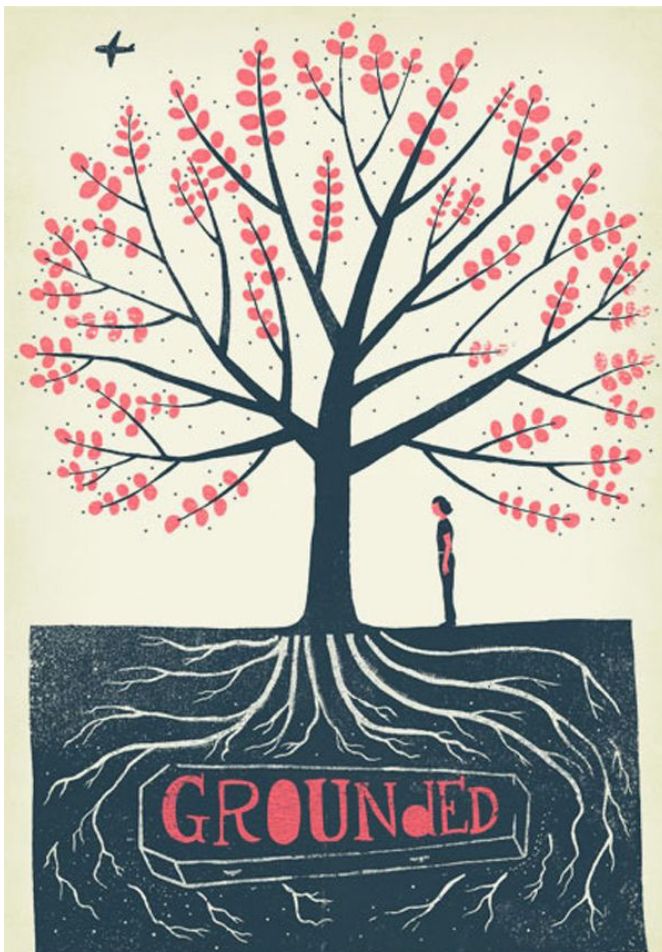




Grounded and settled in the faith.

The necessity of established teaching to the body of Christ.

Colossians 1:23—Since surely you are persisting in the faith, grounded and settled, and are not being removed from the expectation of the evangel which you hear, which is being heralded in the entire creation which is under heaven of which I, Paul, became the dispenser.

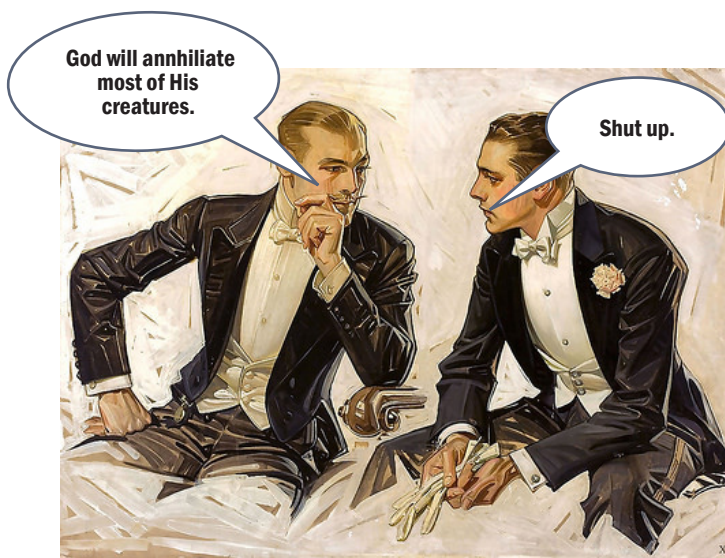


There is “one expectation” (Ephesians 4:4) of the evangel of Paul. It is the “expectation of righteousness” (Galatians 5:5), and the “expectation of glory” (Colossians 1:27) reserved for us “in the heavens” (Colossians 1:5), and not on earth. This is a singular calling, to be distinguished from the terrestrial call given to Peter for Israel (Galatians 2:7). The last thing Paul would want is for us to a) despise it, b) question it, and c) be removed from it. Yet these things can easily happen to those not “confirmed in the faith according as you were taught” (Colossians 2:7). The opposite of being confirmed in the faith is “surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching” (Ephesians 4:14).

