

The Action of the Master Builder

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[0 : 00] And it's Acts chapter 18, reading from verse 1, and it speaks of the establishment of the church at Corinth. Acts of the Apostles, chapter 18, reading from verse 1.

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome, and he went to see them.

Because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked for by trade, they were tent makers. And he argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

And when they opposed and reviled them, he shook out his garments and said to them, Your blood be on your heads.

[1 : 25] I am innocent. From now I will go to the Gentiles. And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titus Justus, a worshiper of God.

His house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing Paul, believed and were baptized.

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not be silent. For I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you.

For I have many people in this city. And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Now we come to 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 10 to 15.

1 Corinthians chapter 3, 10 to 15. According to the grace of God given to me, Like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, And another man is building upon it.

[2 : 51] Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, Which is Jesus Christ.

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, Precious stones, wood, hay, straw, Each man's work will become manifest, For the day will disclose it, Because it will be revealed with fire. And the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, He will receive a reward.

If any man's work is burned up, He will suffer loss, Though he himself will be saved, But only as through fire.

Amen. The Lord bless us. These readings may be to his praise and to his glory. So continuing looking at this introductory first, Three chapters, four chapters of 1 Corinthians.

[4 : 03] Two weeks ago I told you that we were now returning to the main theme. The main theme having been announced in verse 10 of chapter 1.

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, That all of you agree and there be no dissensions among you, But that you may be united in the same mind and in the same judgment.

And the way the apostle has got his people to Corinthians To return to the theme He's in the portion from 2.14 to 3.4 To consider what sort of people they are.

And in that section, he looks at three different sorts of people. Are they unspiritual people? Are they spiritual people?

And he concludes that the problem is That they are carnal people, Meaning they are not under the control Of the Spirit of God. Following on from that, Last week, He directed their attention to think of Himself and Apostle, Apollos, As servants of God.

[5 : 20] What sort of servants are they? What have they achieved? Well, now this week, He extends that theme a bit further And draws their attention to think About what he has done in Corinth.

So first of all, You have the action of the master builder. According to the grace of God given to me, Like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation And another man is building upon it. Let each man take care How he builds upon it. When we come to this statement Of the skilled master builder, Master builder in Greek Is architecton, From which you get the English word Architect.

But the meaning here Is expert builder. And the meaning in ancient Greek And classical times Is actually wider Than what it means in English.

Because in English, The name and the noun architect Has come to mean The man or woman Who draws up the plans For a building to be constructed. Whereas, In the Greek society, It meant not only The man or woman, Usually the man Who drew up the plans, But actually also the man Who built the building Or other device That had been so planned.

[6 : 56] So that's what he's talking about here. He's first of all saying, The way to go about this, This is something that has come to me From revelation from God.

And I've seen the plan. I understand what we should be doing. Here he goes on to describe it As his ministry.

And this is the only place In the New Testament Where the apostle or anyone else Describes their ministry With this word architecton. And it's the only place In the New Testament Where this noun occurs.

But his motivation In all of this Is important. And it's seen in the phrase Like this. According to the grace of God Given to me.

Now what he's saying here is My ministry isn't dependent On my learning. Although elsewhere he will say I'm a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

[8 : 03] Pharisees. I was brought up Under the feet Of Gamaliel Who was a very important rabbi And is still reckoned to be so In Judaism today.

But my ministry is dependent On the grace of God Which is given to me. Now in the epistle to the Ephesians He wants to say That not only has this gifting Been given to me But it's been given To all of us.

Ephesians 4, 7 Grace was given to each of us According to the measure Of Christ's gift.

So the motivation in all of us Has to be This gifting of grace. Our ministry will differ. Our ministry will be complex.

It will be profuse. Because it's the ministry Of the body of Christ. So Not only this He wants to say something else about this.

[9 : 17] And as far as his own calling is concerned He considers that his calling Was to be an apostle A preacher And a teacher. So in 2 Timothy 1.11 He says For this gospel I was appointed a preacher And an apostle And a teacher.

These are the levels The different levels of gifting That have been given to him. Now What is it That the apostle does In Corinth With this grace That has been given to him?

He tries To establish the church By preaching The gospel. Now what about the response? The response is That they had Some very hurtful things To say about him.

2 Corinthians 10.10 They say His letters are weighty and strong But his bodily presence is weak And his speech of no account.

This is the response to somebody Who has spent a year and six months Laying a biblical foundation Trying to build them up In their faith.

[10 : 46] What can we learn from this? It is a truth Which we have to confess That Christian people Often say things to one another And to the pastor For that matter That not only should they Not say They should never ever have thought it To start with But how does he respond?

This is how he responds I will most gladly spend And be spent For your souls Thus his reaction Is not one of bitterness But it is one of love And grace And his response Is to carry on With this all-important work Of laying the foundation According to the grace of God Given to me Like a skilled master builder I lay the foundation And another man Is building upon it In grace The word foundation Is the word familius It is inter Inter Varsity press Who have founded A magazine For theological students And it is called Familius It means a foundation Or a foundation stone So what

is this foundation?

