

## A Firm Foundation

*"However, the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness" (2 Tim. 2:19).*

The phrase "Firm Foundation" is the name of a religious journal among brethren, published in Austin, Texas and originating in either the latter part of the 19th century or early part of the 20th. The journal was champion in opposing the "Gospel Advocate" (a journal also among brethren, published in Nashville, Tennessee). The latter paper espoused the doctrine that Baptists (or others practicing immersion) who were baptized to "obey Christ" need not be "rebaptized" when they sought fellowship in churches of Christ. The controversy raged for several years. The phrase "How firm a foundation" is part of a stanza we sing from a beloved hymn. Paul's words from 2 Timothy 2:19 was not written to promote the rebaptism teaching (however accurate that may have been); it was written following his exposing of two brothers, Hymenaeus and Philetus, whose profane babblings said *"the resurrection is already past."* God's "firm foundation," something that would endure through the years, was this seal: *"The Lord knoweth them that are his;"* and, *"Let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness."*

The first of these statements -- *"The Lord knoweth them that are his"* -- carried a necessary implication, namely "The Lord does not know those who are not his." Indeed, Jesus made this statement in the sermon on the Mount: *"I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Mt. 7:23). Most assuredly the words, *"I never knew you,"* does not mean Jesus was oblivious to their existence. The "all knowing" of God is part of His being God. *"His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men"* (Psa. 11:4). *"All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do"* (Heb. 4:13). God could scarcely bring into men into judgment to give account of the deeds done in the body, were He not aware of them. The phrase, *"God knoweth them that are his,"* must be understood as, "God approves of them that are his." He is aware of them, but, more importantly, He approves of them. Jesus' sheep are those who hear and follow Him (Jn. 10:4-5, 14). In the context of 2 Timothy, those who are His are those who have heard and believed Jesus' words that there is a general resurrection for all men, something which has not yet occurred, nay, cannot occur until the consummation of our world --its end.

The second phrase of the seal is, *"Let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness,"* a phrase echoing Paul's words to the Corinthians (itself a quotation from Isaiah 52:11): *"Wherefore, come ye out*

*from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you ..."* He who names the name of the Lord is not only one who has confessed his faith in the Sonship and Deity of Jesus; he has placed all his hopes, his trust, yea, even his life itself in to the hands of Jesus the Lord. The one who has so done, must depart from unrighteousness. We cannot be the Lord's and act otherwise. There is no middle ground. *"He who is not for me, is against me,"* said Jesus (Mt. 12:30). Furthermore, He said, *"No man can serve two masters"* (Mt. 6:24).

Are we the Lord's? If we are, He approves of us. And He approves of us because we have openly confessed our faith in Him, and by leaving all ways and acts of unrighteousness, have put our confidence in Him by living the life of which He approves.

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