



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA

By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

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1 Corinthians 3:1-23

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English Standard Version

“Cross Words: Build”

The 5th Sermon in a series on The Book of 1st Corinthians

1 Corinthians 3:1-23

“But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³ for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? ⁴ For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human? ⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.

⁹ 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.

¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” ²⁰ and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” ²¹ So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future — all are yours, ²³ and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and as always, we need it. We need to be reminded of the greatness of the Gospel, the Power of the Cross, and the Glory of Christ! We need the to know the sufficiency of Your Word for all the problems of our lives. We need the to know the wisdom of Your Word for all the problems of our lives. Speak to us by the power of Your Spirit that we might be people who listen to You, and build our lives, and **build** our church, on Christ, the only sure **foundation**. Thank You that **1st Corinthians** is a love letter to unlovely people, pointing them, and us, to our Redeemer. We need the redemption He offers. Bring us to the Cross, Bring us the grace of repentance, Soften our hard hearts, Have mercy upon us, Build us up in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so we pray, by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, in His name we pray, amen.*

INTRODUCTION: “A Cracked Foundation”

How many of you have been to The Washington Monument? When you live in this area for a while, you slow down on visiting all the monuments and museums in DC. It becomes something to do when company comes to visit. But after the Virginia earthquake of 2011, The Washington Monument was closed for several years due to a number of cracks. \$15 million dollars later, it was re-opened only to be closed again this year for a complete overhaul of the elevator system. Now, this isn’t the only time The Washington Monument has had issues. It almost didn’t open at all. The whole project nearly ended in disaster when it was first **built**. It was supposed to be, at the time at least, the tallest stone obelisk in the world – 600 feet tall; it was supposed to have a flat top with a statue of Washington riding a horse at its pinnacle. Obviously, there’s no horse on the top, and the National Park Service lists its height as 555 feet. So what happened?

Well, the problems developed in the initial **building** phase. The monument rested on a **foundation** of about 80 square feet, exerting 10,000 pounds per square inch of pressure ... on a bed of clay and sand. Now, many of you, having lived in the south, know very well what a **foundation** of clay and sand will do! And so, as they were **building** it, The Washington Monument began to lean, almost two inches off vertical, and cracks began to appear. Then for twenty years, the project lay unfinished and neglected. Everyone thought the whole thing was doomed to failure ... until a colonel in the Army Corps of Engineers managed to resolve the problem and completed the work with a simple pyramid at the pinnacle so that we have the monument you know today.

But for twenty years, the great monument to America’s founding father was an unfinished, cracked, leaning tower that looked like it was about to fall over at any moment. They fixed it by **dramatically** strengthening **the foundation**. And they did that by adding a large concrete slab around **the old foundation** to increase the monument’s load bearing area by two and a half times. So today, the area at the base of **the foundation** is 16,000 square feet, with a

depth of 38 feet below the lobby, and the new weight of **the foundation** is 37,000 tons. And today, it looks like it sits on top of a small hill, but actually, the hill was **built** around it to help provide stability support for the **foundation**.

So what does having a good **foundation** have to do with **1 Corinthians 3**, our text for today? Quite a bit ... because we're going to learn today that when it comes to the church in general, and this church in particular, having a good **foundation** really matters ... if what you **build** on it is going to last.

Let's start by taking a quick look at **verse 10**. Here's how Paul puts it. "*According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master **builder** ... pause right there. He's not boasting. He's not showing off by saying, "I'm a master **builder**." The word is a technical term for a sort of project manager, an architect, or the principal leader on a **building** site ... 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.*" Paul's role is to lay **the spiritual foundation** for the church. It is the only **foundation** that will work. You can't lay any other. Try it, and your Christian life will begin to lean, off-center. Cracks will start to appear. You do not **build** to last unless you **build** on the **foundation** that is Jesus Christ.

And that's why the key word for our text today is "**build.**" But not only are we going to talk about **building**, we're going to talk even more about **what keeps us from building** and **what keeps us from being built up**. The Apostle Paul, having talked about the need for unity, and the role of the Holy Spirit in the church, now returns to his first concern — the damage being done by divisions in the church. And that's where our text starts today, with Paul's concern that

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v. 1-4: DIVISION DISPLAYS IMMATURITY ¹

Paul finished chapter two with a comparison of the natural person and the spiritual person. And last week, we asked the question, "How should spiritual people live?" He wants the Corinthians to see that it's crazy for them to want to run after the ways of the world, when they have access to the mind of Christ. But that's exactly what they were doing. They were sanctified and set apart, but they weren't living like it. They had access to the wisdom of God, but they were living according to the wisdom of the world. They were spiritual people, but they were acting like natural people. And Paul drives this point home in these first four verses of chapter 3, "*But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³ for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? ⁴ For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?"*

