

## Building for the Lord, 1Corinthians 3:10-15

Psalm 127:1, “*Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it...*” Last Wednesday evening, I included and read our subject passage (1Cor.3:10-15) along with the text we were considering, but ran out of time before really using and applying it to our study of *The Wise and Foolish Builders* from Matt.7:24ff. So, I thought we'd go back there this evening for a more complete understanding of its contribution to the subject of *building for the Lord*.

### The Context of 1Cor.3:10-15

Before we can really comprehend (and subsequently correctly *apply*) any passage or text, we must first understand it in its context. Thus far in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, several salient points have been made- each predicated and built upon the previous:

- There were *divisions* (fractures in fellowship) that manifested themselves in split allegiances to *men* rather than a unified devotion to Christ, 1:10-17.
- These stemmed from affections for and affiliations with *worldly wisdom/words* over *divine wisdom/words*, 1:18-20.
- To correct these things, Paul further endeavors to remind them of: the *true nature* and *power* of God's wisdom, 1:21-31; his own previous practices and purpose when among them, 2:1-5; and the *process* (of inspiration) by which God's wisdom is expressed and was delivered to them, 2:6-16.
- Then he reveals that their *fleshly* attitudes and activities had hindered the normal and natural process of *growth* and *development*, 3:1-9.

It is within this context that we find our text.

### The Primary Points of 1Cor.3:10-15

**A. Regardless of who *begins* or *continues* the work, each must be careful *how* he builds, v.10.** The right *foundation* is essential (cf. Eph.2:20), but so too is: the right *purpose/objective*, cf. 1:17; 2:2-5; the right *binding agent* (the *wisdom/words of men* divide and destroy, while the *wisdom/words of God* unify and save), cf. 1:13,21-24; and the right *means/method* of building, 2:1-5!

**B. Building must always be upon the *right foundation* of Jesus Christ, v.11.** If we seek to *build* on the foundation of “man's felt needs” (of health, wealth, or entertainment, cf. 2Tim.4:3-4), we surely have the wrong foundation- and the structure will be destroyed, cf. Matt.7:24-27!

**C. The *durability* of each man's work is dependent upon the *quality* of the materials utilized, vv.12-13.** Paul had built in Corinth upon the correct *foundation*, cf. 2:1-5, and Apollos had *added to the structure*, cf. 3:4-6, but whether or not the *building remained* would be dependent upon the *quality* of the Corinthians themselves- for they were *building blocks* of the structure! Would they be *gold*, *silver*, and *precious stones*, or *wood*, *hay*, and *straw*, v.12? At the time of writing, and acknowledging that the final verdict of *testing with fire* was yet to be determined, they were certainly looking more like *wood*, *hay*, and *straw* (very flammable) as

opposed to *gold, silver, and precious stones* (which are either *purified by* or *impervious to* fire)!

**D. Reward versus saved though suffering loss, vv.14-15.** These verses are difficult unless we keep them in, and carefully note, their context. To that end, consider a few pertinent specifics:

- The *reward* spoken of is predicated up *the work/building* remaining, v.14, but such is not the only factor. Note that it will also be “*according to his own labor*,” v.8. What do these things mean? If the Corinthians *failed to remain* would Paul (or Apollos) be denied *the reward* of heaven? Certainly not, for Paul has already pointed out that he had built upon the *right foundation*, toward the *right purpose*, with the *right binding agent*, and in the *right way*! The Corinthians themselves would determine whether or not they were *inflammable* or *flammable* building blocks when *tested by fire*, cf. v.12.
- Given these things, *the reward* mentioned is not heaven itself, but the satisfied pleasure of a builder who sees his work remain though tested by *fire*, cf. 2Cor.7:11; 1Thess.2:19!
- Conversely, should his work *not remain*- be *burned up* (*destroyed* rather than *purified/hardened* by fire), he shall *suffer the loss* of heartache and despair of what might have been, rather the joyful *reward* of victory and triumph, cf. 1Thess.3:5. Therefore, *he himself shall be saved* on the basis of *his own proper labor*, even though what he attempted to build was destroyed when tested, cf. vv.8,15.

#### **Take-Home Lessons for the Corinthians and Us:**

1. **The building is God's, so *no man* can destroy it without recompense, vv.16-17.** Some, if not most or even all, of the Corinthians were *destroying* God's building there in Corinth through their improper affection/affiliation with worldly wisdom, divisive attitudes and activities, and spiritual immaturity. These particular verses (vv.16-17) are a very specific warning to them, and all others similarly afflicted, against being *destructive* rather than *constructive*.
2. **Let no man deceive himself, vv.18-20.** If any man thinks *he is wise in* (and of) *this age*- and thus presumes himself to be *gold, silver, or precious stones*, but is in reality *wood, hay, and straw* to be burned, is therefore, very much *deceived*. He thinks he is *mature*, but is yet a *babe*. He thinks himself *wise*, but is yet *foolish*. He thinks himself *worthy of reward*, but will be *destroyed*.
3. **Christians are *inheritors* of all things, *if we are* (or become) building blocks of *gold, silver, and precious stones*, in God's building, vv.9,12,21-23.** No man- including Paul or Apollos, can do that for you. You determine what *kind of building block* you are! So, will be *gold or silver building blocks* that are *purified and improved* rather than *destroyed* by fire? Will you be *building blocks of precious stones* that are impervious to *fire*? Or will you be *building blocks of wood* (strong, but vulnerable to fire) or *hay/straw* that cannot withstand *testing by fire*? The choice is yours!