It would seem to be a mark of spiritual progress in some circles to question everything and hopscotch continually into new and startling theological positions, as though “being rooted and being built up in Him” (Colossians 2:6) were a liability. Rooted people learn the truth and never again doubt it. Paul writes “rooted” to remind us of trees. Trees don’t wander around; they stay put. Where does Paul say “doubt everything you learned from me”? Like Bereans, we are to verify Paul’s word in Scripture, then hold fast to it. We are to “not [be] removed from the expectation of the evangel which you hear” (Colossians 1:23).

Certainly there is room for new light and adjustment upon foundational truths—but this is not an abandonment of these truths. What if I told you that, after having studied for weeks and questioning everything I believe, I now realize that Jesus Christ is no longer the Savior of all. “I was wrong all these years,” I write to you. “I am now an Annihilationist.” Many of you would

be shaken to the bone. Some would follow me into the new belief, simply because you have come to rely upon me and trust me over the last 21 years, and because you respect my scholarship. This would only show, however, that you, yourselves, were never rooted and grounded in the truth. For even if an angel from heaven should come and tell you that God's intention is to annihilate most of His creation, that angel should be anathema to you (Galatians 1:8). You are to be rooted and not removed from the expectation of the evangel that you learned from Paul, not from me. I am only a messenger of Paul's message. Paul is your teacher, and I teach Paul. If I stop teaching Paul, then stop listening to me.



If anyone were to become dissatisfied with the evangel brought by Paul, or determine to dig so deeply and frequently into the Hebrew Scriptures that the line between what God gave to Israel and what He gives to the nations through Paul becomes blurred, then that person can seek long enough, look hard enough, and find "new light" anywhere he or she looks. But is it really new light? Frequently, no. It is most often, rather, a new novelty. It is the result of being blown about by winds—either winds of strange teaching, or those of external pressure or internal dissatisfaction.

Many from different quarters will seek to remove you from your expectation and your realm, which is "inherent in the heavens" (Philippians 3:20). Do not be shaken. "Let's re-analyze everything" is not a Pauline exhortation. Paul never promoted wavering and vacillation, but rather establishment. Here is a Pauline exhortation: "Now to Him Who is able to establish you in accord with my evangel, and the heralding of Christ

Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret hushed in times eonian ... to Him be glory for the eons of the eons" (Romans 16:25-27).

That which is established does not wander. The safeguard against wandering is simply to "be noting those who are making dissensions and snares beside the teaching which you learned, and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). Don't shun them, simply avoid the dissensions and snares. Avoid the wavering, questioning, vacillating, and wandering. Seek, rather, that which is rooted and grounded. We are to be trees, not tumbleweeds. "Even if a messenger out of heaven should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema!" (Galatians 1:8).

Learn from and lean on sound teaching and teachers. I would rather "copy and paste" truth than disseminate original error.

Some resist holding firmly to truth because they "were wrong before"—as though no one could arrive at the truth and be anchored in it. Thank God that Paul never thought this way. He was wrong before, as all of us have been, but then he found truth. When he found truth, he held to it as firmly as he once held to error. A mariner seeking a certain port never doubts that port once he arrives—never mind his previous miscalculations or docking into wrong places. Is truth never to be found? Or, rather, does the spirit of God lead us into all truth? Past error is no excuse for doubting present truth. If

it is, then none of us can ever know anything definitively. Is this where we're headed? I am persuaded of better things concerning us. Rather, we are seeking to "stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God" (Ephesians 4:12).

**"I would rather
'copy and paste'
truth than
disseminate
original error."**

TREES, NOT PATHS THROUGH THE WOODS

Yet now, brethren, if I should be coming to you speaking in languages, what shall I be benefiting you if ever I should not be speaking to you either in revelation, or in knowledge, or in prophecy, or in teaching? Likewise, soulless things, giving a sound, whether flute or lyre, if they should not be giving a distinction to the utterances, how will the fluting or the lyre playing be known? For if a trumpet, also, should be giving a dubious sound, who will be preparing for battle? Thus, you also, if you should not be giving an intelligible expression through the language, how will it be known what is being spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. —1 Corinthians 14:6-9



The world is sufficiently full of dubious sounds, theories, agnosticism, and soulless suppositions that we expect respite from all that in the body of Christ. After all, to the body of Christ God speaks. Do we not have the sacred Scriptures? Are they not written to us in intelligible language? There is enough speaking into the air in this world to fill a blimp hangar (as well as the blimp inside the hanger); surely we are able to talk substantively among ourselves, especially when the Word is opened.

