

1 Corinthians Class 5 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online.

We are now in class number 5 in our series on Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. We hope you've been enjoying the classes so far, and we're making good progress.

We're going to begin this evening in **chapter 3**. But as always, before we begin, we want to make sure that we ask God's blessing and guidance on all of us, both the presentation and the hearing. So, if you'll please bow your heads, we'll ask God's blessing.

[Prayer]

[01:35]

Last time we made it through **verse 8** of **1 Corinthians chapter 3**. Let's just briefly remind ourselves of what we were looking at.

Paul starts the chapter by talking to the people of Corinth about how they really were acting much like the world around them and leaving God out of the picture. So he uses the word *carnal*, or as we looked at the word *sarkikós*, from Greek, that has the sense of "all that goes into making up a person, who, at the same time is leaving God out of the picture." And he says, "That's what you're doing," and he says, "I have to almost continue speaking to you that way because you haven't really understood the spiritual lessons behind this."

Carnal = *sarkikós*
sarx = flesh, body

All that goes into making a *person*—personality, character, intellect, natural abilities, etc.

...leaving God out of the equation.

He then talks about the roles that he and Apollos, for example, had because they dealt directly with the Corinthian congregation. Then he says, "*I planted, Apollos watered*, but we know, and you should remember that it is *God* who gives *the increase*. So, it makes no sense to have favorite people when it's God who is the One who actually provides the growth. We don't have that power."

So he uses that particular metaphor up through this **8th verse**, and actually a little bit into the **9th**, and we'll see as we go that he begins to change the metaphor there. But, in essence, part of what he's saying here is, each individual that God calls and places in a position of responsibility has different skills; they bring a different skill set to the situation. And, they are able to make different contributions, with God's help. But ultimately, we as human beings are not going to produce spiritual growth. God is the One who does that.

So, we finished through **verse 8**, and then we come to **verse 9**. Paul says:

[1 Corinthians 3:9] *For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.*

Now, I want to note one point before we actually look at the changing metaphor here, where he talks about: *we are God's fellow workers*.

I think sometimes we may misunderstand that a bit, almost as if we are on the same level as God and we're just kind of rolling up our sleeves alongside God and working side by side. That's not really the sense of this. When you consider this, we are the servants. We are coworkers with one another. Whatever our responsibility may be, we're all coworkers in accomplishing God's purpose. God is the owner of the field. We're the servants, so we're not on the same level of God. So, don't misunderstand when it talks here about being "fellow workers," or in other places it talks about "coworkers." **We** are the coworkers. Each of us has a task and responsibility, but God is the owner. He's the One in charge.

[4:20]

Now, we're in a society today where, unfortunately, we often miss some of the agricultural metaphors that are used in Scripture simply because we are not familiar with the process of growing crops or caring for animals in the same way. When anciently someone, for example, David wrote in **Psalm 23** *the Lord is my Shepherd*, the concept of a shepherd was a very real concept to people of that day. They could understand that there are many different facets to what a shepherd does.

Chances are good that many of you who are listening to this may have never even met a shepherd, much less, have an idea of exactly what they do. Surveys have shown that people in our society today, especially younger people, have very little understanding about how food is produced. They just simply know they go to the grocery store and there it is, or nowadays order it on Amazon, but they don't really understand the whole process.

Now, probably many of you, especially those of you who are a little older, have had the experience of growing gardens, things along those lines. As I was growing up, I had the privilege of taking care of some livestock: horses, cattle, goats and chickens, all of those things. We often had gardens, so we had that exposure to that. My wife came from a background where they always had gardens. So, we tend to pick up some of those things, but in the last many years, we've only had gardens a couple of times. Life just seems to be so busy that most of us don't have time for that, or in many cases don't have space for that.

So, we may miss some of those agricultural metaphors, and Paul has been using that here. But he's now going to switch the metaphor. He said, *you are God's field*. Okay, in the metaphor of agriculture, Paul planted, Apollos watered, God gives the increase.

But, now we're going to move to a different metaphor, one of building. This is probably a metaphor that Paul is very familiar with because most of his work was not done in rural areas, it was done in cities. In fact, Paul refers to the building metaphor more than any other writer in Scripture. Twenty-six times in his epistles, Paul uses a "building" metaphor, so it's something that, again, people would be familiar with. Those who grew up in cities would see buildings being made, so it's easier for them, in some senses, to understand the metaphor in that way—much as when we use the agricultural metaphor: there is one who plants; there's one who waters; there are those who take care of the weeds; there are those who harvest. There are those with different functions in that way.

Likewise, when it comes to building a building, there are people who have different functions. There are those who are—those who can come in and do the rough work. There are those who come in and do the finish work. There are those who work in stone, those who work in wood, those who work in plumbing or electrical, or nowadays, IT—all of those things; there are specialized areas. But each individual is necessary in order to accomplish the building. So Paul's using another metaphor here that would be easily understood.

