

# 1 Corinthians Series #9

## "Building on the Foundation" - 1 Cor. 3:5-17

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Our New Building

1. Making plans
2. Investigating the options
3. Following up on leads
4. Praying, seeking God
5. Immense project; quite scary!
6. But you know what - a physical building is nothing
  - a. it is just wood, brick, cement, wire, plastic, and steel
  - b. in the wider scope of history it is temporary
7. But it is a practical need, so we have our building project

#### B. Another Building Project

1. There is another building project we are already fully engaged in
2. The foundation has been laid and we are even now raising the walls and setting the roof.
3. That building project is the ministry of this church.
  - a. it's going on as we meet here on Sundays and Wednesdays and study God's Word
  - b. it goes on when we meet in our home groups
  - c. it goes on as you go to work and put what you learn into practice in sharing Christ with the lost
  - d. it goes on in our homes as we live out our faith in the trenches of daily living
4. The building we are building is the Church
  - a. not these four walls and a roof
  - b. the Church is the people of God as they walk with Him
  - c. and each and every one of us IS actively building
  - d. the question is: What are we building with?
5. That is what Paul speaks about in our passage today.

### II. TEXT

#### A. V. 5

**5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?**

1. This is a follow up to what Paul said in v. 4
2. The Corinthians were carnal and highly spiritually immature
3. One of the evidences of this was their strife and factions

- a. lining up under favorite teachers
- b. The camp of Paul; Apollos
- 4. So Paul asks, "Who am I that you would elevate me to the place of such importance?"
- 5. "For that matter, whose Apollos?"
- 6. "We are simply ministers - servants."
- 7. Let's put this in a more contemporary setting
  - a. you go out to eat one night
  - b. there's another person from Calvary there
  - c. you sit at the next table
  - d. you both get your dinner at the same time, but by different waitresses
  - e. it's a fantastic meal
  - f. but you begin to rave about what a great waitress you have
  - g. the other person begins to argue and says his meal and waitress is better than yours
  - h. pretty soon you're shouting at each other about who has the better meal and waitress
  - i. you get so caught up in the argument, you fail to notice that the rest of the customers have left the restaurant.
  - h. finally, both waitresses come out and say, "Neither of us cooked your meal. Our gourmet chef did. All we did was bring it to your table."
- 8. In effect, this is what Paul is saying in v. 5
- 9. The bickering and fighting among the Corinthians had become so bitter, they had lost their witness in the City.

B. Vs. 6-8

**6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.**

**7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.**

**8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.**

- 1. Paul had played his part in serving God by planting the church in Corinth
- 2. Apollos had played his part as well by coming along after Paul left and teaching them how to go on in Christ
- 3. But they were just servants
  - a. all they could do was fulfill their calling as ministers
  - b. it was up to God to bring about fruit in the lives of the people
- 4. The farmer plants his seed
  - a. he carefully tends the soil

- b. waters and cultivates
- c. then he has to wait for the miracle of life to occur
- 5. This is so important for us to realize
  - a. we cannot make people come to faith in Christ
  - b. we cannot make people grow in Christ
  - c. only the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God can effect conversion and growth
  - d. only God can bring forth fruit
- 6. It often happens that we try to force people to grow
  - a. parents with children
  - b. husbands and wives
  - c. friends
- 7. Really, our call is to serve, and let God bring forth the fruit
- 8. When we stand before Him, He will not ask how many people we saved nor how many we disciplined
- 9. The only question we will have to answer will be, were we faithful?
- 10. The results of our faithfulness are in God's hands

C. V.9

**9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.**

- 1. Again, Paul reminds the Corinthians that he and Apollos were not envious and fighting.
- 2. They were fellow-workers, co-laborers in God's field; by which Paul means, the Corinthian church
- 3. Paul uses a remarkable phrase here: He says that he and Apollos were not just fellow-workers, they were God's fellow-workers
  - a. the partnership was not just with each other
  - b. it was with God Himself
- 4. But wait a minute: Isn't the work of God done?  
 Didn't Jesus say, "It is finished"?
- 5. Indeed, the work of PROVIDING salvation is finished
- 6. But the task of PROCLAIMING it is far from over
- 7. It was this work that Paul was engaged in, along with Apollos and the other Apostles and Evangelists
- 8. But there is a wider application to this than just the Apostles: All Christians are God's fellow workers
  - a. we labor alongside each other in the work of the kingdom of God
  - b. and as we do, God Himself joins the work
- 9. Cannot God do the work Himself?

