

Lesson 2 9 February 2014

Building on the Foundation

Lesson Scope: 1 Corinthians 3 and 4

Lesson Focus

Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion concerning spiritual discernment. The Spirit of God, through the believers' knowledge of the Word of God, opens their understanding to the mind of Christ and enables them to overcome.

But some were embracing the philosophical influences that had infiltrated the Corinthian church from nearby Athens. These were doctrines that glorified the mind of man instead of the mind of Christ. Although the brethren at Corinth had received salvation by faith in Christ, their spiritual growth was hindered because their focus drifted to human personalities and talents rather than remaining on the one foundation, Jesus Christ, and the principles involved in church building.

Jesus is the only foundation. We cannot overemphasize this eternal truth. But this truth must be made practical. Go over the lesson principles for church building and ask yourself these questions: Am I able to understand the deep truths of the Scriptures? Am I cooperating with God and my brethren? Am I able to accept the place God has for me right now? Can men tell that I am building on the solid Rock, Christ Jesus? Are my influences helping others on the highway of holiness? (Eternity will reveal the full answer to this question.) Am I willing to "spend and be spent" for the cause of Christ?

Remember, salvation is the gift of God. We do not earn it. "Man's work" as taught in chapter 3 pertains to the influence of our lives on others. As Ephesians 2:10 points out, since we are saved, we will obey the Master Builder and work for Him with all diligence. The church is the temple of God. Her leaders as well as her people must work together to promote her strength and purity.

Lesson Aim: To present principles for church building.

Theme Verse: [1 Corinthians 3:11](#). For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Lesson Text

Building by Example

[1 Corinthians 3:1-9](#)¹ And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.² I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able.³ For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?⁴ For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?⁵ Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?⁶ I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.⁷ So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.⁸ Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.⁹ For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

Building Together

[1 Corinthians 3:10-18](#)¹⁰ According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;¹³ Every man'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.¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.¹⁶ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?¹⁷ If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.¹⁸ Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 ¹ Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

Building With Care

1 Corinthians 4:8-9 ⁸ Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. ⁹ For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

1 Corinthians 4:14-16 ¹⁴ I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. ¹⁵ For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. ¹⁶ Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

1 Corinthians 4:19-21 ¹⁹ But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power. ²¹ What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and *in* the spirit of meekness?

Questions for Study

Building Together

1. List evidences of carnality in the church at Corinth that militated against building together.
2. What practical principles from the analogy of husbandry can be applied to church building?

Building With Care

3. What things should one take heed to when building on Christ, the foundation?
4. Discuss the effects of fire on the various "building materials."
5. What does God require of us as stewards?

Building by Example

6. What basis did Paul have for his fatherly warnings and appeal (see also 1 Corinthians 4:4-7, 10-13)?
7. What factors should be considered when the questions in 1 Corinthians 4:21 must be answered?

Analyzing the Passage

Although Paul addressed the Corinthian church leaders as brethren, their humanistic reasoning, carnality, and lack of spiritual judgment were evident (1 Corinthians 3:1).

He called them to serve unobtrusively, working together with and exalting God, the sovereign giver of all (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). Husbandry and building (1 Corinthians 3:9), or "framework," are analogies for the church, "the temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Notice that 1 Corinthians 3:10-16 seems to indicate a work in progress. Therefore we must take heed how we build on the only foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

The day (1 Corinthians 3:13) may indicate the grind of time. The passing of time concludes a verdict. "Wisdom is justified of her children" (Matthew 11:19).

Fire is God's method of testing "man's work" (the souls of persons being built or "influenced" into the kingdom), whether it results in purification or destruction. Gold, silver, and precious stones represent people who are refined and purified. Wood, hay, and stubble represent those who do not endure to the end. To be saved "yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15) warns of the fine line between a man's work and his spiritual state (1 Corinthians 3:15-17).