So, he said, *you are God's building*.

[7:36]

He says in [1 **Corinthians 3**] **verse 10**:

10 *According to the grace of God—*

Remember, God's grace is what God gives that we don't really deserve.

10 *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.*

So, we're going to begin to do a metaphor here of building. It's interesting—small point, but an interesting thing—the term that's translated here *master builder*, the Greek word is *architekton*, which sounds very much like our term “architect.” It's not quite the same function. Probably what we would say is, the *master builder* here is the on-site manager of the building—the one who oversees everything and makes sure it's done in the right way.

Now, Paul comes along and he says, “What have I got? God has given me this opportunity to do the oversight.” And he said, “I have come in, and I have laid the foundation.” Paul doesn't say he is the foundation. He doesn't say he provided the foundation. God is the One who provides the foundation. Now Jesus Christ is the foundation, the chief cornerstone, as we read back in **Ephesians** and we will read again as we go a little further today.

[8:49]

So, it's not a matter that Paul says, “I am able to provide you the foundation; it comes from me.” No, it came from God. Jesus Christ is that. But, in bringing that message, the gospel message that's focused upon Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah, as the King of the coming Kingdom, Paul says, “I placed the foundation. I laid it there where it's solid, and you can begin to build upon it.” So, he uses that aspect of it.

The verb that's used here for *have laid* is interesting. It's what's called a perfect tense. Perfect tense means “it's completed.” It's not something that's an ongoing process. Paul is not saying, “Oh, I'm continually laying down foundation for you.” No, the process of putting the foundation there is already accomplished. The building has to come above that. And what we're going to see as we go further is that what we build on the foundation is going to be tested; it's going to be examined. And he's going to even use the metaphor “fire,” that it's going to test the structure that we build on it.

But you will note that foundations are not tested in that way. Once the foundation is placed, even if there's a terrible fire as we've often seen, for example, in the West Coast areas of California where those horrible wildfires have gone through, the entire house may go up in flames in a few minutes, and all that's left is the foundation. Foundation doesn't need to be tested. Jesus Christ is our foundation. There doesn't need to be any testing of Him. It's solid; it's firm. But what we build on it is going to be tested and examined.

[10:35]

So, he tells the people in Corinth: what are the problems here in the Corinthian congregation? What's wrong with our building, so to speak? And he makes the point clear to begin with, the problem is not the foundation; foundation is fine. What we do with it depends on us. So, to really understand, to correct the issues, what we have to do is: “Let's go back to the foundation and make sure that we're building carefully upon that.” Paul is not implying in any way that, you know, he did a good job, but Apollos didn't. No, he's not judging Apollos' work at all. That's not what he's saying. He shows us that the individual who builds on the foundation of Jesus Christ needs to be very careful in the way that he builds.

Probably what will come to your mind, as it does to mine, is the very end of what we call the Sermon on the Mount, in **Matthew chapter 7**, where Jesus Christ gives these words, starting in **verse 24**:

[Matthew 7:] 24 *“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: 25 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.*

26 (And as he continues) *“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: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

So, we can draw many lessons from that. But one of the things that we understand is that, regardless of which foundation you build your house on, it's going to go through pretty much the same storms and trials. The difference is not whether you have the storms and trials. The difference is how you come through them. Those who build on the solid foundation, the Rock, Jesus Christ, are going to be able to endure the difficulties of life. Those who don't won't be able to endure. And of course, He makes it clear that we're not just talking about building a building. He's talking about whether we hear His words and do them or not. So, it's a very important lesson for us.

The context of this passage here, I think, is important to understand because it can be misunderstood easily. The context—and let me just say, the way sometimes people misunderstand what we're about to read is they say: "Well, we really hope you'll do a good job as a Christian, but if you don't, don't worry; you're gonna be saved anyway. It'll be all right."

That's not really what's being said here. We're not being told that we can be careless. The context here primarily has to do with the responsibilities of the ministry. Remember, Paul said, "I laid the foundation and Apollos watered." Okay, the ministers came and did the—well, excuse me—I'm mixing the metaphors there, "I planted and Apollos' watered." Paul says, now, "I laid the foundation. Those who come along build upon that." So, he's making the point that the ministry has a certain responsibility here.

Now, that may sound a little funny—it has to me for a long time—to say: "Well, now here's the problem in the Corinthian Church." Why are we suddenly talking about the responsibility of the ministry to build? Well, I'll show you that in a moment because I think there's a very good reason for that. But, at the same time, there is a principle here for us to derive as well in our own personal lives, because we, likewise, as we just read there in **Matthew 7** (as it's still on the screen), we recognize that we have a responsibility to build in a personal sense as well.

[14:20]

Now, we're going to see as we go a little further here that we're not talking just simply about building our own personal lives. He's talking about building a temple, and that temple is symbolic of the Church. So yes, I think it is proper to say that these are primarily—this section primarily is referring to the work of the ministry. But again, why would that be? Why would people in the congregation be encouraged—as some have taken it—to sit back and evaluate, to critique the work of their pastor? Is that really what Paul is saying?

