

7. Understanding How to Build on a Firm Foundation

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help all Christians grow to spiritual maturity so that each one can have a part in building God's building, the church. Christ is the One who is the foundation of the church. He chooses to give us the privilege of building on that foundation. We also see that God will reward us according to the way that we build on that foundation. For that reason, we need to show our children the importance of asking the Lord to give us His strength so that we can be effective builders as we build on a firm foundation. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In 1 Corinthians 3:11, we read, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Here, we see that Christ is the chief cornerstone and foundation of the church. Ephesians 2:19-22 says, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Here, we see that God is causing us to be built together as a place where the Holy Spirit can live on this earth. Instead of building a temple made of wood or bricks, God says that He is building every Christian so that together we can be the temple of God where the Holy Spirit lives. That is why the foundation for this building must be Christ.

We go on to see how we and our children are to build on this foundation. 1 Corinthians 3:12-13 says, "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." Here, we see that our service for God, in helping to build His church, can be either like gold, silver and precious stones or like wood, hay and stubble. Fire refines and purifies gold, silver and precious stones. Fire quickly burns up wood, hay and stubble. Here, we see that our service for God in helping to build His temple can be lasting and effective or it can be gone in a moment.

God also says that the service or works of each Christian will become clear because our works as Christians will be tested by fire. God said that this fire will make it clear what our works on this earth have been like. Some works are temporary because they will only last as long as the earth lasts. Other works will endure for all eternity. We see here that both are temporary works and our lasting works will be tested by fire. 2 Peter 3:10 says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." Any works that are like wood, hay and stubble will quickly be gone. Any works that are like gold, silver and precious stones will be eternal.

In 1 Corinthians 3:14-15, we read, "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." Our works that we build on the foundation of Christ will endure and last for eternity. We read that Christ promises we will receive a reward for any works that last and endure.

We see that Christ is eager to give us rewards. Matthew 10:42 says, “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” We can have joy as we know that the Lord is going to reward us for any lasting service that is done in His name.

In contrast, those works that were only for this earth will be quickly gone like wood, hay and stubble when they are burned. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, many of their works were like wood, hay and stubble because they were not growing to maturity. As a result, their works were done to please themselves on this earth and had no eternal value. God said that such works will not last because they are not built on Christ. The Christian that has no works of eternal value will see everything that he did after he became a Christian burned by fire. However, every person that has repented of their sin of unbelief and placed their faith in Christ will be saved. However, it will be as through fire because their works that were not lasting will be destroyed and will receive no eternal rewards.

Since Paul was confident that the Corinthians had truly placed their faith in Christ, even though they were not growing to spiritual maturity, He asked all those who were true Christians two questions. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says, “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.” The first question was, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God?” We want to help our children understand that their body is the temple of God. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Here, we see that it should be the desire of every Christian to bring glory to God both with the things that they do with their body and the things that control their lives in their human spirit.

The second question is, “Do you not know that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Every Christian needs to understand that the Holy Spirit comes into his or her life at the moment of salvation. Romans 8:9 says that any person that does not yet have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them has not become a Christian yet. That verse says, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” In contrast, Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit is the down payment and eternal guarantee of our salvation until we get to heaven.

Paul also warned that if anyone defiles the temple of God that God will destroy that person. This is a warning to those who are not Christians and would try to destroy the church and any person that is a part of the church. Matthew 18:6-7 says, “But 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!” Here, we see that God will judge those

in the world who offend any Christian. God says that the temple of God, every Christian, is holy and He will judge anyone who tries to destroy His temple.

Paul also gave a warning to each Corinthian Christian not to deceive himself. 1 Corinthians 3:18-23 says, “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’; and again, ‘The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’ Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--all are yours. And you *are* Christ's, and Christ *is* God's.” This warning to the Corinthians is also a warning that we need to give to our physical and spiritual children. We need to warn them about the danger of deceiving themselves.

Here, we see that Paul gives a summary of the first three chapters to help us understand how to build on a firm foundation. First, in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul warned about the dangers of depending on human wisdom. He pointed out in those verses that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of the world. Here, we see that he warns again that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. We help our children to build on a firm foundation when we help them understand the importance of depending on godly wisdom instead of human wisdom. 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 says, “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.” We want to help our children build their lives on godly wisdom.

Second, Paul said that we are not to boast about the teachings of any particular man if we are going to build on a firm foundation. Instead, we want to help our children learn to build their service and work for the Lord on the foundation of Christ. The Lord is the Creator of all things. As a result, all things belong to Him. However, as His children, we are promised that we will share His entire inheritance. Romans 8:16-17 promises, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” As we help our children build their lives and ministry on the firm foundation of Christ, we can share with them that just as we have suffered with Christ we will also share in His glory. If we help our children learn to do service that is like gold, silver and precious stones, they can look forward to an eternal reward that will be given to them by Christ when they stand before Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help both your physical and spiritual children learn to focus on the things that are eternal in their lives and ministry.