He makes it clear In Romans 15-20 He says this Regarding his own ministry Thus making it My ambition To preach the gospel Not where Christ Has already been named Lest I build On another man's foundation And the only foundation That you can lay That will last That will stand the test Into eternity Is a biblical foundation A foundation of ministry That is based On the word of God I have heard Not from here Sermons on the radio Where the word God And the noun Jesus Were never ever mentioned And it's supposed to be A sermon Directing people's thoughts To the eternal God The only one That's going to stand

The test of time Is the foundation That's built On holy scripture Now he has a challenge According to the grace Of God given to me Like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation And another man Is building upon it Let each man take care How he builds upon it I've said that the foundation That he sought to lay Is a biblical one It's one that has its message All about Jesus Christ And in that passage That we read From the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 18 at verse 5 We read this When Silas and Timothy Arrived from Macedonia Paul was occupied With preaching Testifying to the Jews That the Christ Was Jesus So the foundation

Is based on Old Testament scripture And it's proving That Jesus Is the anointed one The one they've been waiting for Down the centuries Now if you turn to Acts 17 Verses 2 and 3 You'll find that This is the kind of method He uses This time at Thessalonica And we read there That Paul went in This is into the synagogue As was his custom And for three weeks He argued with them From the scriptures Explaining and proving That it was necessary For the Christ to suffer And to rise from the dead Saying This Jesus Whom I proclaim to you Is the Christ So what he's talking about Is a truth The truth of the gospel It centers in In the person of Jesus

[15:19] It takes its foundation In Old Testament scripture And later on In the same epistle In chapter 15 He says I deliver to you As of first importance What I also received That Christ died For our sins In accordance with the scriptures That he was buried That he was raised On the third day In accordance With the scriptures So this tradition That he's now referring to Is something that is based On the Old Testament scripture It's based on the word of God Not only is it based On the word of God It's based On a living person The one who died The one who rose again And the one who will come again Jesus Christ

How do we know That he was being guided Or right By his interpretation Of the scriptures Last time I referred you To Ephesians 2 Verses 19 and 20 Where we read that So then you are no longer Strangers and sojourners But our fellow citizens With the saints And members of the household Of God Built on the foundation Of the apostles And the prophets Christ Jesus himself Being the chief cornerstone So in that text The phrase that we think about now Is this phrase Built upon the foundation Of the apostles And prophets Now the way that phrase Is traditionally interpreted Is that it's thinking about

The prophets Of the Old Testament And the foundation work Of the apostles Whom Jesus called Now Paul in his epistles Has quite a bit to say About the work Of the prophets In the Old Testament For example If we read Romans 1 Verses 1 and 2 We read this Paul a servant Of Jesus Christ Called to be an apostle Set apart For the gospel of God Which he promised Beforehand Through his prophets In the holy scriptures And time and time And time again He refers to What the prophets Have said Relative to Jesus But if that is true Shouldn't the phrase Have been Built upon the foundation Of the prophets And the apostles But it's not It's the other way around Built upon the foundation Of the apostles And the prophets What I'm now talking about Is the situation That existed When Paul was ministering To the varying churches Such as Galatia Corinth Ephesus And so on What they had And what he draws Attention to In 2 Timothy 3 16 When he says All scripture Is inspired by God What he's talking about Is the Old Testament Because the New Testament Was still in the act Of being written And part of the role Of creating That New Testament Was the work Of the New Testament

Prophets Now he refers to this In Ephesians 3 Verses 4 and 5 When you read this You can perceive My insight Into the mystery Of Christ Which was not Made known To the sons of men In other generations As it has now Been revealed To his holy apostles And prophets By the Spirit So in this First century church This role of Paul the apostle And indeed Silas Who comes to Corinth Is a recognized prophet They go together To create What is now The New Testament Canon If you want An illustration Of how this took place Turn when you will To Acts 15

[20 : 25] Here is The first Apostolic council And that council Has been called Because As the chapter Opens Certain men Have come down From Judea Saying Unless you are Circumcised After the manner Of Moses You cannot Be saved Now here Are the mind Of legalists And in the Christian church We're actually quite good At being legalists Not in so much As what you should do But it's more to do With what you can't do But when this was being Discussed As to whether The Gentiles Required to be Circumcised As true Jews Always are Peter stood up And spoke about The conversion of

Cornelius In Acts 10 And he said We believe That the Gentiles Will be saved By the grace Of the Lord Jesus Christ Just as We have been So they resolve To send out Paul and Barnabas Together with Silas And Judas And these last two Are prophets And we read of them In Acts 15 32 And Judas And Silas Who were Themselves Prophets Exalted The brothers And sisters With many words And strengthened Them Now what I'm saying Here is this That these New Testament Prophets Confirmed What was now Being taught And which we