Well, let's go further. He says, [**1 Corinthians 3**] **verse 11**:

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"No one is able to lay an additional foundation" is the sense of it here. It's not really talking about necessarily setting something off to the side and using a different foundation, although that certainly could be. But, it seems to be talking about individuals who come along and want to build, but instead of building clearly on the foundation, they may get off a little bit, and they begin to build things that are not built on that solid foundation of Jesus Christ.

When we begin to insert our own opinions, our own ideas into things, we're not building on the right foundation. We have to be very careful how we do that. So the use—the understanding and the use of Scripture is very, very important. That's something we certainly stress for the ministry, and I think many of

our ministers do a wonderful job of that.

So, we need to understand that we don't build on a different foundation. Everyone must build on the same foundation, and that foundation is Jesus Christ. Those who build must make sure that what they build is in full harmony with that foundation.

The example and the teaching of Jesus Christ must be the starting point for everything that we do. We don't look to the world first and see what they tell us to do and then try to make that fit with the foundation of Jesus Christ. It doesn't work that way. We begin with that foundation, and, if there are things that we can pick up from the world around us that can help us be more effective, well, that's fine, but we don't build our temple, our building, our lives on what the world says. That's not the starting point. The starting point is the foundation of Jesus Christ.

So, what did Jesus Christ tell us to do? The commission that He gave to the Church was a commission of making disciples. Remember what He said there in **Matthew 28 verses 19 and 20**.

He says—I'll pick it up in **verse 18**, actually:

[Matthew 28:] 18 *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."...*

Now, remember what we talked about [in] the last class when we went through a certain aspect about teaching? We said that there were actually two facets to bringing this message. There was the *kerygma*, the pronouncing, the announcing of the message that's there as a herald. And then there's *didache*, which is the teaching, the training, helping people to understand. So, there is a proclamation, and then the process is that of making disciples. We are to help people understand so that they can be a disciple of Jesus Christ—not our disciples, but disciples of Jesus Christ. Now, remember, a disciple is not simply a student; there's more to it. A disciple is one who seeks to walk in the steps of his master, of the one that he's following, and that's what we're told to do. We're to help people be able to walk in the steps of Jesus Christ. So, this is our responsibility.

[18:28]

Now, let's consider again what Paul said about the foundation we must have. I'm going to pick it up in **Ephesians 2, verse 19**, and then we'll notice especially **verse 20**:

[Ephesians 2:] 19 *Now, therefore (he says), you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (in Verse 20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*

We've talked about the chief cornerstone. It is the first stone of the foundation. It is the stone from which every measurement in the entire building is made, the orientation of the building, the size. Everything depends upon that chief cornerstone, which Jesus Christ is.

Now, I'll just continue on in **verse 21**:

21 *in whom the whole building, being fitted (joined) together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, (Verse 22) in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

A temple was considered to be a place where the god dwelt, and when it comes to God's temple, there

was the understanding that in a sense, through His Spirit, God was there. Glory was brought to that temple because of God's presence, in that sense.

So, he goes on to tell us:

[1 Corinthians 3:12] *Now (consider this building that we're talking about) if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,*

Now, he's going to go on and talk about all of those aspects of it. But, we might notice here the aspect of *if anyone builds on the foundation*. Everyone is going to build on the foundation. So he's not saying: "Well, it's okay if you just have a foundation." No, you don't really live in the foundation. You've got to have more than that.

So, everyone is going to build, but the "if" aspect of it here has to do with what materials we choose to build with, how we're going to build. But building is not optional. Once the foundation is there, it's there for a purpose. We can't just say, "Okay, I'm done. I know about Jesus, and I know about the gospel, so I'm done; everything's fine." No, we've got to build upon it, and it's going to take a while. It's a process. And, we don't have to have just a foundation. We can go beyond that. It is the good foundation that does enable us to build in a way that endures.

[21:00]

Now, there's a principle also that we're beginning to see in this passage—that we're going to see that carries forward through the rest of the book. Now, it'll be phrased a little differently, but I want you to consider this principle because I think it is a thread that's woven throughout the entirety of the book. And the thread here is: there are choices to make, and, you need to be careful that you're making the best choices.

You can build on a foundation with any of these things, and as we'll see, that was very common in that society to build with all of these things. Now, it sounds— "Well, you wouldn't build with straw or stubble." Well, yes, that actually—that was used in construction that would last for many, many years. Many people had homes—they had this as a part of it, as we'll see as we go just a little further. No, you can build with any of these things. But what we're being told—and it's not sinful; there's nothing wrong with building with those things—but you do need to be careful that you're making the best choices.