Teachers teach. When they teach, we expect teaching. No one ought to care “where a teacher is” in his personal journey. We want to know what God says in His Word. We want to hear from our apostle Paul. Paul never wavered. As students of Paul, we want to be rooted in his evangel, and we want those who teach us to be rooted there as well. This is not only desirable, but necessary. The opposite of rooted is, again, wandering. Wandering is confusion. Israel wandered in the wilderness; we’re done with that. Ours is not a God of confusion or change. Paul’s writings are not full of mysteries, but rather secrets. Once these secrets are known—and they can be known—they never change. *Ever*. They are sure and settled. We should not care about anyone’s opinion.

“God gives
teachers, not
roundtable
discussions.”

—A.E. Knoch

*Unsearchable Riches
Magazine*

Never trust a statement that begins with, “It seems to me ...”, or that ends with, “How do *you* feel about this?”

As A.E. Knoch writes in Volume 36 of *Unsearchable Riches* magazine: “God gives teachers (Ephesians 4:11), not roundtable discussions.”

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

Here is what God says in His Word. These are foundational truths, not only concerning Paul’s evangel, but concerning great themes such as God, the eons, the salvation of all, the person of Christ, the Scriptures, the meaning of death, the sovereignty of God, and the celestial realms.

GOD

There is no other God except One . . . God, the Father, out of Whom all is . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is . . . (Galatians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

All is out of Him, through and for Him (Romans 11:36). God creates evil (Isaiah 45:7), but never sins.

God gives the experience of evil to humanity to humble them (Ecclesiastes 1:13).

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ is “the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15).

Jesus Christ is “the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20).

Jesus Christ “died for our sins, was entombed, and roused the third day” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of God and humanity, the One giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

THE SCRIPTURES

All Scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, exposure, correction (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

A pattern of sound words must be preserved as given in the original Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:13).

The Word of truth must be correctly cut (2 Timothy 2:15).

Each part of the Word must be applied to those to whom it was written: Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry (Romans 15:8) and the twelve apostles to the Circumcision, and Paul to the nations (Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:7).

All Scripture is for us, but it is not all about us or to us.

THE EONS

Jesus Christ created the eons (Hebrews 1:2).

God's purpose is not eternal, but rather related to time periods called eons (Ephesians 2:2).

The eons have consummations (1 Corinthians 10:11) and a conclusion (Hebrews 9:26).

God is the Savior of all humanity at the consummation, but especially of believers during the eons (1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10)

THE SALVATION OF ALL

God is the Savior of all humanity (1 Timothy 4:10).

God will reconcile all creation through the cross of Christ (Colossians 1:20).

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

All is out of God (Romans 11:36).

“God gives to all life and breath and all” (Acts 17:25).

THE MEANING OF DEATH

The dead do not live (Revelation 20:5).

The dead do not know anything (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

PAUL'S EVANGEL

Paul's evangel to the nations is different from Peter's to Israel (Galatians 2:7).

Believers in Paul's evangel are justified, not forgiven (Romans 3:24).

Paul's gospel is of faith, not works of law (Romans 3:28).

Believers in Paul's gospel are to be seated among the celestials, not upon the earth (Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:5; Ephesians 2:6).

THE CELESTIAL REALM

The terrestrial sphere and immediate “heaven” (that is, the air surrounding us, where the birds fly) belongs to Israel (Genesis 12:1-3).

The Greek word translated “heaven” is *ouranos*. It is what is seen when looking up. (The English elements are SEE-UP.)

In the singular, *ouranos* is confined to the gaseous atmosphere surrounding Earth (Matthew 6:26).

In the plural, *ouranos* includes the five layers of atmosphere above the earth, namely the troposphere, the stratosphere, the mesosphere, the thermosphere, and the exosphere. It may also include the celestial sphere (*epouranion*), depending on context.



The word *ouranos* is often used figuratively, but figures of speech do not determine meaning. Only the literal use of a word is definitive. The word *ouranos* does not have “several meanings,” but may vary in usage, including the figurative usage.

The Greek word translated “celestial” in the Concordant Version is *epouranion*. It joins the prefix *epi* to the adjective form of *ouranos*, making it that which sits *on* the heavens. Therefore, it is that part of the universe which is on, or higher than (Hebrews 7:26), and may be seen through (Hebrews 4:14), the gaseous heavens.

Along with the subterranean and the terrestrial, *epouranion* completes the universe (Philippians 2:10).

