and the sincerity and motives of our work will be

made obvious. Those that have worked hard with sincere hearts will be rewarded as the Lord sees they were faithful to Christ's instructions. The foundation is Jesus Christ and all who build upon his foundation will inherit eternal life.

There will be some however, whose service was inferior and their works will not last. These builders will be saved as if they had jumped out of a burning building and lost everything but their lives. They may enter Heaven but will not receive the same reward as those who built well. What a great waste to live life on earth only to discover that what we have invested our interests, priorities, money and talents in are worthless in Heaven's eyes.

**III. Rewards in Heaven will be given on the basis of the fruits of our faith.**

The message for us to hear is that each of us builds into the church only the values we build in our own lives. We end up tearing down our own lives if we fail to build into the church the values that will last. Although we may look very successful to men, but "the day

shall declare it” and on that day we will see how much time and energy we really wasted. This demands that we build the church and our lives on the truth of Jesus Christ not on teachings based on the values and desires of the world.

Building on the foundation of Jesus Christ is based upon making a tremendous investment into the lives of people. Many would spend a lot of money for a stained glass window, but spend no money or make any personal sacrifice to clean a stained soul. Building on this foundation is to build into people positive and unselfish thoughts because our minds affect our usefulness more than any other factor.

The only way to build these kinds of people is not only to teach them with our mouths but also to model the Christian way with our lives.

If you want to be rewarded in Heaven then you need to use the gifts that God has given you. The Corinthians were having difficulty accepting their individual gifts, and allowed to go on they would not be able to use their gifts thus hurting the church. We need to realize that each of us has our own unique gifts and ministry is not a

competition. If we copy another's gifts and pretend to be someone we are not we will soon discover that any benefit will be short lived.

If we are functioning beneath our gifts or moving way beyond them our work will lack the necessary quality. If we are utilizing our God-given gifts to their fullest our work will be seen as quality work.

Heaven will be one great rewards ceremony, which will hold many surprises. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. *At that time each will receive his praise from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5—NIV)*

Many people whom the world and even us has viewed as insignificant will be judge to have done consistent quality work.

Some of the arrogant servants who marched to the drum beat of man's applause will discover that their efforts did very little to advance the Kingdom. The question is where are you planning to be rewarded? Here or there? Another question are you and the church

ready for Jesus, because he is coming soon?

**Conclusion:** The whole book of I Corinthians is clear that the church is Christ's body on earth. How does the Church ready itself for the second coming of Christ? One word: Jesus! The church needs a passionate commitment to Jesus, not a passionate commitment to political, ideological, or stylistic ideas. We don't need to focus on consumer desires or even on one frame of reference theologically. When we rediscover Jesus Christ, our worship will be revitalized. We'll not be concerned about style as much as we'll be excited about content. We must rediscover the beauty, the majesty, and the power of a strong commitment to Jesus Christ. When that happens, we will not get bent out of shape about golf shirts and jogging shoes. The central question will be, "Did we meet Jesus?" not "Was my opinion or style supported today? To say that Jesus Christ is the root and foundation, the cornerstone, the vine, is not a way of evading issues. This is calling the church to understand that we are Jesus people. We are members of his body, and the church in all of its power and strength needs to rediscover Jesus.

When we rediscover Jesus, our mission will be sharpened. We will want to give a cold cup of water in Jesus name. When we rediscover Jesus Christ, we'll be liberated from the tyranny of style.

The Doonesbury cartoon is so serious that it often appears on the

editorial pages of our newspapers. In one cartoon, Mike, the central character, was looking for a church, so he interviewed the pastor of the Little Church at Walden. He asked, "How did you get your church started?" The pastor replied, "I took a survey in the community, and they all wanted aerobics, so we started an aerobics class. Then they said they all wanted basket weaving, so we started basket weaving. Then they wanted jogging, and we started jogging. And the next thing we knew, we had a church. It's getting so big now that we have a whole denomination." In the last frame, Mike, who knows nothing about the Gospel, scratches his head and said, "So that's how religion is spread."

No, it's spread because Jesus Christ changes lives. Anything else will die. It may have its day, but it will die. When we rediscover Jesus Christ, our belief will be strengthened and focused. When the church rediscovers Jesus Christ, the people will come for the show, but they will stay to grow.