So, in other words, here's a principle that says: there are choices to be made. They're not always choices of sin or righteousness. There's a greater degree of choice here, and as Christians, we have a responsibility to make sure we're choosing properly. We don't just say, "Well, as long as it's not sin, it's okay."

Okay. Think about that principle; we'll carry that forward.

Just as a side point: I've always wondered when I read this about *gold, silver, precious stones*—that what comes to my mind are things like diamonds and jewels of various sorts. Some of the commentaries say that probably the term here, *precious stones*, is more a sense of marble, because many of the beautiful buildings of that time were constructed out of the marble that was so common in the area, so, that may be what it's talking about there.

Okay, let's go a little further here.

As we look at this, what are we talking about? The survival of the foundation is never in question. It's only what's built on the foundation that needs further testing. Now, in that day it was normal for structures to

be made of *wood* and *hay* and *stubble* and relatively easy to build with those structures, with those building materials.

You may remember the famous situation of what we call “the fire in Rome,” when Nero was accused of setting the fire, and he—frankly, history will probably show us that he did—he blamed the Christians for it. But there was this great fire in Rome. Well, when you and I think about ancient Rome, we probably think of all these stone buildings, so how could there be much of a fire? Actually, much of ancient Rome was built of wood. In fact, much of the forests that used to cover Israel were clear cut, and the wood was shipped to Rome because there was such a demand for wood to build structures there. So, there was a lot of wooden structure—what we would probably call tenements—all over Rome. Oh, Nero didn’t like those things, and he was really wanting to get rid of them so that he could put up more magnificent buildings because he thought he would have honor from that. So, there’s a lot more wood structure than you might think that took place in those ancient cities.

But, those structures were quite common, built of these materials. And, again, it wasn’t simply a matter of taking pieces of straw and living in there. But it was a matter that this was incorporated into the clay and would help to solidify it, make it stronger and hold up—it wasn’t so fragile, much as the mud bricks that were made in Egypt by the early Israelites.

[24:42]

So, that was a very common thing to use. People were quite comfortable with it. It would not be unusual at all for someone to build a structure made of those materials, so that’s normal. It certainly takes a lot more effort and work to build with some of these other materials. So, if someone’s in a hurry, or they just want to put up some kind of shelter, oh, they might use those materials and be satisfied to stay there. But, Paul is telling us that’s not really the best choice.

Now again, I like *Barclay’s* comment here. He says:

Paul is not here thinking of the building up of wrong things, but of the building up of inadequate things. A man may present to his fellow men a version of Christianity which is weak and watered down; a one-sided thing which has stressed some things too much and others too little, and in which things have got out of balance; a warped thing in which even the greatest matters have emerged distorted.

So, it may have been normal to build with those materials, but Paul is saying we need to be careful. Now, this is instruction, as we said, to ministry. It’s also instruction to each of us.

(He says) [1 **Corinthians 3**] **verse 13** *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.*

Now again, a couple of things that we might tie in with that—you may want to tie in just as a reference, **Isaiah 48**, in **verse 10**, where Isaiah was inspired to write, giving God’s words:

[**Isaiah 48:10**] *Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.*

So, when it talks here about this day when our building is tested by fire, we’re talking about a time of affliction. And he tells us that when that time comes, each one’s work will be clear because the day is going to prove it.

Now, we’ve very often looked at this and said, “Well, *the Day* here [1 **Corinthians 3:13**] refers to the *Day of the Lord*, that it’s talking about the time of Jesus Christ’s return.” Okay, I think there is an application of

that, and certainly that will—there will be a great testing upon God's people at that time. But if that's the only meaning of this phrase *the Day*, then basically this verse is only for people who live at the time of Christ's return. What about the rest of us? Isn't our structure tested down through time, and of course, yes, it is. So, I would tend to think that the term here *the Day* is a reference to the afflictions that come into our own personal lives—that we will have those days when we are tested.

[27:30]

Now again, do we apply this to the Church? Well, if you've been around the Church for very long, you know that we've certainly been through our days of testing too. And we know that, unfortunately, a lot of things that were built didn't last. Many of us remember those days when 150,000 people assembled in various places around the world to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. It's not that way anymore; that's gone. Thankfully, there are those who survived *the day, the day of trial, the day of affliction, the day of testing*, and we are always grateful to be together in those times. But, it is true that the Church has gone through its periods of testing too. So I think that's an appropriate way to see it.

It tells us that what we've built is going to be revealed *by fire*. The fire's going to *test everyone's work, of what sort it is*.

[1 Corinthians 3] verse 14 (He says) *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.*

Okay, so if we build carefully with the right materials, and it endures the day of affliction, then God rewards. Now remember, salvation is a gift. Reward is according to works. So, we're not saying here that you must earn your salvation. That's not the way it comes. That's by God's free gift. We are required to live certain ways in order to receive the gift, yes, but we don't earn that gift, that's not possible for us. But, He does tell us that He rewards His people according to their works. And how do we do that? Well, when the time comes and the affliction comes along, then the works are really tested.

