



# Built to Last

## Introduction:

Continuing on his plea for unity in the church, Paul commands the believers in Corinth to be builders of the church, which in and of itself is a unifying experience. His building metaphor helped paint the picture of how a unified church would look, if built on the foundation of Christ. If the church was built on any other foundation than Christ (such as on the worship of certain leaders), even if it were to last in this lifetime, at the end its foundations would be exposed for what they were all along, and its efforts discarded.

This part of the letter therefore continues to warn the Corinthians of building the church on poor foundations, while encouraging them to be faithful builders, building on Christ as their only foundation.

## Today's Scripture Text

### 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

## Sermon Points

### #1. We are expected to BUILD

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Paul makes it very clear that sitting back and hoping the church will build itself is not an option. If we have been saved by Christ, then the foundation has already been laid, and we are expected to be faithful to build upon it. Not only that, but we should take care in *how* we build it too. It is not an afterthought, something we think about as we roll into church on a Sunday, but it is to be an intentional focus-point of our lives. We are the living stones that make up the building, which is the church, and so, in ignoring our identity as part of God's temple, we are choosing to be unfaithful to the call. It really is that simple.

God expects us to build, and to build with care and intention. When he returns, our building will be scrutinized to see if it was actually built on Christ or not. The Corinthians were in danger of building the church on the powerful personalities that had brought the gospel to them, rather than on the gospel itself. And the temptation for us today to build on other things, other than the gospel, is just as tempting. Believers who truly and carefully build upon Christ's foundation will be rewarded by God, when Christ returns. Those who build upon false foundations, as impressive as they may have appeared in their day and age, will not be rewarded, but instead their true motives will be exposed. Believers who build well or poorly will still both be saved, but only the faithful will be rewarded.



- ♣ What does it mean for us to build the church upon Christ as the foundation?
- ♣ Why is building the church all of our responsibility, and not just for the clergy?
- ♣ Why do you think that the faithful building of the church is unifying?
- ♣ In what ways do you think the church in our day is tempted, or even succumbing to the building of the church on faulty foundations?
- ♣ How do you think we can remain faithful to build the church on Christ as our foundation? (E.g. What are some of the checks and balances one would need in place to test our motives and our faithfulness?)

## #2. We are empowered to BUILD

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Some of us may take on board Paul's expectation of building the church with sheer dread, just at the thought. Some of us feel unqualified, while the majority of us probably feel overwhelmed by life's intense pressures and busyness, that we worry we will never manage to fit this in as well. Instead of seeing it as part of our purpose in life, we see it as an unmanageable burden that we cannot cope with.

However, Paul reminds us that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, both individually and collectively, as a body of believers. The Spirit of God continually draws us towards Christ, and empowers us to draw others towards him too. We are not left to build with our own resources or by our own efforts, because the Spirit is the real power behind drawing people closer to Christ.

When we are complacent, divisive, antagonistic, or when we bring any other forms of disunity into the church (God's temple), it is a direct affront to God himself, because the church is his holy dwelling place. But when we submit to the Spirit's work, and join him in his labour to draw people to Christ, we are co-labourers with him.

- ♣ Why is it important to grasp that we are not building the church with our own resources but are powered by the Holy Spirit?
- ♣ What do you think it looks/feels like to have the Holy Spirit empower you to build the church faithfully?
- ♣ Why is disunity in the church a direct affront to God himself?
- ♣ Do you think that if we saw ourselves as co-labourers, we would still see it as exhausting work? Explain.

## #3. We are exhorted to BUILD

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:18-23

Once we have been convicted of disobedience, and convinced to be faithful builders of God's church, we then need to consider *how* we build. We are not given free rein to do as we please. Our attitude to our building matters. Though in our natural wisdom, we would fight for our own way, or for what we think is best, when we are unified in Christ, we will bring humility and unity to our building endeavours, and build together on nothing but Christ. Paul reminds the church that they are empowered to build, because of the riches given to them in Christ.



Apart from Christ, they would have nothing with which to build, and so they are completely dependent on God to build his church. This also means that every believer has the same resources available to them, and have been given them by Christ alone. This makes all believers equal in value and in humility, as none of what we have to build with is self-generated, but given by God himself. This realization is humbling and unifying, because no individual believer or church body can boast of its own glory, regardless of how it may appear on the outside, or in the eyes of the world.

- ♣ Why do you think it is important HOW we build the church?
- ♣ Why is it important not to assess the success of a church through a worldly lens?
- ♣ Why is it humbling and unifying to realise that our ability to build the church is given by God alone?

**Take Home:** What is one conviction or take-away that God is asking you to address this week? Share this either with the group or with one other person before you leave.