

## 1 Corinthians 3:10-23 “Jesus Christ - Our Foundation”

Feb 19, 2017

If you've ever studied the history of fairy tales, you will know that the original stories did not always end well. Consider the story of Pinocchio. Remember the cricket who tried and tried to counsel and correct his wooden friend? It turns out that Pinocchio got tired of his persistent nagging and correcting. He didn't want a conscience telling him what to do. He finally took one of Geppetto's wooden mallets and silenced the endless chirping once and for all. It's called "flat cricket". From then on things did not go well for Pinocchio. With no conscience to guide him, his bad choices led to far more than donkey ears and a tail. In the end it led to disaster and finally death.

Do you see what's happening? We've sanitized that story and given it a happy ending. In much the same way, we have sanitized life too. To most people's way of thinking, no one goes to hell anymore.

The story of Cinderella used to be far darker than most of us remember. In pursuit of marriage to the prince, the wicked stepmother persuaded one of her daughters to lop off a couple of toes so that the slipper would fit. The other daughter cut off part of her heels. The reasoning was simple, "When thou are queen thou wilt have no more need to go on foot." After their plan failed and Cinderella and the prince married, two pigeons came and pecked out the step-sisters' eyes. They spent the rest of their lives as blind, lone beggars. But Cinderella and the prince did live happily ever after!

Turn with me to the Three Little Pigs. When they were old enough they were sent out into the world by their mother to "seek out their fortune." Off they went, eager to build a life and build a home. The first one built a house of straw. It was bright and airy with lots of ventilation but then the wolf came and huffed and puffed and blew the house down. Oh, and then he ate the pig. The version you remember probably had him escape to his brother's house. The second pig built a house of wood. It was strong and sturdy. It was made to last. Again the wolf came and huffed and puffed and blew the house down. Then he ate the pig. The third pig built his house out of bricks. The wolf came and huffed and puffed but could not blow it down. But like the devil in our salvation account, he did not give up. He tried over and over again to trick the pig into coming out of the house but fail again and again. Finally the wolf came down the chimney but the pig was ready for him. The pig caught him in a big pot of boiling water and slammed the lid on him. Then he turned up the heat. He cooked the wolf and then the pig ate him! In many of the stories we told our kids when they were little, the details and the endings were sanitized. Nobody got eaten. Nobody died. Everybody lived happily ever after. Well, most everybody. I hear tell that the big bad wolf had to give up bacon and become a vegetarian.

So, where are we going with this? Today we want to explore our own spiritual life and our own spiritual health. We want to look at how well and how strongly we build our life of faith on the foundation that Jesus has established by means of His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. We want to fix our eyes on the one and only foundation that can protect us from the sharp and brutal attacks of the enemy, preserve us in the midst of his plots and plans, and ultimately live happily ever after.

Our text sets out to tell us about Jesus, and about us and our relationship with Jesus, and what that all means. When the storms of life come, and they do come, who will be our strong rescuer? He has rescued us from sin and death, but now will he also rescue us from every evil, every storm and every temptation? Is he the woodman who will rise up and come to our rescue when the wolf eats us? Will he take his axe and slay the big bad wolf, then cut us free? Think about who he is. He is true God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We don't fully understand it, but we believe it because the Bible says it. He is also true man and that is no fairy tale. He came to live among us and walk with us. He came to experience life in a sinful world. He came to take on the old evil foe, to fight against him and overcome him. And He came to rescue us, that despite the storms of life, we might one day live happily ever after. That's no fairy tale either. He also came to be a good friend to you.

Most important, He is also God's sacrifice for sin. He is our substitute when we stand before the judgment seat of God. All the good we might do as God's children can never make up for the sins we commit, nor can it change our inner sinful nature. Because of our sinfulness, our salvation and eternal life can never be built on us. It must be built on the one foundation that Paul speaks about in our text, "*No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" Our happily ever after depends on Him. It depends not on just any Saviour but the God-man who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Do you know why he did that? He did it so that there could be forgiveness of all people. He did it so that your sin and mine might no longer separate us from God. He did it so that we might be His children and heirs of eternal life through faith in Christ.

Our word of God today is no fairy tale. It is not rewritten or changed from one generation to another. It is history. It is about Jesus who rose from the dead. It is about Jesus who is exalted above all creation. It is about Jesus who is King and Lord. So are you too old for a bedtime story this morning? I want to tell you one. Which one would you like? Maybe Goldilocks and the three bears? Maybe Little Red Riding Hood. Historically that one didn't end well either. Little girls should never go wandering in the woods.

