

HOW SHALL WE THEN BUILD?

The ONE FOUNDATION of Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 3:11 (NKJV)

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

In the context of 1 Corinthians, Paul is talking about building the local church. Of course, it is Christ Who is building His Church (Mt. 16:18), but He uses human instruments in the process. The Church is not a building per se, but a people. It is a forever family of believers in Jesus Christ starting from the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and being completed in the Rapture (1 Thess. 4). The foundational reality for the Church is Jesus Christ ALONE. Until a person has a saving faith relationship with Jesus Christ, there is nothing to build on. Everything starts with the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Note the foundation is not Jesus PLUS baptism, or Jesus plus good works. NO! The foundation is Jesus Christ ALONE! It pleased God through the message of the cross “to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). Apart from Christ, there is nothing to build on, but once people have Jesus Christ as their foundation, then they can build their lives upon that reality. The question for believers is this: How shall we then build?

Two Categories of Building Materials: Human Wisdom versus God's Truth

Throughout 1 Cor. 1-3 Paul contrasts human or worldly wisdom with God's revealed truth. Paul presents two general categories of building materials. On the one hand, there is gold, silver, and precious stones. On the other hand, there is wood, hay, and straw (1 Cor. 3:12). I contend that in context the gold, silver, and precious stones represent building into people's lives with the uncompromised Word of God. Wood, hay, and straw represent a compromised ministry in which one tries to build into people's lives with human wisdom.

When God puts our work to the “fire test” on judgment day (3:12-15), it will only be WORD-BASED ministries that will survive that exam. Only God's pure Word will stand before Him on that day! All human ideas will go up in smoke. Human philosophy, psychology, etc. will not endure. The gospel alone saves people and people are built up in the faith on the basis of GOD'S WORD ALONE! The Word alone is acceptable building material.

What NOT to build with...

- 1:17 – not with wisdom of words
- 1:19 – I will destroy the wisdom of the wise
- 1:20 – Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?
- 1:21 – the world through wisdom did not know God
- 2:1 - not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom
- 2:4 – not with persuasive words of human wisdom
- 2:5 – faith should not be in the wisdom of men
- 2:6 – not the wisdom of this age
- 2:13 – not in words which man's wisdom teaches
- 3:18 – seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool
- 3:19 – the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God
- 3:20 – the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.

What TO build with...

- 1:17 – to preach the gospel
- 1:18- the message of the cross
- 1:23 – we preach Christ crucified
- 1:24 – Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God
- 1:30- Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God
- 2:2 – Jesus Christ and Him crucified
- 2:6 – we speak wisdom among those who are mature
- 2:7- we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery
- 2:9 – things which God has prepared for those who love Him
- 2:10 – the deep things of God
- 2:12 – things that have been freely given to us by God
- 2:13 – words...which the Holy Spirit teaches

The issue here (in the context of 1 Cor. 1-3) is not the use of a person's gifts or the level of his activity. The issue here is essentially **WHAT** was used to build the local Church. Anything else other than God's Word goes up in smoke on judgment day! Only the **PURE WORD** will stand that test!