Probably all of us have seen, perhaps, buildings that look so impressive when you see them, and yet, when difficulty comes along, they don't survive well. They don't go through the trials and difficulties well. Perhaps you've seen, for example, areas where a hurricane has come through, and there may have been beautiful homes there along the beach, and yet, a powerful storm may come in and sweep them away because they weren't designed to survive that kind of thing. Others perhaps were not so beautiful, but they survived because they were well-built and [well-]designed.

Well, we're talking about, here, building a spiritual life, a spiritual temple, and when we go through those difficult times, there are going to be parts that survive and parts that don't.

Now, what does this tell a minister? Well, it tells us that as ministers we have a responsibility to make sure that, as we help God's people, that we're building in a quality way. Now, I think every minister does, when he reads a passage like this, he stops and looks at: "What have I been covering? Have I been really building? How have I done in helping God's people to be solid and strong?"

I will have to say that in my years as a church pastor, I look back and I think there were some messages that were very helpful and constructive and helped people be strong. There were others that really weren't. Sometimes we may get caught up in some idea or some approach that maybe we read our own ideas into things, and we have to recognize: "Wait a minute, that's not the kind of thing that's going to endure."

[30:40]

I remember a minister, years ago, who made a big deal out of the fact that he didn't have a television in his home that he would turn on, and he would avoid that kind of thing. But then, each sermon he gave seemed to be about whatever the latest movie was that he saw. And we used to almost joke about: "Okay, here comes the movie-of-the-week sermon." And we heard some really unusual sermons!

I remember one that I heard of, that I frankly didn't hear, but it was based upon the slogan for Coca-Cola. Jesus Christ is "the real thing." That was pure fluff, and it didn't survive the trials the Church went through. So we all have to look at that, and I certainly had to as a pastor, at times, look back and say, "Okay, is what I covered—has it been something that strengthens and builds, or not?" We all have to do that evaluation, and sometimes we probably have to admit, well, that wasn't really the best approach, and we try to change. We try to do better.

But it's also a principle in our own lives. What are we spending our time on? How much are we really focusing on this calling that God has given us? Are we as individuals building on the foundation of Jesus Christ in the right way? People can get so distracted by things that really are, in the long run, inconsequential. So, we need to be careful about that. Sometimes we've had a great deal of emphasis on what kinds of health foods you eat, or, certain aspects of the way we conduct our physical lives. Okay, those can have benefit. Paul tells us that physical exercise has a limited value, but it does have a value. But, don't make this your life. There are other things that are more important.

So, Paul says to those who are doing the building— Oh, excuse me. Before I go there, I want to mention something more here. I asked the question earlier, why would Paul spend the time to be talking about what the ministers are supposed to do? Again, we said he's not giving this so that people can be critics of their pastor, but why then would he then bring this up?

Remember the problem at the beginning of **1 Corinthians [1]** and at the beginning of **chapter 3**? Paul brings out that they are choosing ministers as their "hero," as their one that they think they should follow: "Oh, *I am of Paul; I am of Apollos; I am of Peter*"—all of those things. And Paul is saying, "No, that's not appropriate. Why would you follow an individual when each individual has a function to carry out, but God is the One who tests, not you? You're not the one who makes this determination. God is the One who tests, and each one's work will be examined by God."

[33:31]

So he says:

[1 Corinthians 3] verse 15 *If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

So, what's he saying here? This phrase of *so as through fire*—most of the commentaries say this is a picture of someone escaping from a burning building. He lives, but he loses everything in the building.

Now, again, when he uses the phrase here *if anyone's work is burned*, it indicates that there will be some things that are going to burn, that are not going to survive. There will be other things that do. So, he tells those who are doing the building: "Make sure you're using the right materials, you're building in the right way, on the right foundation, and those things will last. If you don't do that, it doesn't mean that you will lose your salvation as a servant of God, but the reward certainly can be lost in that process."

It's interesting—*William Barclay* puts it this way. He says:

It is the tragedy of a fruitless life, of a minister who built so poorly on the true foundation that his

work went up in smoke. His sermons were empty froth or windy words without edifying or building power. They left no mark in the lives of the hearers. It is the picture of a wasted life.

Now again, I hope that would not describe any of our pastors today, any of those who serve God's people. *Barclay* is speaking in a much broader sense. But again, we can certainly think of many individuals who have done very eloquently, who are wonderful speakers, but aren't around anymore—they're gone. In some cases, dead, and in some cases just simply going off and doing other things. Being really impressive, being the individual everybody wants to listen to does not really mean that there's substance there. Very often we hear things that are so impressive, they sound so religious, but when you stop and think about them, there's really not much there.

So, we all have to examine ourselves in that way. And I think we also have to keep in mind, a minister can only do a certain amount. He can provide God's people with the best material, the material they need to be growing and overcoming, but it still becomes their responsibility to use the materials. To just receive them and do nothing about them, well, that's what Christ was talking about at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. If we hear them and don't do it, it's like building on sand. So, the ministry as a whole can do its part, but each of us has a responsibility as well.