In our text, Paul tickles our interest with what we might use to build our life. He calls us to careful planning and careful construction. He cautions against using the wrong materials. You could use straw or hay or wood, or precious stones. So, let's examine the Three Little Pigs! Once upon a time there were three little pigs. When they were grown enough to move out on their own their mother gave them enough money to each build their own house. Build it well, build it strong. There's a big bad wolf out there and he's waiting to eat you up. The first one built his house out of straw. The second one built his house out of wood. The third one built his house out of brick, expensive and precious stones. They all lived happily for a time but then the wolf came. He stopped at the house of the first pig.

Little pig, little pig, let me in. Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin. Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in. What happened then? In the story I know the little pig barely escaped with his life and he ran to the house of wood. But the wolf would not be deterred. He stopped at the house of the second pig. Little pig, little pig, let me in. Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin. Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in. In the story I know the little pigs barely escaped with their lives. They ran to the house of brick. Still the wolf persisted. He went to the house of the third little pig. Little pig, little pig, let me in. Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin. Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in. And the wolf huffed and he puffed and he puffed and he huffed, but he couldn't blow down the house of brick. The three little pigs were safe and I guess they all lived happily ever after.

So what does this have to do with our text today? *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, 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. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.*

Did you hear it? There is one foundation, one source of salvation. Jesus says, I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, except through me. Anyone who tries to build a new foundation, one of their own design, is doomed to fail. Our lives need to be built on the one sure foundation, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Having said that, it does matter what you build on that foundation. Will you build with costly stones, or wood, or hay, or straw? Just like the three little pigs, some people take what Jesus had done and build a house of straw. They are proud to say, "I believe in God." - I believe there is a god and I can get to know Him at the park or at the lake. I don't need the Bible or the church. And on fair weather days, that might be true. But you know and I know that storms come up in life. You know and I know that strong winds are on the horizon and sooner or later the wolf will be at the door? Will your fair-weather faith survive? Or will the wolf come blow your house down?

James 2:19 tells us, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that ... and shudder." Simply believing there is a good is a house of straw. Such a house, such a faith has no strength and no staying power. When the storms of life come your way the devil will huff and puff and blow your house in. Some people take Christianity and build a house of wood. It is stronger than the other one and looks pretty sturdy. It should keep you warm and dry, most of the time but what will happen when the really bad winds start to blow? what will happen when the doctor says the "C" word? What will happen when the boss comes and gives you twenty minutes to clear out your desk? What will happen when the police officer comes to your door in the middle of the night, and it's about one of your kids? Will that house of wood stand up to that kind of wind and that kind of pressure? Do you trust in things, in stuff? Do you trust in feelings and rely on sensing God's nearness?

The winds and storms and trials of life will come. Will you still trust when health fails? Will you still trust when your job is downsized? Will you still trust when prayers seem unanswered and God seems far away? How do you build with brick and precious stones? How do you build with silver and gold? The bricks, the precious stones, the silver and gold, those are God's Word and Sacraments. They stand on the foundation of Jesus Christ, and no wolf will ever blow them down. When the storms of life blow and I'm tempted to doubt God's love, God's promises, God's forgiveness and God's grace, what will withstand that kind of assault? It is the word and promises of God.

God's word today calls us back to the foundation, to the Lord Jesus Christ. It calls us to build our lives solidly on Him using Word and Sacrament. Do not build with hay or straw or wood. Do not depend on worldly things, but build with brick, with costly stones, and dare to trust the promises of God. You can take God at His word despite the evidence around me to the contrary. You can believe that you are a forgiven child of God because God said it at your baptism. You can believe that your sins are truly forgiven, even when the wolf, even when the devil, would lead you to doubt and try to blow your house down. You can believe it because Jesus said it and because He gives you His very body and blood in the sacrament. Your life of faith is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. It starts with baptism. It is built by the gospel. It is joined and held together by the body and blood of Christ.

Let the wolf howl. Let the storms of life blow. It is not your strength that keeps you safe. It is the foundation of Jesus Christ crucified and risen again. It is the building of brick and precious stone, God's Word and Sacraments built upon that foundation that will hold you safe and preserve you. And in the end, you will live happily ever after!