A special category of beings that are not human live in the celestial realm (Ephesians 3:10; 6:12)

The destiny of body of Christ members is to be seated among these beings (Ephesians 2:6).

Only the apostle Paul uses the word “among” (Greek, *en*: when used in the dative case—as in Ephesians 2:6—denoting location **in** a single thing, or **among** a plural number of things) in conjunction with the word *epouranion* (“among the celestials”—Ephesians 2:6) to describe the future operative *location* of body of Christ members.

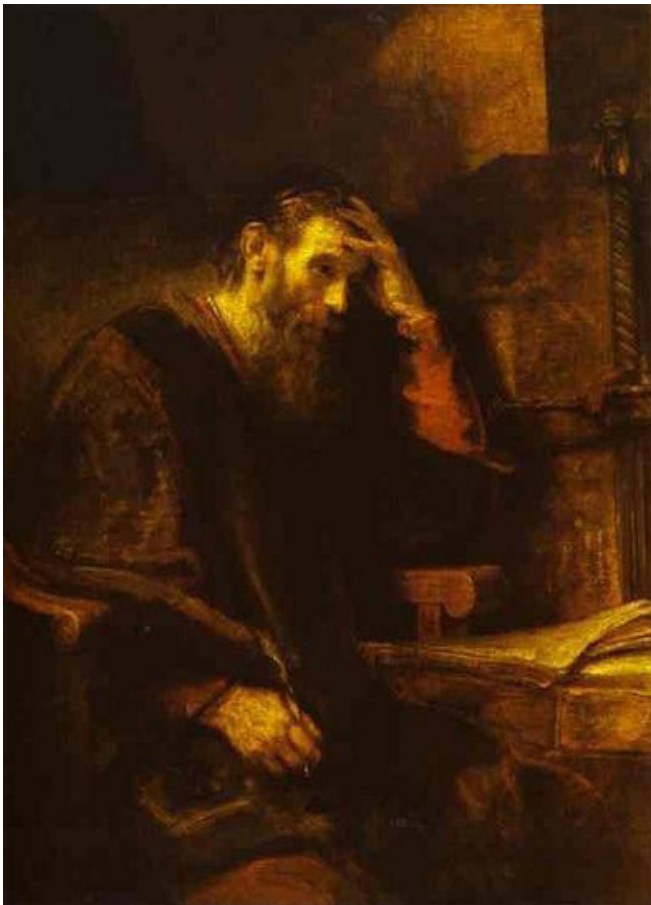
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Take the following verses to heart, and remain established, fixed and rooted in what you have learned from Paul, and from those who dispense Paul:

Colossians 2:6-7—As, then, you accepted Christ Jesus, the Lord, be walking in Him, having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith according as you were taught, superabounding in it with thanksgiving.

Ephesians 4:11-14—And the same One gives these, indeed, as apostles, yet these as prophets, yet these as evangelists, yet these as pastors and teachers, toward the adjusting of the saints for the work of dispensing, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17—Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, Who loves us, and is giving us an eonian consolation and a good expectation in grace, be consoling your hearts and establish you in every good work and word. (“Establish”; Greek word *sterizo*; English element: SOLIDIZE.)



1 Thessalonians 3:1-2—Wherefore, when we could by no means longer refrain, it seems well for us to be left in Athens alone, and we send Timothy, our brother and God’s servant in the evangel of Christ, to establish and to console you for the sake of your faith.

Romans 1:11—For I am longing to see you, that I may be sharing some spiritual grace with you, for you to be established.

Romans 16:25—Now to Him Who is able to establish you in accord with my evangel, and the heralding of Christ Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret hushed in times eonian ... to Him be the glory for the eons of the eons.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2—I Now I am making known to you, brethren, the evangel which I bring to you, which also you accepted, in which also you stand, through which also you are saved, if you are retaining what I said in bringing the evangel to you, outside and except you believe feignedly.

Ephesians 4:12—Greeting you is Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, always struggling for you in prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

1 Corinthians 15:58—So that, my beloved brethren, become settled, unmovable, superabounding in the work of the Lord always, being aware that your toil is not for naught in the Lord.

Romans 16:17—Now I am entreating you, brethren, to be noting those who are making dissensions and snares beside the teaching which you learned, and avoid them.

Galatians 1:8-9—But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema! As we have declared before and at present I am saying again, if anyone is bringing you an evangel beside that which you accepted, let him be anathema!

—MZ