Every steward (overseer) will be known by the record of his account (1 Corinthians 4:2). The Lord will make proper judgment of every man (1 Corinthians 4:5). Reigned (ruled) (1 Corinthians 4:8) seems to be speaking ironically of flawed stewardship. Further, Paul says that if they would reign in faithfulness, he would work together with them. But some were puffed up (1 Corinthians 4:6). Their show of wisdom, strength, and honor (4:10) was of man and for man. To be made a spectacle (from the same root word as theatre) was not to be praised but to be defamed with mocking, scorn, and injury (1 Corinthians 4:11-13).

Principles and Applications

Building Together

1. Those who build the church must be spiritual, able to understand the deep truths of the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Since Jesus has come, we have the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the truth

(1 John 5:20). This understanding comes by daily searching the Scriptures and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Diligent study removes the shame of ignorance and is the path to rightly dividing the Word (2 Timothy 2:15).

2. Men must cooperate with each other and with God, the master architect, in building the church (1 Corinthians 3:6-9). Some in the background, others in the foreground, and God in it all! Teamwork is essential. Cooperation in the home, school, local congregation, and beyond reflects the unity of the Spirit and brings glory to God.

3. We must recognize the place of varying gifts God has given for the building of the church (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). God has set the members in the body as He has pleased. We must lose ourselves in the work of the church, doing our best with the gifts God has given us and appreciating and encouraging others in the exercise of their gifts.

Building With Care

4. To build the church, we must carefully build upon Jesus Christ, the only foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). We cannot overemphasize this truth. Our lives must center on Christ. Paul challenges us to be "rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as [we] have been taught" (Colossians 2:7). This means more than lip profession. The Scriptures are clear that obedience is the test of one's connection to Christ. We must beware any emphasis on a saving relationship with Christ that is not coupled with a life of self-denial and separation from the world.

5. "Man's work" must meet God's standard (1 Corinthians 3:10-13). Since God's standard is holiness, "shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ... Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:9, 14). By the grace of God, we labor upon this premise, employing the enduring principles of God's Word. Does our influence within the church call others to God's standard? Eternity will reveal "of what sort it is."

6. Church building requires diligence befitting a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Oh, brethren and sisters, let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices, but rejoice in the Lord Jesus and make no provision for the flesh. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine;

continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16). We may not flinch at the high cost of holiness. We must nurture in our children a willingness to bear the cross. We must teach the importance of shunning the world and of valuing Scriptural church standards.

7. Church builders are responsible as stewards of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). All members have the stewardship responsibility to share the good news that Jesus saves! May it never be said of us, "You never mentioned Him to me." God needs men who are willing to sound out the Gospel and hold forth the Word of Life, not only by word but also by faith and practice.

Building by Example

8. Dedicated church builders must be ready to suffer rejection and defaming for the cause (1 Corinthians 4:8-9). "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Though we may become weary in the fight, we must avoid becoming weary of the battle. No, many of us have not yet resisted unto blood. "If in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:5). "If no one joins me, still I will follow, / No turning back."

9. Church builders must exhibit a loving concern for the souls of men (1 Corinthians 4:14-16). The Scriptures give us these concepts to emulate: "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.... Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11). Warnings given with sincere appeal cannot easily be shrugged off.

10. Church builders must be able to discern between the sincere and the insincere (1 Corinthians 4:19-21). Holy Spirit discernment must be sought when evaluating others. Decisions based on Scriptural principles and precedent, rather than on suspicion, frame of reference, family traits, or position, are the most credible. Much prayer and carefulness are needed to choose the most redemptive corrective measure.

Important Teachings

1. Those who build the church must be spiritual, able to understand the deep truths of the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

2. Men must cooperate with each other and with God, the master architect, in building the church (3:6-9).
3. We must recognize the place of varying gifts God has given for the building of the church (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).
4. To build the church, we must carefully build upon Jesus Christ, the only foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11).
5. "Man's work" must meet God's standard (1 Corinthians 3:10-13).
6. Church building requires diligence befitting a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).
7. Church builders are responsible as stewards of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).
8. Dedicated church builders must be ready to suffer rejection and defaming for the cause (1 Corinthians 4:8-9).
9. Church builders must exhibit a loving concern for the souls of men (1 Corinthians 4:14-16).
10. Church builders must be able to discern between the sincere and the insincere (1 Corinthians 4:19-21).
11. Building acceptably is marked by spiritual power (1 Corinthians 4:19-21).

