

“Building a Life”

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

INTRO:

Not everyone is born to be a carpenter. I appreciate what carpenters do. Over the years, I have done carpentry work on several building projects. When I am forced into this role I think about Amos’s description of his call to being a prophet. Amos wrote in **Amos 7:14-15**:

“I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel’”

I am not a carpenter, nor the son of a carpenter, but often I filled that role, not well I am sure.

The Apostle Paul writes about building projects in the text we are about to study. The building he has in mind here is not a physical one, it is a spiritual building. How is this building built? Like most buildings, we begin with the foundation and then work on the superstructure. So, Paul expands on his image by taking us through the two aspects of building: laying the foundation and then building the building itself.

I. Our Foundation (v. 10-11)

II. Our Superstructure (v. 12-15)

I. Our Foundation (v. 10-11)

A. ***“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. 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” (vs. 9-10).***

Paul told us how the Corinthians came to Christ through the sowing and reaping ministry of Paul and Apollos. Then he changes the image to teach us two things. **(1)** He wants us to understand that our lives are built on Christ. **(2)** We are building our lives our churches by how we live before the face of God.

B. So, we begin with the foundation. It is axiomatic that if you do not have a good solid foundation, your building will not last long. What is our foundation? It is the foundation of Christ. **(1 Corinthians 3:10-11)**

“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.”

The source of the foundation is still the grace of God. Paul was the master craftsman to lay it down, but the Lord Jesus is the reason that the foundation is sure. The foundation is not reinforced concrete; it is the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. This is the Gospel. The Lord Jesus

calls us to believe in Him, not just in some doctrines about Him. Salvation is a person; the foundation of the church is also a person.

C. **Vs. 12** says, ***“Now if any one build upon this foundation.”***

Who is Paul referring to here? Is Paul writing about the Corinthian church as a whole; is he talking about the individuals as individuals, or is he talking about both?

1. Context indicates that the teachers of the church are in Paul’s mind here. The Corinthians must see Apollos and Paul as those who are trying to build the church on Christ. But is this all that is here?

2. Paul uses a phrase here that seems to broaden the application. He says, ***“Let each one.”*** Thus individuals receive the charge here. Not only are churches (which are believers in Christ) built upon the footing of the Lord Jesus, but the individual believer who makes up the church is building his life upon the word and life of Jesus.

3. **Vs. 13** and **15** support this point of view. Paul writes that fire shall test each one’s work.

“Each one’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

Twice the pronoun ***“each one”*** is used. **Vs. 15** follows the lead of **vs. 13**.

“If anyone’s work will be consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved so as by fire.”

Does this sound like a statement made to someone who is in leadership of a church? Are the only rewards that a leader can receive related to what he does in the local church? This appears on the surface again to have a broader sense than just to the leadership.

D. For these reasons, I think that both the individuals who are the church and the leaders of the church are in view here. This means that Paul’s warning here is for each one of us. If we are going to build a life, we must make sure, first of all that the foundation is there! **(John 1:12)**

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”

We are converted and the foundation for our lives is laid when each of us trust the Lord Jesus Christ to save us.

II. Our Superstructure (v. 12-15)

A. The foundation is taken care of, now let us consider the life, the superstructure of the building. What are we building into our lives? **(1 Corinthians 3:12-15)**

“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."

The Apostle Paul lists six building materials – ***“gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw.”*** It is important to note that Paul is not speaking of stability when he writes about building material here. Wood is clearly superior to gold for structural strength. Rather he is talking about the permanence and quality of the life that we are building upon this foundation. Most of all, he is thinking of the material's resistance to fire.

1. Sometimes we build into our lives and the lives of others that which has lasting value from God's perspective. In the language of the text that would be gold, silver, and precious stones. We live embracing the values that God loves, doing His will, making sacrifices to please Him. In the end of “The Sermon on the Mount” the Lord Jesus gives us some building advice. **(Matthew 7:25)**

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”

The issue here is whether we are building a life on pleasing self, or are we building out lives on pleasing God.

2. The other side is the ***“wood, hay, and straw.”*** These less than the best building materials are used when we tried to do things our way and not God's. When we make choices and do things pleasing ourselves and not pleasing God. I think the rest of the Lord's vivid picture fits nicely here! **(Matthew 7:26-27)**

“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

B. As we build our lives, we need to remember the building inspector will someday come.

“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.” (1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

1. Paul outlines two possible results arising from the building inspection of our lives. The first is that when the fire is applied, most of what was built into the life will endure for all eternity, and the result is that we will receive a reward. What is that reward? I know what it was that Paul looked forward to. **(2 Timothy 4:8)**

“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.”

Other than this reward, I do not know. But I am sure of this, when we get to heaven after building a life of gold, silver, and precious stones, we will not regret any sacrifices made to build this life, and we will be eternally grateful that we did it.

2. The second possible result terrifies me. I want it to also terrify you! Here is a life in which the foundation was laid – he or she was saved – yet, the whole of the life was given to pleasing himself or herself, and not to pleasing God. Suddenly, when the fire comes it is all gone. And Paul says simply ***“he will suffer loss.”*** Is this eternal loss? We know that this is not a loss of his eternal salvation. But will this person regret for all eternity what he did or did not do in building a life here? I think so. Why?

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” (Revelation 14:13)

Is it possible that our works will follow us throughout all eternity? It will make a difference how we serve, give, and pray in this present life, one hundred years from now?

So, beloved, we are together building a church, and we are individually building a life. The question is what kind of a life are we building? Someday, everyone will find out.