1 The Introduction and Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, The Cross and Christian Ministry by Dr. D.A. Carson, pages 67-89; Basic Christian Leadership by Dr. John R.W. Stott, pages 85-106; and The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians by Dr. Roy Ciampa and Dr. Brian Rosner, pages 137-168. **And the sermons**, "*Building on the Foundation*" by Dr. David Strain, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, 4/9/17, www.fpcjackson.org; "*Are You Spiritual?*" 9/6/15 and "*God Gives the Growth*" 9/13/15, both by Rev. Josh Black, First Evangelical Free Church, Wichita, KS, www.firstfreewichita.org.

Even though they were spiritual people who had the Spirit of God, Paul couldn't address them as spiritual people. Instead he had to address them, **verse 1**, "*as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.*" When they first heard the gospel, years ago, Paul fed them with milk, not solid food. They weren't yet ready for **the deeper implications of the gospel**. They simply needed to start out with the fact that Christ crucified is what saves them from sin and death. By now they should be ready to move on to the deeper implications of the gospel. They should see how the gospel affects issues like sexuality, and idolatry, and the use of the spiritual gifts. But after all these years they still weren't ready. In fact, **the most basic implication of the gospel** was conspicuously **absent** in their church. The gospel not only reconciles us to God, it also reconciles us to one another. They should have been united, but they were divided! Even though they had the Spirit, they were acting *only in a human way*, like the natural person.

It seems that the Corinthians were pretty prideful people. And one area they boasted was in their spirituality. Paul is trying to burst their bubble. The only reason they were saved was because of what God had done for them in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Their only reason to boast was in God. They had no reason to boast in their spiritual maturity. They weren't even loving one another in the church. They were acting childish. And acting childish could be seen in how they were lining up behind particular leaders, even though we have no evidence that any of those leaders had encouraged this. As we've already seen, there was a celebrity mentality in the church at Corinth. They wanted their leaders to be popular and powerful speakers. They wanted their leaders full of the world's wisdom. And the wisdom of that day valued self-reliance and self-promotion.

When a culture adopts a celebrity mentality, the value of humble leadership takes a back seat, and even more so when that happens in the church. Churches start looking for the superstar preachers to lead their churches, not quiet shepherds who will feed the flock with the Word of God. They start looking for polish and prestige. And when this happens the church begins to boast in man and not in God. Man gets the glory. A celebrity mentality also robs the church of the good that God wants to do in His church. Numerical growth may happen, but there will be little spiritual growth. And eventually that church will be torn apart by divisions. Because when the focus is on man there will always be conflict. And that's exactly what was happening at Corinth. They were divided due to their own **spiritual immaturity**.

But that's not the only consequence of division, because next we see that ...

v. 5-17: DIVISION REVEALS IGNORANCE

And ignorance is revealed when we give our favorite Christian leader the allegiance that belongs to God alone. And Paul uses several metaphors to remind us that in the end, it is God that gives the growth. And he begins with an agricultural metaphor that reminds us that ...

- **We're the worker, not the Farmer**

⁵ "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. ...

In **verse 7**, Paul says that he and Apollos aren't anything. But he's using hyperbole. They are doing something. They plant. They water. What this means is that Paul planted the church at Corinth. He preached the gospel to them. And they believed that gospel and were

saved. Later Apollos came along and watered what Paul had planted. He too taught them the Word of God. So, God appointed them and used them to grow His church. In **verse 9**, Paul says, we're *God's fellow workers*. What this means is that they were used by God to grow His church.

This is where Paul's agricultural metaphor really shines. God uses farmers to cultivate a field, to plant seed in a field, and to water that field. But at the end of the day, the growth of that field comes because of God. In the same way God uses Christian leaders to grow His church. But with churches, as with farms, **it's God who gives the growth**. As we saw last week, the gospel was given to Paul through the Spirit. And it was imparted to the Corinthians by the Spirit. People aren't even able to believe the gospel without the work of the Spirit.

God uses human leaders, but **God** is the one who gives the growth. Therefore, our allegiance belongs to God. And our praise belongs to God. We don't boast in God's servants; we boast in God, the one who saves us and gives us growth. But not only are we not to think too highly of these celebrity preachers, we're also not to think too highly of ourselves. We're being reminded that we work in the field, but the field belongs to God, not us. And He's the one who gives the growth. In a similar way, Paul reminds us next that ...

