

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

“The habit of preachers today is to address their people as though they were all Christians and just need instruction...men and women are being treated as saved who never knew they were lost.” [Lloyd-Jones]

*“In my lifetime I did not care to hear that word that cut me most, and showed me my lost estate aright. I was vexed to hear my sins mentioned, and laid to my charge. I loved him best, who deceived me most; who said, Peace, peace, when there was no such thing.” (Jer. 5:30,31).
[Bunyan, John. A FEW SIGHS FROM HELL]*

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com (blog)

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No Other Foundation

July 21, 2024

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 3:9-17

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

I planted, Apollos watered, but GOD gives the increase. Here were these Corinthians in their spiritual

infancy wrongly exalting men who were nothing but God’s workmen. The pastors and teachers and evangelists who God gives to the church for the building up of the flock, are doing nothing more than planting the seed of the gospel, watering it, and that is all they can do. It is what they are called to do, *but if left to them alone, there would be NO one saved nor would any believers grow.* The garden would be barren.

Why? Because it is GOD who imparts life. He is the one who gives the growth. It is the Spirit of God who empowers the Word which is proclaimed.

And therefor it is absolutely a fool's errand to look to a man – even a man as great as the Apostle Paul – for the creation and growth of the church.

1Co 3:9-17 For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. (10) According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. (11) For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— (13) each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. (14) If the work that anyone

has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. (15) If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (16) Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (17) If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

I wonder? *Saint Paul's church. Saint Mark's church. Saint Peter's.* How does that square with what we have just read here? What would Paul, Mark, Peter and other apostles think about this practice?

Paul is using two figures here for the church:

1. A field. *You are God's field.* The soil was good, prepared by God so that when the seed of the gospel was planted and watered, growth took place.
2. But the primary metaphor Paul uses here is that of a *building*. You are God's

building. Paul preached and some believed and were saved, so a foundation was laid. That was the beginning.

Paul says, *like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation*. You see him use the same image in Ephesians:

Eph 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, (21) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (22) In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The foundation begins by preaching Christ crucified, the Word of the cross. The Apostles preached that very same method and as people were saved, they were added as living stones into

this building (which is now the temple of God).

NOTE: There is no conflict between the Old and New Testaments. The Apostles AND the Old Testament prophets preached the same gospel – salvation by faith in Christ.

Now, why does Paul emphasize his care in laying the foundation? Well, if you have ever built a building and it was built upon a concrete foundation, you knew that the foundation had to be *right*. It had to square. If it weren't, then all that was built upon it would be wrong. And that is Paul's point. Listen to him again:

1Co 3:10-11 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. (11) For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Subsequent workers must take great care that they are preaching the same message whereby the church was built. *No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Now, by “Jesus Christ,” Paul means the gospel. The Word about salvation in Jesus Christ. That is the only message which God uses to build His church. There is only one way, one narrow Way, to come into the church, to be added as a living stone to this building – and that Way is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that Paul warns about two errors:

1. Laying a different foundation
2. Building upon the foundation which Paul laid, but using inferior materials.

NOTE- the foundation dictates what the building is going to be. Those who preach a false gospel have declared that they don’t intend to follow God’s blueprint. So that what they are building is not the church. It is worthless.

What if you decided upon a house, you hired a contractor to build it, gave him the blueprints, and then you return when he notifies you that the house is completed. And what if you look at it and don’t recognize it at all? It is not the house you told him to build. He didn’t follow the blueprints. That is what happens now when a local church is not built upon the true foundation, according to the pattern given by the Lord.

NOTE: There is to be a correspondence between the church triumphant and the church militant. That is, between the church glorified in heaven, and the church which is still fighting the good fight here in this present world. We see this required correspondence in the case of the Old Testament tabernacle construction:

Heb 8:5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern

that was shown you on the mountain.”

Heb 9:23-24 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (24) For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

The Old Testament tabernacle there in the wilderness, and later as Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem, was an earthly copy of the true Temple in heaven. Moses was cautioned by the Lord to be certain to follow exactly the blueprint instructions he was given. The earthly was a copy of the true, of the heavenly.

And so it is with the Temple of God today, the Church. The Church here on this earth is to be a copy, built after the Lord’s blueprint, - a copy of the Church glorified, in heaven, as much as is possible.

What is the Church in heaven like?

1. It consists of true saints, of regenerate people who were redeemed by Christ. There are no counterfeits.
2. It consists of people who are holy.
3. The Church in heaven consists of people who suffered in this world, who were hated by this world.
4. The Church in heaven is characterized by true worship, giving all glory to Jesus Christ:

Rev 5:6-14 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

(7) And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. (8) And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before

the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

(9) And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, (10) and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

(11) Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, (12) saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (13) And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (14) And the four living creatures said,

“Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

As we will see, Paul reminds us that it is quite possible, and indeed very common, for an entity which claims to be a Christian church to be the imagination and construction of man, not build upon the only true foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Let each one take care how he builds upon it” (that is, upon the foundation which was laid by Christ, by the Apostles, and by the Prophets of old). The gospel. Christ crucified. The Word of the Cross. Justification by faith alone in Christ alone.

