

1 Corinthians 3:10-17
The Church Must Be Built on the Gospel

Pastor Eric Douma
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Paul's Flow of Thought

1 Cor 3:5-9 = Paul and Apollos are fellow workers – the Corinthians are “God’s building” (vs.9)

1 Cor 3:10-11

- A. Paul laid the foundation of the Church
- B. Someone else is now building on it
- B. That someone better be careful how he builds
- A. The foundation Paul laid is Jesus Christ

1 Cor 3:12-15 Judgment Seat of Christ: All Believers will answer as to how they built: gold, silver, precious stones

1 Cor 3:16-17 Warning not to destroy God’s Temple

By Grace Paul Laid The Foundation

1 Cor 3:10-11 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Grace of God = Paul’s bragging of being a “wise master builder” is attributed to God’s grace.
(1 Cor 4:14-15; 9:1-2)

Wise = “sophia” Those at Corinth claimed to be wise – but Paul taught actually wisdom – from God (2:6-16)

Builder = ἀρχιτεκτων - Both “architect and engineer.”
Paul is not a mere τεκτων “carpenter” (Isaiah 3:3 LXX).

Builders Must Build With The Gospel

1 Cor 3:10-11 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Foundation = Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1:23; 2:2)

Each man... Paul is warning the teachers in Corinth (not Apollos or Peter) that they cannot build with their materials – the “sophia” of man!

Other = παρά – Literally “along aside.” Paul is showing that laying another foundation apart from the true gospel is not possible

We Must Build With The Gospel!

1 Cor 3:12-13 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.

*The Corinthians must build the superstructure on top of the foundation (Christ) in a way that is consistent with the foundation.

Gold, silver, precious stones = Are materials that endure the testing by fire and are therefore consistent with the foundation. (1 Chron 22:14, 16; 29:2; 2 Chron 3:6; Hag 2:8)

Wood, hay, straw = Are materials inconsistent with the foundation – and therefore will be burned up.

Our Works Judged During The Day of The Lord

1 Cor 3:12-13 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.

The Day = “The Day of the Lord” “Paul has various expressions for this “Day.” For him it involves the Parousia, the resurrection, and judgment. Hence it is above all “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5:2 [cf. v. 4!]; 2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Cor 5:5), which OT term he transformed into “the day of our Lord Jesus (Christ)” (1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16). Although there is no distinction in these terms as to what aspect of the future Paul is emphasizing, that of judgment tends to dominate” (Fee, NICNT).

Excursus: "The Day of the Lord"

- Broad day of the Lord:** Begins with the inauguration of Daniel's 70th week (7 yrs). It will come unexpectedly.
- 1 Thess 5:2** For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child...
- Narrow day of the Lord:** The day that Jesus comes and fights for Israel. (Joel 2:31; 3:14-15; Zech 14:1-4; Mal 4:5)

Reward or Loss At The Judgment Seat of Christ

1 Cor 3:14-15 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- Build with the gospel = reward
- Build with anything else = loss

2 Judgments:

2 Cor 5:9-10 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (White throne Rev 20:11-15)

God's Warning To False Teachers

1 Cor 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Temple = $\tau\epsilon\pi\omicron\nu$ – temple complex as a whole, ναοc – the inner sanctuary where God dwelt.

God will destroy in hell those false teachers who build improperly on the foundation!

James 3:1 Brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (John 3:10)

Summary:

This text has singular relevance to the contemporary church. It is neither a challenge to the individual believer to build his or her life well on the foundation of Christ, nor is it grist for theological debate. Rather, it is one of the most significant passages in the NT that warn—and encourage—those responsible for “building” the church of Christ. In the final analysis, of course, this includes all believers, but it has particular relevance, following so closely as it does vv. 5–9, to those with teaching/leadership responsibilities. Paul’s point is unquestionably warning. It is unfortunately possible for people to attempt to build the church out of every imaginable human system predicated on merely worldly wisdom, be it philosophy, “pop” psychology, managerial techniques, relational “good feelings,” or what have you. But at the final judgment, all such building (and perhaps countless other forms, where systems have become more important than the gospel itself) will be shown for what it is: something merely human, with no character of Christ or his gospel in it.