- **We're not laying the Foundation**

*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."*

In the first part of **verse 10**, Paul basically reiterates what he's already said. He simply uses a new metaphor. Paul laid the **foundation**. And someone else is **building** upon it. That's very similar to *"I planted and Apollos watered."* But in the last part of **verse 10**, Paul adds something new to what he's previously said. He admonishes us to be careful about **how we build**. And the reason for this is that our work will be **judged**. So this metaphor teaches us that God **cares** for His church, and holds us accountable for how we **build** it. This sentence, generally gives us **three truths**. God cares for His church. God holds us accountable. And there are different ways to **build** the church. I want to work through these three truths in reverse order, and give you more specifics about each one of them.

First, we're basically given two options for how to **build up** the church. We can **build** according to the wisdom of the gospel or the world. Look again at our text, starting at **verse 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..."* The six building materials listed in **verse 12** represent different ways of **building** on the **foundation** of Jesus Christ. While there are six building materials listed, they really fall into only two categories — that which will survive the fire of judgment and that which won't. Gold, silver, and precious stones will survive. Wood, hay, and straw won't.

So, the question before us is ... What kind of ministry, or what kind of **building up** of the church, will survive and what won't? The answer to that question comes from the repetition of the word "**foundation**" in **verses 10-12**. In **verse 10**, we're told that Paul laid a **foundation**. In **verse 11**, we learn that the **foundation** is none other than Jesus Christ. And as we saw in **chapter 2**, it's more specifically *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*. That's what Paul taught when he was planting the church. So the **foundation** is the gospel of Jesus Christ. In **verse 12**, we learn that all future work is **building** on that gospel foundation. Therefore, it only makes sense that the ministry that will survive judgment ... is ministry that is consistent with that gospel foundation. As one commentator says, "The reason for care in **building** the superstructure is related to the character of the foundation." The ministry that will survive is **gospel ministry**.

How does the wisdom of the world show up in the church today? What are the shoddy building materials being used that will be burned up on the last day? The Biblical scholar Dr. D.A. Carson says it well. "Shoddy ministry is ministry that's built on charm, personality, easy oratory, positive thinking, managerial skills, powerful and emotional experiences, and people smarts, but **without** the repeated, passionate, Spirit-anointed proclamation of the gospel." Ministry that's built on self-reliance and self-promotion instead of weakness and humility is ministry built with wood, hay, and straw.

When we take our eyes off of the cross and focus on secondary matters, we're **building** with shoddy materials. When we **build** the church on wonderful programs that don't help people, **2 Peter 3:18**, "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,*" then we're **building** with materials that'll burn. When we entertain, but never focus on holiness and sacrificial love, we **build** the church with wood, hay, and straw.

And that comes with a warning. Look again at our text, this time starting with **verse 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.*" The Day spoken of is the judgment day. But the fire being spoken of is not hell. Paul's not saying that these people will go to hell for not working according to God's wisdom. He's saying that **their work** will be judged. Why say that? Well look at **verse 15**. "*If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*" Paul doesn't say the **worker** will be burned up in hell, he says the **work** will be burned up. Paul doesn't say he'll be punished, he says he'll **suffer loss**. That means he'll be deprived of something. And I believe that means he'll be deprived of the reward that will be given to the worker in **verse 14**. Paul also says that he will be saved but only as through fire. The assumption here is that the worker is in fact a Christian. And he or she will be saved. We're not saved on the basis of how successful we are in ministry. We're saved **by grace alone ... through faith alone ... in Christ alone**.

So, we've considered ways of ministry that won't endure God's assessment. What are the **enduring** ways to build a church? What are the gold, silver, and precious stones we have today? Obviously, **the Word of God is gold**. It does the work of God. And we know it won't pass away. But what we teach is not the only thing that matters. **How** we teach is also important. We need to teach the gospel in a way that is **consistent** with the gospel. We need to teach with a humility that draws attention to Christ and not to ourselves. Another way to build the church is with **prayer**. If we really believe that God gives the growth, then we need ask God

to use our words and our work. We need to **pray** for the Lord to open the eyes of those inside and outside the church so they will believe the gospel and grow in grace. We need to **pray** for the Lord to use His Word to do His work.

Now clearly, you're not reading God's Word enough. Neither am I. And it's probably a fair guess to say that you're not praying enough. Neither am I. After all, what's enough? And while some of you are **building** your lives with wood, hay, and straw, I want to stop and say that **others of you are building** with gold, silver, and precious stones ... you just don't realize it.

