

1 Corinthians 3:10-17, A Life Worth Living: “The Rewards of Following Jesus”

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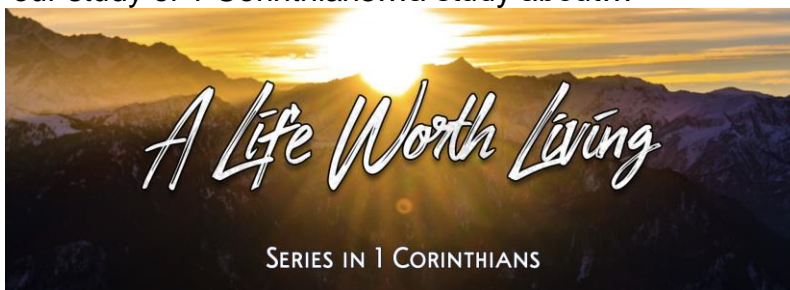
Today is Mother’s Day and I too, want to wish all the mother’s: a wonderful HAPPY MOTHER’S DAY!!!!

We love you and appreciate you so much! And we’re so grateful for the memory of the moms who have gone on to be with the Lord! They will never be forgotten! Indeed, mommas are amazing and wonderful...and truly, without them...we wouldn’t be here. You’re here because of a mom... I love Psalm 127:3...

Psalm 127:3

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.

A reward...indeed children are! Mom’s know their children are a REWARD FROM THE LORD! And you know what...that’s exactly what we’re going to talk about today. Rewards. We’re going to see the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ rewards those who serve Him and we’ll see that very clearly today as we return to our study of 1 Corinthians...a study about...



“A Life Worth Living.” A life worth living that ends with an eternity in heaven where we will receive rewards for what we’ve done here on earth!

Now as we begin to read this passage in 1 Corinthians 3, let me remind you that the church members at Corinth were divided. They had broken into cliques...factions...little groups who have identified themselves by whom they are following. It’s a mess! Remember...some said they followed Paul...some Apollos...some Peter. They were fractured, disjointed, disunified and Paul said, “Church, this is breaking the heart of Jesus...and Paul pointed out the fact that churches are to be One...just as Jesus and the Father are One.” So, we pick up now in verse 5 and we’re going to move from there into our text in vs 10-17.

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled^[b] master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. ¹⁶Do you not know

that you^[c] are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

34 years ago, next month, I received a great reward. I graduated from High School. I can't believe it's been 34 years. It was early June of 1986 and I received my diploma from West Wilkes High School. That diploma represented the culmination of 4 years of hard work, blood, sweat and tears, and I was so excited, thankful and grateful! That diploma was a great reward!

You know, to be honest, remembering that makes me grieve for this year's graduates. It seems so unfair for them not to have the opportunity to graduate in the traditional fashion of getting their diploma's in a public ceremony...and yet, it is what it is... They will be the class of the 2020 Virus. In fact, 34 years from now...they might have a bit of celebrity status because they were THAT CLASS. But, nonetheless...it's still disappointing... YET, just as we shared in the announcement video, we want to recognize our graduates. If you have a graduate, would you please let us know...

Send us their name and the school they're graduating from...High School or College and we will recognize them on our social media pages on Sunday, May 31st. We want to acknowledge all of their hard work and to celebrate with them all that they've accomplished in graduating! They've earned it and we want to REWARD them by acknowledging their accomplishment.

Rewards...we're all motivated by rewards...and even in the Christian life there are rewards to following Jesus... One day we're going to GRADUATE to heaven and eventually, we'll be rewarded for what we've done here on earth. And that was Paul's point to the Corinthian church... Get your eyes off of your little cliques and groups...your leaders and your favorites and look to the reward of heaven...and remember that those rewards are all predicated on what we do here... And Paul uses this analogy of building a house to describe this process... See it again...

1 Corinthians 3:10

¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled^[b] master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.



What's this? A foundation...it's been poured at a construction jobsite. A building of some sort will soon be erected from that spot, because the foundation has been laid. It comes first...

You see, the apostle Paul had established the church in Corinth some 6 years earlier from the time of his writing them from Ephesus. He's been gone for about 4 ½ years and since then, a man named Apollos has come there and helped lead the church and then even Peter comes for a

period of time... And so, Paul says, "I laid the foundation...and others are building on it." The same is true here. Mt Pleasant was established in 1875 and for the past 15 years, I've gotten to come along and help build on it... And the same is true for our lives as individuals...

You see we're all building. We're building our lives. The question is: What's our foundation? Listen, our ultimate foundation is to be Jesus Christ and **what we build with is going to ONE DAY be tested** to see if it has any value.

1 Corinthians 3:11

¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

For the follower of Christ...Jesus is the cornerstone of our foundation. He holds everything together... That's what a cornerstone does. See this one...