- a. He could - but He has chose not to
  - b. instead, He has ordained to use us
  - c. the preaching of the gospel has not been committed to angels - though they could certainly do a better job
  - d. it has not even been given to just a select group of qualified men and women who have polished skills of oratory prowess or who have earned degrees from a seminary
  - e. rather God has chosen the weak and foolish of the world to be the bearers of the message of eternal life
  - f. I have often wondered why Jesus rode in to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on a donkey
    - 1) why not a brilliant, fiery white stallion?
    - 2) Here's why: the King of glory rode on a humble beast so that no one would be distracted by the vehicle that carried Him.
    - 3) even so, God delights today in using the humble and meek, the apparently disqualified by the world's standards to be His witnesses, to carry Him to the world
    - 4) so that when people are won, the praise can only go to God
  - g. Christ died - He rose - and He's coming again
  - h. and in the in between time, you and I have the one message that makes the difference between eternal life and death, between hope and despair
10. What an incredible honor this is - to be God's fellow workers!
- a. suppose a Michelangelo or a Raphael told a little boy who cleaned his brushes, "Come here. I will let you do a little work upon my greatest masterpiece."
  - b. Jesus says to us - "Come and work with Me. Lend me your hands and feet and mouth. I will use you, send you, speak through you!"
11. And then, what an incredible encouragement this is
- a. to know that God is working with us
  - b. In Mark 16, end of gospel, he says that Jesus told them to go into all the world and share the gospel
  - c. then He ascended up into heaven
  - d. they went everywhere proclaiming Christ
  - e. Mark writes, that as they went, the Lord worked **WITH THEM!**
  - f. so it is today as we work - God works with us
  - g. and because God works with us, our success is sure

D. Vs. 10-11

**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.**

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

1. At end of v. 9, Paul called the Corinthians, "God's building."
  - a. Paul often spoke of the church as the temple of God
  - b. Ephesians 2:19-22 You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.
  - c. Peter - we are living stones who are being built into a spiritual house in which God dwells. (1 Pet. 2:5)
2. The only foundation the Church can rest on is Jesus Christ
  - a. for it came into being by Him and exists for Him
  - b. there is no other reason for it
3. Paul was the one who had laid that foundation in Corinth
4. Apollos and other had come and were building them up
5. But Paul gives a warning: He tells them to be careful how they built
6. In other words, the foundation was solid and secure
  - a. it was well laid by Paul
  - b. that foundation was The Lord Jesus
  - c. but Paul tells them to be careful what kind of a structure they erect on that foundation
7. Picture a well built, solid, and mighty foundation
  - a. concrete pillars driven deep into the ground
  - b. all connected by a reinforced concrete pad several feet thick
  - c. but then on top of this solid foundation is erected a cardboard hovel with a plastic tarp for a roof
  - b. the visible building does not fit the excellence of the unseen foundation
8. That is what Paul is warning against here
9. Paul goes on to tell us how we can build in a worthy way

E. Vs. 12-15

**12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,**

**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.**  
**14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.**  
**15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

1. Granted; Paul is speaking primarily about the work of people in building the Church
2. But the principle applies to all of our lives because we ARE the Church
3. We have a choice in what we will use to build our lives
  - a. gold, silver, precious stones
  - b. wood, hay, straw
4. What does Paul mean by this?
5. Notice he says that one day what we have built with will be revealed
  - a. the Day he speaks of is the Day of Judgment
  - b. when we were studying Romans 14, we saw that while the Christian has escaped the judgment of sin and condemnation, he/she will face a judgment of works and rewards
  - c. that is what Paul is speaking about here
6. All our works will pass through the fires of judgment
  - a. some will last - gold, silver, precious stones
  - b. others will burn up - wood, hay, straw
7. What are these things?
  - a. the things of God versus the things of this world
  - b. Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."
  - c. over and over the word of God is described as precious treasure - better than gold or silver or precious stones
  - d. Jesus said that heaven and earth would pass away, but that His word would last

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. We Are Building!

1. The building we are doing now is two-fold
  - a. we are each building our lives
  - b. and as we do, we are also building the Church, because we ARE the Church
2. We have a choice to make in what we will build our lives with:
  - a. the wisdom of God as revealed in His word
  - b. or the faulty, fleeting, and futile wisdom of this world

3. The foundation has been laid - And it is mighty!
4. Will we live in a cardboard shack, or a mansion
5. Each decision we make, no matter how small and seemingly inconsequential is another act of construction in the building of our lives.

B. What Foundation Are You Building On?

1. Jesus told the story about two men
2. One built his house on a rock
  - a. when the storms came, it stood the test
  - b. because it had a firm foundation
  - c. Jesus said that rock was Him
3. The other guy built his house on the sand
  - a. beach front property
  - b. great view, party time!
  - c. but then the storms came
  - d. lost everything!
4. Life may be fine for you now
  - a. this may be the summer time of you living in your beach front property
  - b. trust me - the winter is coming
  - c. the storms are going to come
  - d. and if you are not on the rock, you will lose everything!
5. Come join us on the Rock!