You may think you've been **building** with wood, hay, and straw, but when you sat caring for your aging parents, through tears till they crossed the finished line, in Jesus' name, ministering to them so selflessly, **you were building** with gold, silver, and precious stones. When day after day after day, for years and years you faithfully prayed for that loved one who didn't know the Lord, and no one saw and no one knew, the Lord saw and the Lord knew and **you were building** with gold, silver, and precious stones. When you opened your mouth, risking reputation or worse in the workplace, the neighborhood, the schoolyard to speak up for Jesus, then **you were building** with gold and silver and precious stones. Listening to God in prayer and listening to God's Word each require a humble dependence on God, but so does mercy ministry, so does teaching our children, so does listening to God's people as they go through all the hardships of life. All of those require a humble dependence on God as well, but when that work is done solely through self-reliance, or even worse, for self-promotion, then you're back to wood, hay, and straw. Just like the Corinthians. They were divided due to their own **spiritual immaturity**. And that division revealed their **ignorance of the wisdom of God**. But the consequence of division only gets worse, because next we see that ...

v. 18-23: DIVISION LEADS TO DECEPTION

As we saw back in **verse 5**, Christian leaders are supposed to be servants. One reason the Corinthians preferred some leaders over others was because of their love for human power and prestige. They valued self-reliance and self-promotion. And the leaders that embodied these values were prized among the Corinthians. But Paul is saying that Apollos, an eloquent speaker, and Paul, an apostle, were simply servants. To the Greek mind, a servant was the lowest of the low. Greeks valued the wisdom of the world, which included power and prestige and status.

But hear what the Apostle Paul says, starting at verse 18, "*Let no one **deceive** himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.*"¹⁹ *For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness,"*²⁰ *and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."*²¹ *So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours,*²² *whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future — all are yours,*²³ *and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."*

What this means is that Christians need to adopt **the wisdom of God**, not the wisdom of the world. They need to embrace **the gospel** as an all-encompassing worldview. And that worldview involves weakness and humility. For when we are weak, God is strong. And when God is strong, God gets the glory, not man. That's why Paul says in **verse 21**, "*So let no one boast in men.*" Christian leaders, who sees themselves as servants, embrace the gospel for others, not just for themselves. Our Lord came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. It only makes sense that Christian leaders would see themselves as servants. They haven't cornered the market on truth. They don't have all the gifts. They don't

have exclusive insight. They don't have ultimate authority. They are servants of Christ. The only reason a Christian leader is a leader at all is because the Lord Jesus assigned this task to him. He's assigned everyone in the church a task of serving the church in order to **build up** the body of Christ. Christian leaders are no different. They too serve Christ by **building up** the body of Christ, which is the church.

And as we've learned in 1st **Corinthians** so far, **gospel ministry** is not **just** preaching the gospel. It also involves preaching and teaching the gospel in **a way that is consistent with the values of the gospel**. **The style of ministry** needs to fit **the content of the ministry**. What you say about the gospel, about the church, about Jesus Christ ... determines how you say it! When it comes to talking about the gospel, **how** you say it conveys **what** you think about it. And if that's true about our words, it doubly true about our actions. Both our words and our actions need to be **shaped by the cross**. They need to be said and done in accordance **to the wisdom of God**, not the wisdom of the world! That's what Paul means in **verses 18-19**. "*Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of the world is folly with God.*" Paul is saying, the wisdom of the world is **opposed** to the way of the cross. When he says, "*let him become a fool that he may become wise,*" I think that's another way of saying, "*Let each one take care how he **builds upon [the foundation]***" The only ministry that will survive is **gospel ministry**.

Why is that important? To answer that question, let me jump back to some verses I skipped over, because again, we're not the farmer, and we're not laying the foundation, but according to our passage ...

CONCLUSION: We're the Field, the Building, the Temple

[^{9b} *You are God's field, God's building. ...* 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.*]

Another reason we shouldn't give Christian leaders allegiance that belongs to God alone is that the church **belongs to God**. The end of **verse 9** makes this plain, "***You are God's field, God's building.***" The church doesn't belong to any particular leaders. It belongs to God. He **purchased** it with the precious blood of His Only Son. Christ laid down His life for the church. No matter how good a Christian leader they are, no person should ever be given the allegiance that belongs to God alone!