Now receive That salvation Doesn't need Circumcision Does not need Works Salvation Is by faith Through the grace Of the Lord Jesus Christ This is the role That these New Testament Prophets had And finally And finally Tonight The warning Of the master Builder Verses 14 And 15 If the work Which any man Has built On the foundation Survives He will receive A reward If any man's Work is burned Up He will suffer Loss Though he Himself Will be saved But only As through Fire So here Is a warning Which he is Now giving To the Corinthians Let each Man take

Care How he Builds Upon it Now the Apostle has Been laying This good Biblical Foundation A tradition That he had Already Referred to In 1 Corinthians 15 3 Where he Spoke about Christ dying For our sins In accordance With the Scriptures He's done This By his Preaching And teaching Ministry But every Person has To be Take care How they Will build Upon it And answering The question As to why That should Be He also Says in Verse 11 Just this No other Foundation Can anyone Lay Than that Which is Laid Which is Jesus Christ So the Foundation Isn't an It It's a Person

And the Person Is your Saviour And mine Jesus Christ So every Person Has to Be careful What they Do With their Salvation Verse 12 If anyone Builds upon The foundation With gold Silver Precious Stones Wood Haze Straw Then he Says This Verse 13 Each man's Work will Become Manifest For the Day will Disclose It For it Will be Revealed With fire And the Fire will Test What sort Of work Each one Has done Think how Important This statement Now is And the Great Motivation That the Corinthians Now

[25 : 27] Have For sorting Out their Problems Of division And quarreling The reason Is That all This Quarreling And division And all This lack Of Testimony And witness By that Church Will Be tested By fire By fire This is a Fire Of testing And not Of cleansing Yet there Is no Sense That this Fire Will result In any Saved Person Being sent To hell Because of This testing It will Determine What sort Of works We have Performed In this Sphere Of time The apostle In saying This Is building Again On the Scriptures Of the Old Testament And this Idea Of a

Judgment Of works By fire Is also Found in Second Peter Three Verse Ten The Day Of the Lord Will Come Like a Thief And then The heavens Will pass Away With a Loud Noise And the Elements Will be Dissolved With fire And the Earth And the Works That are Upon it Will be Burned Up So the Idea That our Works Will be Tested By fire Is one That is Found in The Prophets Of the Old Testament You find It also In Isaiah 31 Verse 9 His rock Shall pass Away in Terror And his Officers Desert the Standard In panic Says the Lord whose Fire Is in Zion And whose Furnace Is in Jerusalem

So the Concept of Fire Is one Is one That is Found Very Clearly In the Prophets Of the Old Testament And we Read in Jeremiah 17 Verse 4 Repeatedly In the Book of Jeremiah In my Anger A fire Is kindled Which Shall Burn Forever Fire And those Converts That came From Judaism Would be Very Familiar With this Sort of Terminology And they Would Understood God's Judgment Would be Exercised By Fire We On the Other Hand Have Forgotten About this Element of Fire In a Necessary Part of the Testing of Our Works It has Nothing to Do With the Loss of Our Salvation But has

To do With the Final Reward If any Man's Work is Burned Up He will Suffer Loss Though he Himself Will be Saved But only As Through Fire So the Corinthians In reading This And Doubtless Listening to This from The mouth Of the Apostle In a Future Situation Would be Challenged As to What they Were doing With their Salvation With their Commitment To one Another With the Church

With the Message of The gospel With the Unsaved What's the Reaction Got to Be Second Peter Peter 3 11 And 12 Gives the Reaction Since all

These things Are thus To be Resolved What sort Of persons Ought you To be In lives Of holiness And godliness Waiting for And hastening The coming Day of God Here And what Is the Reason Is the Reason that The Corinthians Should take This teaching To heart Put aside all The differences All the Grudges That they Have One Against the Other Because the Day will Come When all Of this Will be Tested by Fire So what Can we Take out Of this We can Take out Of it The action Of the Master Builder He has A vision He has A way That the Church Is to be Built And that Way Is by The Teaching Of god's

[30 : 30] Word But if That is The case There is A challenge And the Challenge That comes To us Is simply This Are we Responding To god's Word in The way That he Wants Us to Are we Doing And building On the Foundation The way That the Apostle Is laying Down So the Conclusion To all Of this Comes to Me As the Preacher Of the Word And to You As the Hearer Let Each Person Take care How he Builds Upon it And if We Would Take That to Heart The Amount Of Blessing Which god

Can pour Out Cannot Be Computed So let's Take it To heart For us For the Glory of Jesus Christ For the World For where We Are That god Might be Glorified All in All Amen We're going To sing a Hymn which Speaks of The time When God's Spirit will Be poured Out in Such a Way That the World will Know Of the Greatness Of god And the Pleasures Of Jesus Reign Jesus Shall Reign Wherever The Son The

Things Those Happened Loós The Christ Friends Him Here Coming