This cornerstone was laid in 1919. When did you get saved? When did you surrender your life to Jesus? That's the date of your cornerstone...

You see, up to this point in this letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul has been reprimanding the Corinthian Christians for being on the milk and not the meat...he's told them to stop looking at things through the lenses of the world and to allow the Holy Spirit to guide their lives...live in Spirit and Truth...AND in order for them to do that...they've got to get their eyes back on Jesus, not men...because He is the foundation... And if they'll do that...they'll be rewarded...because Jesus gives rewards to those who work for His kingdom. But for those who choose to live for themselves...well, those self-serving efforts will be burned up as worthless. Watch this now... I want you to see the two piles of building materials.

1 Corinthians 3:12

¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—

I love this analogy of the two piles of building materials...See how it's pictured here...



Gold, Silver, precious stones, they don't burn. But, the wood, hay and straw...they burn. Two piles... Piles that we can choose to build from. Think with me now...one pile is made up of items that must be dug up. You have dig for gold...for silver...for precious stones. You don't for wood, hay and straw...they can be found anywhere. It takes work and effort to get to the first pile...it takes nothing to get to the second pile. But what's critical is that we understand what's going to happen to the building materials from these two piles. They're going to be set on fire at the judgment.

1 Corinthians 3:13

¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

Listen Jesus cares about what we do! He cares about how we live and so, He care about what we build with... Yes, you and I can build a house made of wood, or hay, or straw and we might think that's good enough. It's not...because one day, Jesus will put a match to it and it'll burn to the ground.

You may be wondering, "Well, Pastor Kevin, what exactly is wood, hay and straw...what does that mean?" Well, it's pretty simple...it's the stuff of this world. It's stuff that won't matter in eternity and won't transfer to heaven...it's cars, houses, trinkets, gadgets, jewelry, clothes, material possessions, stuff... And we'll leave every bit of it. Naked we came into this world and naked we'll leave it.

You say, "What's the gold, silver and precious stones?" Well, that's simple too... It's what we do for Jesus and His kingdom... It's the whole "seeking first the Kingdom of God" stuff... It's what we do for Jesus...that's what will survive into eternity... The rest will burn.

Do you see what Paul is doing here? Do you see how the Spirit of God has inspired him to write? He's prefaced all of these remarks by speaking of the divisions and factions and little cliques... In other words, he's been saying, ***"Guys...these little cliques you're running in...that's wood, hay and straw...that's of the flesh...that's natural man stuff and it's creating division in the church and so, that's all going to burn...that doesn't please Jesus. No! But, for those who choose to bring unity...that's of Spirit and that will last."***

1 Corinthians 3:14

¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

So, I'll ask this: Is what your building with today going to last? Will it make it through the fire? Is it eternal? Be honest... Are you building your life on Jesus and His kingdom?

You know, I get it. It's hard... It's hard to make eternal decisions living in a pleasure-driven world isn't it? We're constantly fighting against our flesh, aren't we? But you know, CHURCH FAMILY, **we've been stopped dead in our tracks**, haven't we? This virus has paralyzed everything. It's like a cramp in the leg in the middle of the night...we can't even move...all we can think about is the cramp (the virus)... But, listen...once the cramp is gone...you're relieved...thankful...right...

You know, God has allowed this virus to stop us and make us look at our lives and ask, "What's really important?" Are you listening? WILL YOU GET STILL AND FOCUS... What's really important? Is it your stuff? Is it your fun? Where is your mind? Where is your heart? Jesus said, "Where your treasure is...there will your heart be also." Where is your treasure? Here or heaven?

So, what is really important? Is it the kingdom of God or the kingdom of me? Is it really ALL about keeping up with everyone else...particularly those "Joneses?" Is that what life is all about? Oh...if it is...then we're building with wood, hay and straw and it's going to burn! Oh, let that not be us! Let us be the ones who Jesus praises for denying themselves and taking up their crosses and following Him! He tells us that He's going to reward us... Do you believe Jesus will reward us...or will it all be the same for everyone in heaven? Will everyone get the same reward?

We're all the way to the end of Scripture. We're literally down to some of the very last words ever spoken by Jesus in Scripture.

Revelation 22:12

12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done."

What is this...



That's a paycheck. Do you like getting one of those? Sure you do! Would you be willing to work your current job for free? I think we would all agree, we like being rewarded for our work with a paycheck. Jesus is going to reward us too. Now that word "recompense" or "reward" in some translations, is the Greek word:

Misthos:

1 dues paid for work, wages, hire

2 reward: used of the fruit naturally resulting from toils and endeavors

(Source: www.blueletterbible.org)

I want to ask you again what I asked a moment ago: Do you believe everything is going to be equal for everyone in heaven? Are we all going to receive the same rewards? NOW...!

know...being in heaven with Jesus is going to be reward enough. But, Jesus said in Revelation 22 that His reward (misthos) is with Him and He'll reward each one for what he has done. So, this obviously means that the more you do for Jesus, the more you are going to be rewarded in heaven. And that means there are levels of reward in heaven.