Why does God care so much for His church that He demands that it be **built** properly? It's because the church is God's Temple. **Verses 16-17** make this plain, "*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.*" Everything we've been learning about **building** the church has to do with **building the local church**. And the local church is the holy temple of the holy God. This analogy of being God's Temple is used several different ways by the Apostle Paul. There's a sense in which Christ Himself is the new temple of God. He's now the great meeting place between God and man. And there's a sense in which individual Christians are the temple of God. We'll see that in chapter 6. But there's another sense in which the local church is the temple of God. And in **verse 17**, we learn that the church is holy. That is, it's set apart. Remember, the whole reason that Paul's writing to the Corinthians is because **too much of Corinth had gotten into the church**. They were supposed to be set apart from the world. But instead of simply living **in** the world, they were living as though

they were **of** the world. They were adopting the wisdom of the world in the church, instead of **the wisdom of God**. And as a result, the glory was going to man instead of to God. God is holy and worthy of all praise and glory. When the church reflects God's holiness it reflects God. And when it reflects God, then God is glorified.

The church has the Holy Spirit, as **verse 16** says. God dwells with His people through the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is at work in God's people. He not only enables their belief in the gospel. He also wants to transform them into people who reflect the gospel. Part of that transforming work has to do with the way they view themselves, the way they view each other, and the way they view their leaders. They need to reflect the gospel, as do their leaders. They need to put aside their desire for self-reliance and self-promotion, as do their leaders. Instead, they need to see their weakness and humbly depend on God, and their leaders need to see their weakness and humbly depend on God as they preach His gospel. When they do this, they'll stop boasting in men and begin boasting in God.

It's not only the glory of God that's at stake. When we serve God's church in God's way, it's also for the good of the church. A church **that's set apart** won't be **torn apart** like the church at Corinth. A church that is led according to **the wisdom of God** will be healthier than a church that's led according to the wisdom of the world. And so we see that serving God's church in God's way gives glory where it belongs — to God.

Let me finish where we started. I began by telling you about **building** The Washington Monument. And since they hadn't laid a proper foundation at first, the **building** started to lean and crack. It's a good metaphor for the Christian life. And it's helpful because it's basic. This is **foundational**. This is the beginning of the Christian life. Get this wrong, whatever else you **build** will inevitably come tumbling down. The only secure **foundation** for your life is Jesus Christ.

So, let me ask, "What are you **building** your life on?" Some of us are **building** our lives on moral **foundations**. We have a strong work ethic. We strive to treat others as we wish ourselves to be treated. We pride ourselves on the nobility of our motives. And so we feel quite assured that if there is a God at all, surely He holds us in high esteem. Others of us, perhaps, have **built** our lives on the attempt to win approval. First from mom and dad, then from our peer groups. The great animating principle that directs all our efforts is the affirmation and praise of others. And then there's some who may be living in a make-believe world of their own invention. We bury ourselves in the sand to avoid facing reality or taking responsibility. Our response to problems is to run and hide; duck and cover. To drown out our stresses with entertainment or materialism or self-medication, to hope that somehow it all just goes away.

But Paul is telling us here, very clearly ... that whatever we're **building** on, if it's not **the foundation of Jesus Christ**, then eventually cracks will start to appear. Only Jesus can take the weight – unmoving, solid, secure – until we come to the place where we're able to truly say, "*On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand,*" ... until we get to that point, we'll find our lives listing and leaning. The cracks will appear. You're not **built** to bear the full weight of your own life. Only Jesus can take that weight.

What are you **building** on?

What are you **resting** on?

What are you **leaning** on?

*“For no one can lay a **foundation** other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* And if that is true for you, then this is the promise of God ... for you ... *all things are yours,*²² *whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future — all are yours,*²³ *and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”* And it all depends on **having the right foundation.**

Think about that ... You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I’ll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. We confess that we fail to pay attention to Your Word, trading it for the wisdom of the world, often without even thinking about it. Forgive us for being too willing to **build** with poor products – wood, hay, and straw. Help us to **build** with gold and silver and precious stones that our work might make much of Jesus.*

*Teach us, by Your Spirit, to listen to the Word of God once again, and by it may You do a powerful work in making us a people who **build** our lives on the only sure **foundation** that is Jesus Christ our Lord. So look at us as a church, we pray, in mercy. Forgive us and work in these weeks and months ahead of us through **1st Corinthians** — teach us who we really are in Jesus and strengthen us as we seek to live these words out for your glory and our good. And as we begin to be changed by the Gospel, grant that we may live like people **called** to be saints, **united** in fellowship, **discerning** spiritual truths as spiritual people, **building** both our lives and our church on Christ the solid rock, and so we ask these things, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*

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2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

#CrossWords

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”