

# The Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] What then is Apollos?

What is Paul? Paul, servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. 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.

[ 1 : 25 ] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will be revealed, 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 upon the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

But if any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

May the Lord bless us these readings may be to his praise and to his glory. When you look at 1 Corinthians, one thing that comes out is very clear.

That here is a congregation that has distinct problems. For example, in chapter 1, at verse 10, he says to you, I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our 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.

[ 2 : 50 ] The problem was that they were divided. And what they were divided about was the kind of preachers they were listening to.

So some said, I am of Paul. Others, I am of Paulus. Others, I am of Peter. Others, I am of Christ. So he's attempting to deal with all of this, and he goes on to discuss two other themes. First of all, his calling and aim to preach the gospel, and then he goes on to talk about the destruction of natural wisdom by such preaching.

When we come to chapter 3, the chapter we are now in, we see how the apostle had returned to his original theme of the dissensions of the church at Corinth.

In the previous section, he dealt with the work of servants of the Lord, and in this section goes on to defend his own action in what he has done in terms of ministry to the Corinthians.

[ 4 : 01 ] So in verse 10, 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. So I want to look at his definition, this wise expert builder.

It's denoted in the Greek by the noun *architecton*, from which we get the English noun *architect*, and it is this that means expert builder.

Now this is the only place in the New Testament that this word occurs, and it actually comes from classical Greek. In English, the noun *architect* has come to mean the man or woman who draws up the plans for a building to be constructed, whereas in classical Greek, it not only meant the man or woman who drew the plans up, but also the man or woman who actually build the building or other device that had been so planned.

So here he's saying something very definite about his ministry. Like the wise expert builder that I am, I have laid a foundation.

[ 5 : 50 ] And he goes on to define this by saying this. It starts off, verse 10, according to the grace of God given to me.

This is his motivation. Now this phrase, according to the grace of God, Paul uses quite a bit. He uses it in Romans 12, 3.

And then, according to the grace of God given to me, and then gives a list of ethical behavior that people are to follow. What is this grace of God that he's talking about?

It's not the grace that gives you salvation. salvation. This is the grace of God the giver.

In Ephesians 4 and 7, we read this very interesting statement. Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

[ 6 : 59 ] So here he's saying something quite different. Not only am I in receipt of this grace of God the giver, but he's also saying that to you, the people of the congregation, God has given this grace that you might serve Christ.

It is dependent on Christ's gift to us. Now as far as the apostle is concerned, his calling was that of an apostle, a preacher, and a teacher.

So in 2 Timothy 1.11 he says, for this gospel, for this gospel, I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

These are the limits or the definitions of the gifts that God the giver has given to Paul. Apostle, pastor, and teacher.

What is it he's doing with this grace that has been given to him? Now, the fact is that he doesn't respond to the Corinthians in the way that they have responded to him.

[ 8 : 26 ] And we jump into 2 Corinthians 10.10 and we get what they've been saying about him. They say his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily present is weak and his speech contemptible.

Now, these statements are statements that are going to cause hurt and despondency and anguish. But how does he respond?

He says this, I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.

So his reaction is not one of bitterness, but of love and grace. And his response is to lay this foundation.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder, I laid a foundation. foundation. In the Greek language, the word that is used to describe foundation is *fundamentum*, and it means foundation or foundation stone, and it's used 15 times in the Great New Testament.

[ 9 : 57 ] So what is the foundation? Listen to what he says in Romans 15 verse 20. Thus making it my ambition foundation to preach the gospel not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on another man's foundation.

So the foundation is the preaching of the word, and it is therefore a biblical foundation, because at the last analysis, only a biblical foundation will stand the test of time.

man. Let's look again at the challenge to this master builder. 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.

Let each man take care how he builds upon it. it's very interesting to see what Paul does in the varying churches that he goes to, which you can find in the Acts of the Apostle.

In chapter 17, as we'll see in a minute, he was in Thessalonica. In chapter 18, he's in Corinth. In chapter 19, he's in Ephesus.

[ 11 : 24 ] When we get to chapter 18, we find that Paul had gone in advance and was presenting this biblical foundation. And we read in chapter 18, verse 5, that his companions, who were Silas and Timothy, and when they arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

Now, to understand what's actually happening here, when it says Paul was occupied, that is a continual reference in the past.

It goes on. In other words, he's occupied with it today, and tomorrow he'll be occupied with it, and the next day, and so on, until he establishes this foundation.

I spoke about Thessalonica. And we consider his method in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 17, verses 2 and 3.

And Paul went in, and as was his custom, he went into the synagogue, by the way, and for three weeks he argued or debated with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving 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.

[12:59] Now, this is a biblical foundation. It's based on scripture, and what we're talking about is the scripture of the Old Testament, and from it he explains and proves that when the Messiah, the promised one, came, he would have to suffer and to rise from the dead, and then he says, this Jesus whom I proclaim to you, he is the Messiah, the one you've been waiting for.

This is his fundamental truth, his biblical foundation. And that's not the only place he talks about it. When he talks about the doctrine of the resurrection in chapter 15, he says this, in verses 3 and 4, 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, he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

Now, not what he says. He doesn't say that someone told him this. He says, I received it. And he received it by the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit. And you can read about that in Acts chapter 9, which deals with this conversion, which we spoke about two weeks ago. So how does he know that he's been guided right in this matter of the interpretation of the scriptures?

[14:52] Hebrews. Listen to what he says to the Ephesians. Chapter 2, verses 19 and 20. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

Now here's something else. Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The way that biblical commentators have understood this reference is to think of the prophets being the prophets of the Old Testament and the new foundation is the work of the apostles.

In the New Testament and he's got quite a bit to say about the work of the prophets of the Old Testament in his letters. Indeed, in the first two verses of Romans 1, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he had promised beforehand through his scriptures, through his prophets, in the holy scriptures.