Answers to Questions

1. List evidences of carnality in the church at Corinth that militated against building together.
They failed to mature in Christ because of envy, strife, and division that resulted from their party spirit. They were relating to each other as men of the world and not as brethren.
2. What practical principles from the analogy of husbandry can be applied to church building?
Good husbandry is characterized by cultivated fields and orderly rows of plants that are free of weeds. With proper moisture and the blessing of God, plants are healthy, yielding good fruit.
God blesses the church where members are responsive to the Holy Spirit, where each functions in the order he is called to, where purity in love, faith, and duty is held in highest priority, and where peace reigns among the brethren. In this type of atmosphere, all can prosper and bring forth fruit as trees "planted by the rivers of water."
3. What things should one take heed to when building on Christ, the

foundation?

It is by the grace of God that we have been called to build (1 Corinthians 3:10). Each one is accountable to God (1 Corinthians 3:13). Purity is a must (1 Corinthians 3:17). Taking heed to how we build calls for carefulness to avoid self-deception (1 Corinthians 3:18). Judgment Day will come (1 Corinthians 3:13). The defiled and the defiler will be destroyed (1 Corinthians 3:17). The wisdom of this world must be considered foolish if we are to build for God (1 Corinthians 3:18).

4. Discuss the effects of fire on the various "building materials."

Gold, silver, and precious stones are purified and refined by flame. These represent souls, influenced by church builders, who "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6). Wood, hay, and stubble are readily consumed by fire. These represent souls, influenced by church builders, who do not endure unto the end (2 Peter 2:20). "But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" warns the builder himself to be faithful as "building material," the results of another builder's labor (John 4:26-38).

5. What does God require of us as stewards?

God's requirements for us are the same as for those of every other era—faithfulness in duty, in calling, and in accurate accounts—without pretense. God delights in blessing those stewards who hold precious the mysteries (deep things) of His Word and are careful to maintain them by faith and practice. God requires us to be ministers of Christ, sounding out the Gospel to our children, among ourselves, and to the world we live in.

6. What basis did Paul have for his fatherly warnings and appeal (see also 1 Corinthians 4:4-7, 10-13)?

His warnings were for those who were "puffed up for one against another" (1 Corinthians 4:6). They were reigning for self-glory (in irony "as kings") and the praise of men rather than suffering as spectacles for God's glory (1 Corinthians 4:9-13). These were motivated by wrong counsel (1 Corinthians 4:15). They were deceived concerning their accountability to God as well as to Paul as their spiritual father (4:18).

His appeal called them to imitate his ways in Christ (1 Corinthians 4:16-17).

7. What factors should be considered when the questions in 1 Corinthians 4.21 must be answered?

Holy Spirit discernment must always be sought when church builders are called to make evaluation of another member's level of sincerity. All parties involved have the right to all the facts available. Decisions are the most credible when they are based on Scriptural principles and precedents rather than on suspicion, frame of reference, family traits, or position. Much prayer and careful deliberation are needed to choose the most redemptive, corrective measures.

Summarizing the Lesson

Are you building on the Rock,
High above the sandy beach,
Where no sudden wave can shock,
Where no beating tide can reach?

Years, like tides, will come and go;
Tell me, are you very sure
That they will not overthrow
Much that seemed at first secure?

Lay with patience, faith and prayer
Your foundations, deep and wide;
Build thereon with watchful care,
Far above the angry tide.
Are you hearing and obeying?

Are you working, watching, praying?
Tell me, does your dwelling stand
On the rock, or on the sand?
—Jessie Pounds

Research Guide

1. Read 1 Corinthians 12 to refresh your mind on the function of members in the body of Christ.