The words can certainly apply to the ministry and serve as a very sobering reminder of the need to provide God's people with the right building materials. But, Paul didn't really write those words just so we could sit back and judge whether our pastor is providing the right material or not. That's not what these words are for. Among other things, these words show us that we're each expected to build good and precious things into our lives as Christians. Christianity isn't just about the things we avoid doing. It's also about those positive, godly traits that we build into our lives with God's help. The person who's satisfied with doing the minimum necessary, just getting by, that individual's failing to learn to build as God intends.

Now, stop and think—this life is not God's goal. God has a much bigger plan. He has a whole universe out there. He's creating a family, and that family is a family that's trained to build. So, doesn't it make sense that if we want to be a part of that family forever, if we want to be a useful part of that family forever, that we should be learning about building? That's important to God. When Jesus Christ came to the earth, isn't it interesting that God placed Him in a family where the head of that family was a builder, a carpenter? So, it's important for us. We need to learn to be builders in the right way.

[37:48]

So, Paul now takes it a step further.

[1 Corinthians 3] verse 16 *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

So, it's not just "a" building we're building; we're building a temple. And a temple is supposed to be a place where God can dwell, where God's presence can be. So, when we talk about the temple, the building that Christianity is supposed to be, in this case, we could be talking about the Church as the temple. It's supposed to be a dwelling place for the Spirit of God.

Likewise, in our individual lives, Jesus Christ is supposed to be dwelling within us. That's a part of what we're supposed to be doing. So he says, in this case, you—which is plural—you collectively, you as the body of believers are supposed to be building this temple. The whole of all of us together is seen as this temple that God is building.

Now again, we already referred to this in **Ephesians 2**, but I want to look at it in a different translation here, notice what **verse 21** is in the *New Revised Standard*:

[Ephesians 2:] 21 *In him (in Jesus Christ) the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.*

Our lives should clearly show that we are a dwelling place for the Spirit of God in our midst, collectively as well as individually.

You might also remember the analogy or the metaphor that is used in **1 Peter chapter 2**, where Peter wrote:

[1 Peter 2:5] *you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

We are like the stones of that temple, and, the stones are going to survive the fire. We need to make sure that we likewise are building in that right way.

It also tells us that we are supposed to know that the Holy Spirit dwells within us, collectively and individually. How do you know that? How can you tell that? It isn't a feeling. It isn't some wonderful thing that you just have this chill that runs up your spine. No, Paul makes it clear, and again, we're not going to turn back there right now, but when we consider **Galatians 5 verses 22 and 23**, he talks about the fruit that the Spirit produces: *love, joy, peace*, all those characteristics that are there. Those should be evident in our lives and in the Church as a whole. So, God's Spirit is to be dwelling in our midst.

[40:43]

Now, then Paul takes it in another direction, and he warns us about a danger.

[1 Corinthians 3:17] (He said) *If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you (and this is collectively, all of you together) are.*

So, here we are warned against not just building with poor materials, but defiling what God is building. Bringing into that foundation, or onto that foundation, those things which are wrong, which are incompatible with God's way.

It's interesting to note that there's a distinct difference between the individual who fails to build adequately—who does retain salvation, but loses reward—and the individual who *defiles*, who will be destroyed. God does not allow defiling in His temple. So we must be a people who make sure that we don't allow those things which defile, spiritually obviously, to become a part of our lives or become part of our relationship with one another.

So, he says in **verse 18**:

18 *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.*

So, Paul now comes back to this concept of individuals wanting to be looked up to, wanting to be respected, wanting to be someone really special. Sometimes that comes into the Church too, and that's not supposed to be a part of the way that we do things. Don't deceive ourselves in that way.

If anyone...seems to be wise in this age. Okay, an individual who really is skillful in navigating Satan's world, then that individual needs to become a fool in order to become truly wise.

Now, this connects Paul's earlier comments about *worldly wisdom* and *godly wisdom*, but how does it connect with what he's just been saying about the Church as God's temple? Well, when we come into the presence of something awesome and inspiring, let's say for example, a majestic mountain, the beauty of the night sky, some miraculous intervention that God has carried out—if you've had the opportunity to do that. I grew up in the Midwest, and we had hills, and, we called them mountains, but they really weren't. But as I had the opportunity later on to go, for example, out West and see some of the magnificent mountains there, when you come around one of those, you can't really capture the feeling that's there.

[43:25]

I think of, for example—my wife and I visited in Seattle a few—a couple of years ago, and thankfully, unusually, the weather was really, really clear, and you can see Mount Rainier. And I took a number of pictures of Mount Rainier, and not one of them captured the feeling that's there. But, when you're there, and you look at this massive mountain, you feel so small, and you are just amazed at the creation that God has.

