

Welcome To The Bema Seat . . . Part 2!

Our Text: **1 Corinthians 3:10–17** *According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Last week, we need with the idea that Paul was a master builder, but **JESUS IS THE FOUNDATION!!!**

1 Peter 2:6–8 *Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."*

Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

- Every human philosophy, religious system, and code of ethics is doomed to failure and destruction, because it has no foundation.
- There is only one foundation, and, no matter how he may try, **"no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ!"**
- God's kingdom is built on Jesus Christ, and every individual life that pleases God must be carefully built on that foundation.

So how do we build?

Let's continue here . . .

What Will We Build With? Our Works!

1 Corinthians 3:12 *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,*

As Christians, we shouldn't worry about the **foundation** of our faith. *(That is the marble and granite of the person and work of Christ, secure and stable and perfect.)* **Rather, our concern should be that, whatever we build on this foundation, we build with the best of materials!**

Once again, there is only one foundation, **JESUS** . . . But there are many types of materials for building the rest of our spiritual building.

- As long as we are alive as believers, **we are building!**
- We are building some sort of life.
- We are building some sort of church.
- We are building some sort of Christian fellowship and service.

Now . . . What we build may vary:

- Some people are building something beautiful.
- Some are just slapping together a shack.
- Some may be building with intention.
- Some may be building with neglect.
- **BUT EVERY BELIEVER IS BUILDING SOMETHING!!!**

“From the earliest history of the church in Acts and the epistles, and from the accounts of the seven churches of Revelation 2–3 through today, it has been obvious that Christians and the congregations they form are vastly different. From the beginning there have been gold Christians and wood Christians, silver churches and hay churches, precious stone endeavors and those that are straw—in every degree and combination.” John MacArthur Jr.

The building materials mentioned in verse 12 are in two categories, each listed in descending order of value:

- The first category—**gold, silver, precious stones**— clearly represents high-quality materials.
- The second—**wood, hay, straw**—just as clearly represents inferior materials.
- Gold signifies the greatest faithfulness, the most skillful and careful work done for the Lord.
- Straw signifies the opposite, the least, the leftovers.

We have to be clear . . .

- The materials **DO NOT** represent wealth, talents, or opportunity.
- Nor do they represent spiritual gifts, all of which are good and are given to each believer by the Lord as He sees fit.
- The materials represent believers’ responses to what they have — how well they serve the Lord with what He has given them.
- In other words, **THEY REPRESENT OUR WORKS!!!**

We have to be very clear here . . . **WE CANNOT BE SAVED BY GOOD WORKS OR STAY SAVED BY GOOD WORKS!!!**

Ephesians 2:1-9 ***And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.***

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

However, **WE WERE CREATED IN JESUS FOR GOOD WORKS!!!**

***Ephesians 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

***Colossians 1:10** that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

One person said it so well, **“Works are not the source of salvation, but they are the marks of it.”**

So what is Paul saying?

- Every Christian is a builder.
- And every Christian builds with some sort of materials.
- **So God wants us to build only with the best materials, because only the best materials are worthy of Him, are the most effective, and will last!**

It is also important to note that these first three materials are equally valuable.

- There is no grading, since some precious stones (*such as pearls*) were, in the ancient world, considered to be more valuable than gold, and silver could be used for things that gold could not.
- And, only the Lord can determine which works are high quality and which are low. It is not the believer's role to grade Christians and the work they do.

The point that Paul is making is that our purpose should always be to serve the Lord **WITH THE BEST!!!**

He alone determines the ultimate value of each believer's work!

So, since Jesus Himself is the foundation of our lives:

- He should also be the center of the work we build on the foundation.
- The work we do should be truly His work.
- It should not be just external activity or religious busy work.
- It is easy to become deeply involved in all sorts of church programs and activities and projects that are hay work.
- They are not bad programs or projects, but they are trivial.
- The **wood**, **hay**, and **straw** are not apparently sinful things, but subtly sinful things.
- Each can be useful in building something.
- Even hay or grass may be used to make a roof in some cases.
- **But when tested by fire, all three of the second group of materials will burn up!**

2 Timothy 2:20–21 *But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.*

I stole this next illustration directly from John MacArthur Jr. . . .

We do this building:

- **By our motives.**
- **By our conduct.**
- **And by our service.**

First, we build by our motives:

Why we do a thing is as important as what we are doing. A campaign of neighborhood visitation done because of compulsion is wood, but visiting the same people in love to win them to the Lord is gold. Singing a solo in church and being concerned about how the people like our voice is hay, but singing to glorify the Lord is silver. Giving generously out of duty or pressure from men is straw, but giving generously with joy to extend the gospel and to serve others in the Lord's name is a precious stone. Work that on the outside looks like gold to us may be hay in God's eyes.

1 Corinthians 4:5 *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.*

Second, we build by our conduct:

2 Corinthians 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

“**Bad**” (*phaulos*) is here best understood as “**worthless.**” It produces no gain. Our conduct, therefore, can be “**good**” (*agathos*, “*inherently good in quality*”), evil, or just useless—like **wood**, **hay** and **straw** when tested by fire. So things we do can also be gold or wood, silver or hay, precious stone or straw

Third, we build by our service:

The way we use the spiritual gifts God has given us, the way we minister in His name, is of supreme importance in our building for Him. In Christ's service, we must seek to be those vessels “**for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master.**”

“**Some years ago a young man told me he was leaving a certain ministry. The reason he gave was: “I wasn't doing what I do best. I was using my abilities**

but not my spiritual gifts.” There was nothing wrong with the work he had been doing. In fact, for another person it could be gold. But for him it was wood, hay, or straw, because he was doing what others thought he should do rather than what the Lord had particularly gifted and called him to do.”

