

## The Established Life

Sunday, December 20, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Romans 16:25-27

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith-- to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

### Introduction

I remember hearing the story of a pastor of a large church in Columbus, Ohio who felt inspired to have a special worship service, maybe Ash Wednesday, and have it very traditional. This was unusual for the church as it usually held contemporary worship. Surprisingly, many people took part, and the pastor, curious, asked several why they were interested. The answer was the same every time; the traditional worship service reminded the parishioners of their grandparents. Sometimes with tears, they would describe grandparents attending the same church for fifty years, having the same phone number and address for the same length of time. They were always present for their grandchildren, sometimes even when the parents were not. They came to their grandchildren's basketball games even if they themselves were not well. They were trustworthy and could be counted on. They were solid. They were established.

### Set the Stage

The Apostle Paul wrote of God's ability to establish people at the end of his gospel, the Book of Romans. After giving a brilliant presentation of the revelation of God in Christ, Paul greets a long list of people that he knows live in Rome and then mentions the promise of establishment at the benediction.

what does "established" look like?

The verse says, "Now to Him who is able to establish you..." I like the idea of being established. I imagine established as being solid, firm, not easily disturbed, a rock upon which others can lean. There's an element of direction to the word as well. It means "to set fast, strengthen, turn resolutely in a certain

direction." For God to establish a person it seems that He sets that person firmly on the path of heaven. They are on the right road, and their footsteps are firm and resolute. There's a couple of thoughts in Scripture that bring a partial description of someone who is established.

the house on the rock cf. Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus, in Matthew's gospel (7:24-27) describes someone who does what He teaches and commands as being like a house built on solid rock that endures the storms of life and does not crumble. Reading Matthew 5 through 7 will give you a taste of what Jesus wants us to do. Think of these actions as a means to build a life that is solid in cooperation to the work of the Holy Spirit.

the power of community in Romans 16

I suspect that another clue we find in the long list of greeting Paul gives to Christian friends in Rome. For a long time I didn't pay much attention to this list, but now I think it speaks to the power of community. God uses relationships to help establish people. Perhaps established people learn to cherish the relationships they share in the Christian community, and all the greetings at the end of Romans has a great message for us after all.

## Conclusion

There is great power in an established life in the midst of a world in which everything seems to be periodically shaken, especially this year. The Lord promises He can establish the followers of Jesus. There are ways to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He works in our lives. We can follow the commands of our Lord in Matthew 7 and cherish community and relationship, as indicated in Romans 16. It is a wonderful promise. Our God is able to establish us according to the Gospel.