Okay, when you come into the presence of something like that, there is that sense of awe. If you've had the opportunity—and I haven't had this in many years—but, the opportunity to go out at night, away from all of the light pollution that we have so much of in this world, and see the night sky and all of its glory, it, again, makes you feel very, very small. It's the sense of awe at what you see.

Okay, when you come into the presence of something awesome, it has a way of humbling you. You feel small. You feel pretty unimportant in those situations. Experiences like that are important in helping us have an accurate understanding of ourselves. Maybe Paul is telling us that, when we truly see the temple of God, through God's eyes, as the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, it ought to be a humbling experience for us. Seeing ourselves as wise and powerful seems a bit foolish. Ever felt that way?

Sit in services and look around you, and realize those individuals beside you have been chosen by God. In the third heaven, the Father, Jesus Christ examined those people and determined: "What's the best time to call this person to be a part of My family?" And they chose to call those people around you. Sometimes you sit there and look around and say, "What in the world am I doing here? Who am I that I should be among those that God has personally chosen in this age? That's awesome!" There should be a sense of awe.

Unfortunately, I think we grow so use to each other that we lose that sense of awe a lot of times, and we just see people. We just see our friends, and maybe we like them, and there are people we don't really know very well, and all of those things. But we just see people and fail to recognize who they really are in the sight of God. I think Paul is telling us that we need to be very humble if we really want to learn.

As he says, *let no one deceive himself*. This is what's called in Greek a "present imperative." It means "stop doing something you're already doing; quit deceiving yourself." Paul uses that tense quite often, and this is one of those examples. You see, godly wisdom is not something you add to worldly wisdom. Paul says here, "You have to *become a fool* to be truly wise. You need to reject the wisdom of the world in order to understand and live by godly wisdom." To have godly wisdom we have to be willing to look like a *fool* in the eyes of men.

[46:43]

Simple example of that: we don't accept evolution. We believe that man and all that exists is the result of God's divine creation. Now, when I say we don't believe in evolution, perhaps I should qualify. We do

believe that things can change, that within a species things can change over time. That's sometimes referred to as "microevolution," and there are examples of that. That's fine; we can understand that kind of thing takes place. But, "macroevolution" that goes across species, where lizards become birds or dogs or elephants—no, those are things that we don't believe in. And we don't believe that we as human beings are the highest form of animal.

Now, if you try to say that in the areas of, let's say, "higher education" today, you're looked at as a *fool*. You're looked at as someone who really almost is pitiable because you have this strange belief. But when you understand that—the understanding that God created us changes your whole perspective on life. It changes your perspective on human relationships; it changes your perspective on family, on where we're going, on what life is about. It changes all of that. If you accept evolution, you lose **all** of that.

So, you can't try to meld the two together. People have tried to do that. People have tried to do what's called "theistic evolution," that: "Well, okay, the days of creation, they probably weren't literal days. They were billions of years, and God is just using a metaphor." No, they're literal days; the evening and the morning are the "blank" day. They're literal days. And if you believe that, then in the eyes of the world, you're a *fool*. Okay, be willing to be seen in the eyes of the world as a *fool*. If you really want to have godly wisdom, it's necessary.

[48:48]

We could use another example in our world today. If you want to offend someone, express what we call the "complementarian view" of man and woman. We believe that God created man and woman as equals—equals spiritually, equal potential before God, equally His sons and daughters. But, we also believe we're created different from one another—that God created man and woman to complement, to make up with each other what the other lacks. We believe that there are things that men do generally better than women. And that's not a flaw, that's just simply a matter that God put different characteristics in different ones. We believe there are things that women do better than men—not inconsequential things, important things.

Men are terrible at building homes. Women are "home makers," and "home" is a beautiful word. It's not just a matter of "a house." There's so much more there. And God has given to women an amazing skill to build what is, in fact, the most important human relationship we have. These are things that we recognize as: God has created us—men and women—unique and different. And we complement one another, and one is not superior to the other.

But try to express that in our world today, and you will be accused of being a "woman hater," of all kinds of things, as we've seen around us. There are studies that have been done—I even saw one very recently about how "being masculine is toxic." No, it isn't. God has created us with unique characteristics. But, if you want to believe something like that, in the eyes of the world you're a *fool*. Okay, are you willing to be a *fool* in the eyes of the world in order to have God's wisdom? We all have to be.

[50:52]

Paul goes on—again, this is a quote [from *William Barclay*]:

Paul goes on once again to pin down the root cause of the dissension and consequent destruction of the Church. It is the worship of intellectual, worldly wisdom. The trouble about this intellectual pride is that it always has two things.