Let's continue . . .

What Will Test Our Building? The Fire!

1 Corinthians 3:13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

- Any new building is usually checked out carefully before it is occupied or used.
- Cities, counties, and states have codes that require buildings to meet certain standards.
- **Well, God has strict standards for what we build for Him in and with our lives!**

Let's state this as plainly as we can . . . When Jesus returns, **THE QUALITY OF EVERY BELIEVER'S WORK WILL BE TESTED!!!**

“Fire” is the symbol of testing:

Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

Zechariah 13:9 I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, “This is My people”; And each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’ ”

1 Peter 1:17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;

Revelation 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

So, just as **“fire”** purifies metal, **so will the fire of God's discernment burn up the dross and leave what is pure and valuable!**

Once again, this will not be a time of punishment **BUT A TIME OF REWARD!!!**

- Even the one who has built with wood, hay, or straw will not be condemned.
- But his reward will correspond to the quality of his building materials.
- When wood, hay, or straw come in contact with fire they are burned up.
- Nothing is left but cinders.
- They cannot stand the test.
- Gold, silver, and precious stones, however, do not burn.
- They will stand the test, and they will bring great reward.

Let's wrap this up . . .

Who Will Need To Work On The Building? All Believers!

1 Corinthians 3:14–17 *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

We will end with the idea that there are three types of builders: Constructive, Worthless, and Destructive.

CONSTRUCTIVE WORKMEN

- Believers who have right motives, proper conduct, and effective service build with gold, silver, and precious stones.
- They do constructive work for the Lord and will receive corresponding rewards.
- We shall receive a reward.
- That simple and hopeful promise is the message of eternal joy and glory.
- Whatever our service to God's glory, He will reward.

- When a pastor preaches sound, solid doctrine he is building constructively.
- When a teacher teaches the Word consistently and fully, they are building with good materials.
- When a person with the gift of helps spends themselves serving others in the Lord's name, they are building with materials that will endure testing and will bring great reward!
- When a believer's life is holy, submissive, and worshipful, he is living a life built with precious materials.

The Lord's reward for all His faithful followers are varied and wonderful, and all of them are imperishable:

1 Corinthians 9:25 *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

The New Testament refers to them as crowns:

2 Timothy 4:7–8 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

1 Thessalonians 2:19–20 *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.*

1 Peter 5:4 *and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Each of these is best understood as a Greek genitive of apposition (*i.e., the crown which is righteousness, the crown which is exultation, the crown which is glory, and the crown which is life.*) All refer to the fullness of the believer's promised reward.

WORTHLESS WORKMEN

- Many humanly impressive and seemingly beautiful and worthwhile works that Christians do in the Lord's name will not stand the test in "that day." It "will become evident" that the materials used were wood, hay, and straw.
- The workmen will not lose their salvation, but they will lose a portion of any reward they might be expecting.
- They shall be saved, yet so as through fire.
- The thought here is of a person who runs through flames without being burned, but who has the smell of smoke on themselves — barely escaping!
- In the day of rewards, the useless and evil things will be burned away, but salvation will not be forfeited.

- It is easy to fool ourselves into thinking that anything we do in the Lord's name is in His service, just as long as we are sincere, hardworking, and well meaning.
- But what looks to us like gold may turn out to be straw, because we have not judged our materials by the standards of God's Word — pure motives, holy conduct, and selfless service.

- We should be careful not to waste our opportunities by building with worthless materials, for if we do we will become worthless workmen.
- Paul warned us not to use the worthless materials, for if we do we will become worthless workmen.

Paul warned the Colossians:

Colossians 2:18 *Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,*

- When we rely on human wisdom, or even supernatural visions, rather than God's Word, we are carnal, following a "fleshly mind."
- We can be sure that any doctrine or principle or practice developed from such fleshly sources will at best be worthless.

DESTRUCTIVE WORKMEN

- The third group of workmen obviously is made up of unbelievers, because God will never destroy those He has redeemed and given eternal life.
- It is composed of evil, unsaved people who attack God's people and God's work.

- That destructive group can work either from within or without the church, destroying what God has built up.
- Every believer is a temple of God, indwelt by the Spirit of God.
- Consequently the church itself is a temple of God, a composite temple composed of all God's elect.
- Like each individual Christian, it is holy, and God jealously guards that which is holy.
- Under the Old Testament any person, other than the high priest on the Day of Atonement, who dared to enter the Holy of Holies would drop dead on the spot.
- He would not need to be put to death by the people; God would strike Him dead.

God doesn't look kindly upon those who threaten or defile His holy people either:
Matthew 18:6–10 *“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*

“If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

The day of rewards is coming:

Revelation 22:12 *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*

- If we are still living on earth then, there will be no time left for preparing.
- If we go to be with the Lord before that time, there will be no opportunity to prepare after we die.
- **The only time we have for doing the Lord's work that brings reward is now!**

ARE WE READY?!

Let's pray . . .