

FORERUNNERS  
OF THE  
FAITH

Lesson 1



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# THE BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK

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One of the New Testament metaphors for the church is that of a building.

We can apply that metaphor to our understanding of church history

# **The Foundation**

**1 Corinthians 3:9–11** – For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. . . . For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

## **The Foundation**

**Ephesians 2:19–22** – [You] are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

## **The Foundation**

**1 Peter 2:4–6** – And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house.

## **The Foundation**

**Matthew 7:24**— Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

## **The Foundation**



# **The Doctrinal Pillars**

**The Foundation: Christ**

# **The Doctrinal Pillars**

**Word of  
God**

A Right  
View of  
Scripture

**The Foundation: Christ**

# **The Doctrinal Pillars**

**Word of  
God**

A Right  
View of  
Scripture

**Work of  
God**

A Right  
View of  
Salvation

**The Foundation: Christ**

# **The Doctrinal Pillars**

**Word of  
God**

A Right  
View of  
Scripture

**Work of  
God**

A Right  
View of  
Salvation

**Worship  
of God**

A Right  
View of  
the Savior

**The Foundation: Christ**

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# THREE DOCTRINAL PILLARS

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THE SUPREMACY OF  
THE WORD OF GOD

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SCRIPTURE

# THE WORD OF GOD

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The true church submits to the Word of God as the final authority.

# THE WORD OF GOD

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The true church submits to the Word of God as the final authority.

**2 Tim. 3:16–17** – All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.



# THE WORD OF GOD

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**Mark 7:5–13** – The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?” And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: →

# THE WORD OF GOD

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‘This people honors Me with their lips,  
But their heart is far away from Me.  
But in vain do they worship Me,  
Teaching as doctrines the precepts of  
men.’

Neglecting the commandment of God, you  
hold to the tradition of men.” →

# THE WORD OF GOD

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He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition . . . thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

# THE WORD OF GOD

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What about the mention of apostolic “tradition” in the New Testament?

- **1 Corinthians 11:2**
- **2 Thessalonians 2:15**
- **2 Thessalonians 3:6**

# THE WORD OF GOD

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1. The word “tradition” means “that which is given over” or “handed down.”

Apostolic tradition refers to apostolic instruction given to the church either “by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thess. 2:15).

It does not include elaborate customs or practices that developed in later centuries.

# THE WORD OF GOD

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2. Apostolic tradition (instruction) is preserved for us in the writings of the New Testament.

We do not have to wonder about the content of apostolic tradition, because it is recorded for us on the pages of Scripture.

# THE WORD OF GOD

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3. Believers are called to evaluate teachings and traditions in light of God's Word.

**1 Thess. 5:21** – Examine all things carefully.

**Col. 2:8** – See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men.

# THE WORD OF GOD

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**Acts 17:11** – The Bereans were “more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”



# THE WORD OF GOD

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4. The early church viewed the writings of the apostles as authoritative.

They recognized that non-biblical tradition must be evaluated against the standard of Scripture.

# THE WORD OF GOD

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**Irenaeus (c. 130–202)** – We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.

# THE WORD OF GOD

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**Basil (c. 330–379)** – I do not consider it fair that the custom [tradition] which obtains among them [the Arians] should be regarded as a law and rule of orthodoxy. If custom is to be taken in proof of what is right, then it is certainly competent for me to put forward on my side the custom which obtains here. →

# THE WORD OF GOD

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**Basil (continued)** – If they reject this, we are clearly not bound to follow them. Therefore let God-inspired Scripture decide between us; and on whichever side be found doctrines in harmony with the word of God, in favor of that side will be cast the vote of truth.

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THE SUFFICIENCY OF  
THE WORK OF GOD

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SALVATION

# THE WORK OF GOD

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The true church rests solely in the gracious work of God for salvation.

Sinners are justified before God on account of His grace alone. Salvation is the gift of God received through faith because of the finished work of Christ.

# THE WORK OF GOD

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**Luke 18:14** – 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.

# THE WORK OF GOD

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**Gal. 1:6–8** – I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!



# THE WORK OF GOD

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**Acts 13:38–39** – Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

# THE WORK OF GOD

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**Acts 16:31** – Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

**Rom. 3:28** – A man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

**Rom. 5:1** – Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

# THE WORK OF GOD

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**Rom. 11:6** – If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

**Eph. 2:8–9** – For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

# THE WORK OF GOD

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**Phil. 3:8–9** – [Believers do not rest on] a righteousness of [their] own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

# THE WORK OF GOD

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**Titus 3:5–7** – [God] saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us.

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THE SANCTITY OF  
THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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IN SPIRIT & TRUTH

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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The true church approaches the worship of God in spirit (purity of devotion) and in truth (purity of doctrine).

**John 4:23** – An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**Purity of Devotion:** Undefined worship is reserved for God alone.

True worship removes any distractions and rejects all competitors.

See Exodus 20:4 and Isaiah 42:8.



# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**2 Kings 18:4** – He [Hezekiah] removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan.

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**1 Cor. 10:14** – Flee from idolatry.

**1 Thess. 1:9** – [They] turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.

**1 John 5:21** – Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**Rev. 22:8–9** – I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**Purity of Doctrine:** Undefined worship requires an accurate view of who God is.

To reject the truth about who God is, as He has revealed Himself in His Word, is to worship the wrong God.

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**1 John 2:22** – Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**1 John 4:2–3** – By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**1 John 5:20** – And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**2 John 7** – For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.



# THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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**John 1:1** – In the beginning was the Word, . . . and the Word was God.

**John 1:14** – The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.

**John 1:17** – Grace and truth were realized through Jesus the Messiah.

# DOCTRINAL PILLARS

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- 1. The Word of God (in Scripture):** The true church views Scripture alone as its final authority.
- 2. The work of God (in salvation):** The true church understands that sinners are justified solely by God's grace through faith on account of Christ.
- 3. The worship of God (in spirit and truth):** The true church worships the Triune God in purity of devotion and purity of doctrine.

# DOCTRINAL PILLARS

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**2 Timothy 1:13–14** – Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

# THE BIG PICTURE

**The Word of God**

**Modern Age**

**Late Middle Ages**

**Early Middle Ages**

**The Patristic Age**

**The Work of God**

**~1500–Present**

**~1000–1500**

**~500–1000**

**30–500**

**The Worship of God**

**The Foundation/Cornerstone – Christ**

FORERUNNERS  
OF THE  
FAITH