Now, I want to include this quote from *Barclay* because I think these two things are very important when

we look at the concept of pride. He said:

1. It is always disputatious. It cannot keep silent and admire; it must talk and criticize. It cannot bear to have its opinions contradicted; it must prove that it and it alone is right. It is never humble enough to learn; it must always be laying down the law.
2. (And second) Intellectual pride is characteristically exclusive. Its tendency is to look down on others rather than to sit down beside them. Its outlook is that all who do not agree with it are wrong. ...That is precisely what intellectual pride cannot think. It tends to cut men off from each other rather than to unite them.

So, it's causing problems in Corinth.

[1 Corinthians 3:] verse 19 *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness";*

This is actually a quote from **Job chapter 5 [verse 13]**. Interestingly, again—this is kind of a point of trivia, I suppose—but there are only two places in the New Testament where the book of **Job** is quoted. This is one of them. The other one is **Romans 11 verse 35**. But it brings out the point, as it's translated in the *Septuagint* version, that: God looks upon the wise, and He uses their own wisdom to undermine them, to show the foolishness of what's there.

[1 Corinthians 3:] verse 20 *and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."*

They really don't go anywhere. That's a quote from **Psalms 94 verse 11**. The reasonings that wise people have—when you leave God out of the picture—those reasonings are empty. They're not going to get you where you need to go. We can look at the whole history of mankind and see all of the different philosophies that have come forward that are supposed to produce all the wonderful blessings, and they have failed, one after another after another.

Someone once said that: "We really don't know if Christianity works or not because no one's ever actually tried it." Well, Jesus Christ tried it. It works. We believe very deeply that it works, and we believe in a world, when Jesus Christ returns, where Christianity is going to work in a way people can't imagine. But it's true that in this world, man comes up with all kinds of ideas, and they don't work. So, he says, "*The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.*" They're useless; they're empty.

[53:53]

So, he says in **[1 Corinthians 3:] verse 21**:

Therefore let no one boast in men.—

Okay, we're coming back to that concept: "Oh, well, I follow Paul. You know, Paul has the insights, the wisdom. Paul brings things out of the Scripture." "Oh, Peter was there with Jesus. He can quote what Jesus said. Yes, I'll follow Peter." And Paul writes here: "Don't boast in men. Men are just servants. They're just tools that God can use to accomplish His purpose." He says:

—For all things are yours:

What does he mean by that? I mean, you and I don't own all things. But basically, what he is saying here is that God's plan is so all-inclusive that what we encounter, the experiences of life, the opportunities, the trials, are all a part of God's fulfilling a plan for each of us—but a plan that's bigger than each of us, a plan that's for everyone. So what takes place in this world—the trials, the good times, the blessings, the

sadness—all of those things are for us. All of those things have a purpose in God's plan, in the way that He's working.

(He says) **verse 22** *whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter), or the world or life or (even) death, or things present or things to come—all (of them) are yours.*

All of them are for a purpose. God is working this out. He says the service that he had provided, that Apollos provided, that Peter provided—he said all of that was empowered by God for the benefit of the Church—it's yours. As members of the Church, that service belonged to them. God provided it for them. It was given to them. And since all of them give their service to the Church, why would you want to limit yourself to only one? That's like building a building and the only builder that I allow on site is an electrician. Well, I need electricity, but I need these others as well. I need the rough carpenters. I need the finish carpenters. And if I'm going to use stone, I need stonemasons. I need all of those people. Why would I limit myself to one? They're all there to provide something that's needed. So Paul says, isn't it a little foolish to just limit yourself in this way, when all of these things are provided by God for you?

[56:25]

And then he adds one more thing, well, perhaps two more things that we can say that are important to keep our perspective.

[1 Corinthians 3:23] ... *you are Christ's,—*

You have a purpose too. You belong to Jesus Christ, and therefore He is supposed to be able to use you as a workman to build—not just to build you, but to build your brothers and sisters as well, to build your family, to build your friends. He's using you. You are a tool. You belong to Him. And then he concludes it by saying:

— (ultimately) *Christ is God's.*

Jesus Christ is a Servant of the Father. He is there to serve, eagerly, willingly, with His whole heart. And, as we read back there in **Philippians [2:5]**, that's *the mind* that's supposed to be in you and me as well.

Expositor's puts it this way:

Though all things belong to the Christian, they're not centered in him. For all things, actually and finally, belong to God.

This whole plan that God has is for accomplishing His purpose. When we get in the way, when we get our own purposes in the way, when we decide “I want to be this” or “I want to accomplish that” and we leave God out of the picture, then we're really going at cross-purposes with God. This life and what we accomplish in it is not the end result.

Now, should we try to do well? Should we try to accomplish things? Should we have goals and directions in our lives? Yes, we should. But always those goals are submitted to God, and we ask Him for His guidance. We ask Him to lead us where we need to be and what we need to do. That's true for all of us.

Well, we're at the end of **chapter 3**, and that's a good breaking point for us as we have just about finished up our time today. So, we'll conclude there, and in class number 6, we'll pick up in **1 Corinthians chapter 4**.

Thanks again for joining us. [58:31]