Let’s look more closely at this:

1Co 3:12-13 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— (13) each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

Gold, silver, precious stones.

Wood, hay, straw.

A Day coming when fire will test the materials.

Remember the context here. It is this:

1Co 2:1-2 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. (2) For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1Co 1:18-21 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." (20) Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (21) For since, in the wisdom of God, the

world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

There was this false wisdom at Corinth, as it is today as well, infecting the church. The wisdom of the world. The Corinthians were acting like the world because they were listening to the philosophers. There was some kind of *syncretism* going on there whereby the world's wisdom was being mixed in with the Word of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is always a threat to the church, and it is a serious and real threat today.

Just two days ago, as you may have seen in the news, a huge fire broke out in downtown Dallas, Texas at the huge facility of First Baptist church. That church has over 15,000 members. They carried out a \$135 million dollar construction program some years back. Their facility covers a number of city blocks right in downtown. The pastor has considerable fame, hosting a daily television program on TBN and Hillsong, *Pathway to*

Victory. He has written over 50 books and is a regular contributor on Fox News. The slogan you find on this church's website is *Your Home for Biblical Truth and Community.*

Now, what the Apostle Paul is telling us here in this letter to the Corinthian church, is that it is VERY possible to build a "church" even as huge as this one, and have it all be for nothing. Why? Because of this error that Corinth was falling into and which is a present and real danger today –

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom...

There it is. Gold, silver, precious stones, OR wood, hay, straw. What makes the difference? This –

- Building upon the one true foundation, Jesus Christ and Him crucified,
- OR,
- Building with lofty speech or wisdom

Now, we are quite justified in asking some fundamental questions (and then applying those questions to ourselves as well) –

Do we see anything at all in the experience of the Lord Jesus, or in the experience of Paul and the other Apostles, or in the experience of the Old Testament Prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel that looks like a 15,000 member congregation in a multi, multi million dollar facility? You know the answer and I will say that we have every right – even a duty – to examine these kinds of things in the light of God's Word and to be very skeptical of them.

This recent fire burned quite a lot of their facility. But let's ask the obvious question that Paul is putting before us here:

What is going to happen when THE fire comes?

1Co 3:12-15 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— (13) each one's work will
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become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. (14) If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. (15) If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

What is this fire? What is this Day Paul is talking about? Listen to Gordon Fee on this –

“For Paul, the gold, silver, and costly stones represent what is compatible with the foundation, the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified; what will perish is *sophia* (worldly wisdom) in all of its human forms. It belongs only to this age, and this age is passing away, along with all that belongs to it (see 1 John 2)...A day of judgment is coming, and it will test everyone's ‘building,’ that is, how one has built, whether of perishable or imperishable materials. The Day of judgment will expose every person's workmanship, whether

gospel or *sophia*. On the one hand, those who stay with the gospel as Paul preached it, who build the Church with gold, silver, and costly stones, will see their work survive the test, and they will receive their reward. On the other hand, those who persist in pursuing the world's wisdom as a method of building, who are building with wood, hay, or straw, will see their work consumed and they themselves will suffer loss – although their loss, Paul is quick to qualify, does not refer to their salvation.” [NIC on the New Testament].

That Day will also reveal the terrible loss which will occur in which many people – products of this worldly wisdom “gospel” – who thought of themselves as God's people are revealed to be otherwise. Why? Because the workers used the world's wisdom, tweaked and altered the message of Christ crucified, to make it acceptable to the world. Some such workers are full-blown false teachers, unsaved themselves. But others, says Paul, are Christians who have squandered all their

efforts by incorporating into their work elements which are of the world, which appeal to the natural man, and which only produce flammable products which will burn. *“The implication as to these kinds of deluded workers who persist in their course of worldly wisdom, are in grave danger, and that they will be pulled out of the rubble heap just in the nick of time.”* [Fee, Ibid].

Those workers in God’s field, in other words, should fear. WE must be very careful that we are not embracing some element of the world’s wisdom in our work of building the Church.

Let’s end with another very excellent summation from Gordon Fee in his commentary on First Corinthians:

“This is one of the most significant passages in the New Testament 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

verses 5-9, to those with teaching and leadership responsibilities. Paul’s point is unquestionably a 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.

BUT –

The good news of this passage is that *one does not need to build badly!* That which has the character of the foundation, Jesus Christ crucified and risen, will not only survive any present hour of testing, but will enter the final judgment as a glorious church; and those responsible for such building will receive their due reward.”