Now, if it is the case that in this verse he's talking about the foundation of apostles and prophets, and he is talking about the prophets of the Old Testament, it would have been necessary for him to reverse the order, like, built upon the foundation of the prophets and the apostles.

That's not what he says. He says, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. So, what is he now talking about?

[17:05] We have to realize that at the time that Paul is writing this, there is no New Testament scripture. So, what people are being guided by is the ministry of New Testament prophets, who had a role in laying the foundation of the church in New Testament times, whose place today is taken by the preaching ministry of the word of God.

And he refers to this ministry like this. Again, it's in Ephesians 3. 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 is now being revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

Now, one of the things that you learn when you read the Acts of the Apostles is that there were such people around, such people, one of whom was called Agabus.

And he arrived later on in Paul's ministry and took his belt, which he had girded himself, and said, the man whom this belt belongs to will be arrested and suffer death.

So that is a very direct proclamation. salvation. But you also find that at the first great council of the church, which took place in AD 49, and it's recorded in Acts 15, and there the issue was this.

[18:55] The real issue that was being discussed at this council is, is salvation by faith, or do you need to be circumcised as well?

That's a Jewish situation. And James, the brother of Jesus, based his remarks on the prophecy of Amos, and showed from chapter nine, that there would be an gathering of Gentiles.

And they would be accepted into the community, not by circumcision, but by faith. So the issue is a very important issue.

And the issue that the church faces is that of guiding the people by the Holy Spirit.

And we find that Judas and Silas, they were themselves prophets. And after the decree of the Jerusalem council had been written and had been read by Paul to the varying churches, we're told that they, the prophets Judas and Silas, exhorted the brothers with many words, and strengthened them.

[ 20 : 29 ] Now what I'm trying to say here is this challenge is something that was very much in the depth of the New Testament.

Because what it depended on, the challenge to Paul as the wise master builder, was to make sure that those people that he preached to would understand to understand, it's by faith.

It's an all-important challenge. The challenge is still with us. People today think that they've got to do good works to enter the kingdom of God.

That's not the case. What Jesus is saying is, come to me. Come to me in faith.

Let me go on. 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.

[ 21 : 43 ] If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Now, what we are now looking at is this implication, let each man take care how he builds upon it. Now, when Paul went to Corinth and guided the people there for a period of 18 months, he did so by showing from the Old Testament that this is a gospel that is to be received by faith, and every person must take care how he receives it.

And the reason for that is this. For other foundation can anyone, no one lay which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

So the foundation is not an it, but a person. And that person is here today, because where two or three are gathered, he is in the midst, and he is speaking to my heart, I pray, and to yours.

[ 23 : 08 ] You have to take care what you are doing with God's salvation. If anyone builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, he then goes on to say what will happen.

Each man's work will become manifest or revealed, 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.

Now, when you think of the issue that was in Corinth, all this quarreling went on about Paul, you know, this is what they were saying, we like Paul because he gives us these definitions of the faith. We like Apollos, he's great with eloquence, we like Peter, he's simple to understand, man. And so there's all this division.

Each man's work will become manifest, the day will disclose it. Each man's work will be tested by fire.

[ 24 : 26 ] Now, one of the things you have to note here is this business of each man's work being tested by fire, this fire is not a fire of cleansing.

It's not something that goes on in the afterlife that will allow you into the kingdom of God. It's a fire that tests what sort of work you have done and I have done on this earth.

Now, the apostle in making this statement has built his teaching on the scriptures of the Old Testament and the idea that fire will be associated with judgment on works you can find elsewhere in the New Testament.

For example, in 2 Peter 3.10 the day of the Lord will come like a thief. 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 in it will be burned up.

Now, this is an Old Testament idea. The idea of fire being associated with judgment. An example to quote you this from Isaiah 31.9 man, his rock shall pass away in terror and his officers desert the standard in panic, said the Lord, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

[ 26 : 19 ] In other words, this fire is operated in the land of Judah and in the city of Jerusalem. And the fire is coming through prophetic words which are calling on men and women to change their ways and repent.

Now, it's not only in Isaiah you get this, but you also get it in the book of Jeremiah several times. one of them is in Jeremiah 17.4.

For in my anger a fire is kindled which shall burn forever. So, what's the practical point of fasting into this judgment by fire and saying that if a man's work is burned up, he himself will be saved as through fire.

One of the questions that comes up, what about my friend X who was soundly converted and followed the Lord for a short period and then drifted off?

What happens to him in the eternal day? That's what the scripture is talking about. It applies pastorly to that situation.

[ 27 : 54 ] If your friend X who was soundly saved and followed the Lord, he's still soundly saved at the moment of his death.

But what he loses is the reward that he might have gained for the work he might have done to which God had called him.

it's a very important pastoral work. The testing is the testing of our works.

It does not end with the loss of salvation for that is already being guaranteed by Jesus himself. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

So what kind of reaction should we have to this word? What sort of reaction was Paul looking for in Corinth? Well, the kind of reaction you get, or he was looking for, is actually detailed in 2 Peter 3.

[ 29 : 10 ] And it follows on to that statement about the world being burnt up with fire and judged.

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.

This is what Paul was trying to achieve in Corinth. He was trying to achieve a reversal of what they had, which was a whole lot of opinions about different kinds of ministry.

He wanted them to turn around and realize that God has called them to do something significant in Corinth, which is to make known the gospel of the free grace of God.

It's necessary for them to put aside all their petty jealousies and divisions. things. And so he comes to this conclusion. Let each man take care how he builds upon it.

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.

[ 30 : 44 ] Amen. May the Lord bless what has been said to his own praise and glory. If you wish to ask me anything about it, please do so at the end of the service.

we know that. Thank you.