

## The Foundation

Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16, Luke 6:46-49

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Psalm 78 provides a glimpse into a grateful person's heart. The writer of this psalm asks us to remember all that God has done for us and more importantly make that known to our children, to the coming generations. The psalmist further states he will not hide God's wonders from anyone.

The second set of verses from Psalm 78 tells us that "in sight of their ancestors God worked marvels..." There are families in this church whose ancestors go back years and years in the history of this church. How fantastic is that! To be known as a third, fourth, fifth or sixth generation family is to know you have been given a firm foundation, a foundation built upon rock.

I've been here a month. I find myself becoming more and more comfortable in southern Alabama. The food is great, Mobile Bay is wonderful, the people are generous and fun, and Government Street Presbyterian Church is a rock! It has persevered throughout its 186-plus years of standing firm on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! Praise God! And there's more to do!

I've been told and perhaps you know this that the foundation of this great church is built upon cotton bales. That's right! Cotton bales when compacted and

pressed down become as strong as concrete. I think that's pretty cool considering the history of cotton in Alabama and throughout the South, how cotton was once the major industry in the South and shipped from the Port of Mobile to places around the world.

But there's another foundation that built this great church, one that still stands paramount over anything else, and that is the faith of the people. This church was begun in 1831 by those first 21 dedicated Christians who heard God's words and acted on them. They, and your ancestors, built this church. They "dug deeply and laid a foundation on rock," through their faith in the words of Jesus Christ.

What stands out to me in Luke's text is Jesus reminding his disciples that not only is it important to **hear** his words, it's critical to **act** on them. It is an unfortunate occurrence in today's world, that people hear Christ's words but don't act. I get how hard it is to follow Jesus' words that ask us to love our enemies, how hard it is to hear words that ask us to give to everyone who begs from us, how hard it is to hear words that ask us to forgive someone who has sinned against us, as many as seventy-seven times.

Jesus' words inspired the actions of the men and women who built  
this church's *foundation!*

I believe it is Jesus' words that inspire our actions that build

*the foundation* of our spiritual lives.

Hearing the words of Jesus and our subsequent

actions build upon *the existing*

*foundation* of this church.

Jesus' words *are also the foundation* for the coming generations, children such as Win Elliott, Laura Nelson and Coleman Oswalt who will join us today at the Lord's Table for their first communion.

Jesus' words are critical to our lives. Without the words of Christ sealed in our hearts we will struggle to bear life's stormy weather, like a house built **without a foundation**. If we listen to the words of Christ but do not act on them, then it becomes easier for us to ignore our neighbors, to focus on self and not others, to distrust God's intentions to make all people equal before God.

Those on the margins of society, those who suffer with mental illness or physical disabilities, and those who can't build a strong foundation due to lack of resources, **they also need to hear the words of Jesus and learn how to incorporate them into their lives**. That's where we, Government Street Presbyterian Church, come in. According to the history of this church, we began organizing other Presbyterian churches in 1842. That's impressive!

All of the Presbyterian Churches in Mobile and Baldwin counties today were created with assistance from this church. That's amazing action by this church

body. It is my sincere hope that we continue to help those who need to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. There are others in our communities who need to build a foundation for their life that provides for them in times of struggle. What can we do?

We are given a choice to act on the words of Christ or ignore them. The ancestors of this church acted on the words of Jesus, built a foundation which still stands tall and strong today, to extend the love of Christ into this city and far beyond. Each of us has a responsibility to make *the foundation* stronger by hearing Christ's words and acting on them.

Luke's Gospel was written when mercy, forgiveness, and grace did not exist in the public sphere. The Romans were brutal occupiers of the lands they conquered. Jesus Christ came to us to reveal God's love for all people in all times and places. The central message of Luke's Gospel is the strong emphasis on **the last, the least and the lost. One of Government Street's strongest legacies is serving the last, the least and the lost.**

Through times of peace and war, times of violence and injustice, in times of scarcity and in times of abundance the themes we find in Luke are timeless. Government Street Presbyterian Church has emphasized the gospel of Jesus Christ for all these many years. From the beginning of this great church to now, preachers have preached on Luke and the themes of equality and respect for all people,

themes of forgiveness and mercy, themes of love and grace for all. These themes remain important to us and to our church's mission outreach, to those we serve whatever one's circumstances.

The picture of Jesus that Luke portrays wants us to be obedient to his words, doing for others what he has done for us. **We can do that! We have done that!** **Let's continue to do just that**, providing a ministry of love and compassion to all we serve. Amen.