Let me see if I can lay this out in a bit more detail... Think with me now...Jesus talked about rewards all the time. Remember when He started His ministry and taught the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:11-12

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Reward...how about another instance. Remember when Peter was complaining to Jesus that they had left everything to follow Him?

Mark 10:29-30

29 Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, **30** who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Remember when Jesus was teaching the "Parable of the Talents," in Matthew 25? Jesus described the reward for each servant who invested what the Master had given to them prior to his departure. One was given one talent, another 2 and another 5. Of course, Jesus was talking about Himself being the Master...and He did leave...He left this earth and He is watching to see how we use the talents and abilities He's given us. Will we use them for ourselves or Him? Watch this...

Matthew 25:19-21

19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. **20** And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' **21** His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Folks, it doesn't get any better than that. In fact, in another parable, in Luke 19, Jesus said to the faithful servant these words...

Luke 19:17

17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'

You see, these teachings...these parables describe what the eternal kingdom of heaven is going to be like. We will be rewarded...even "set over much...even being given authority in heaven..." Yes, there are positions of authority that will be awarded in heaven. Now go back to verse 14 again and we'll see this play out...

1 Corinthians 3:14-15

¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as

through fire.

You know what's sad, church family...some Christians are going to get to heaven and stand before Jesus with nothing. Nothing. Think of that... That's verse 15... Their work is burned up...but they are saved. That's a tragedy! To live this life in such a way that it doesn't result in anything for the kingdom... How could that happen??? Church, I believe it has everything to do with our pursuit of Jesus and His holiness...we will pursue Him to be like Him. That's verses 16 and 17.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

¹⁶Do you not know that you^[c] are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

You know in the Old Testament, if you wanted to worship God, you had to go to the Temple and bring an animal and have a priest go on your behalf before God. But, when Jesus came...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, when He died on the cross and rose again, He gave believers access to God. Humanity would no longer have to go through a priest...but instead, could come boldly before the throne of God.

Do you understand church? TODAY we are the Temple of God...it's not about buildings...it's about people... When you trust Jesus and choose to follow Him, you have the Spirit of God come to indwell you. And thus, you become the Temple of God. And just as nothing unholy was allowed into the Temple in the days of Jesus, nothing unholy should be in our lives either. See it again...the end of verse 17...

1 Corinthians 3:17b

For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Oh, I know... I know we live in a day and time where there's this idea that we can be whatever we want to be and act any way we want to act and Jesus will be okay with it. No He isn't. He desires for us to be like Him. He is holy. He is pure. He has given us His Spirit and His Word to guide us in holiness. He says, "Be holy as I am holy." And church family, that's what it means to pursue His kingdom. We pursue Him in holiness, righteousness, purity. You see, when people say, I can live any way I want to live and Jesus is okay with that...they're building with wood, hay and straw and it's all going to burn.

It's true...one day every believer is going to stand before Jesus and receive our rewards...and this is called the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is 2 Corinthians 5:10. We'll eventually get there in our study. Watch:

2 Corinthians 5:10

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

The Greek word there in verse 10, for the 2 English words: "Judgment Seat" is: "Bema," and it literally means "a raised platform." We understand this don't we... In a courtroom, where is the Judge seated? See this picture...



On the BEMA, the raised platform. And that's where the Judge renders the verdict. You know that guy in the orange jumpsuit, might be afraid, but Church family, understand something about the Judgment Seat of Christ, (at His Bema), we don't have to be afraid...NO...at the BEMA, we won't be judged for salvation...that's already been decided. Instead, for us...at the Bema Seat of Christ, it will be a time of examination to determine our rewards. A place where the fire will be lit to our works and we'll see what doesn't burn.

Church family, you know what? As wonderful as getting a diploma at graduation is or getting a paycheck is...Heaven is going to be worth so much more. And the reason it is...is because of who's going to be there... Jesus. For me...heaven will be about the Lord Jesus... Oh...don't get me wrong... I look forward to seeing my loved ones again...and the joy of placing any crowns I might receive at the feet of Jesus... But, the joy of heaven will be looking at Jesus face to face when He says, "Well done good and faithful servant...enter into the joys I have set before you." It will be all about Jesus!

One last time as we close: How are you living your life? Are you building on Jesus...living for His kingdom...are you building with gold and silver and precious stones...OR, are you still trapped in a pursuit of pleasure...building for your own kingdom...that's wood, hay and straw and it won't make it...it'll all burn! Oh Christian...let's live our lives storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven...with our eyes and our lives set on Jesus!
