

1st Corinthians 3:10-17
(a construction illustration rooted in the last phrase of 3:9)

The initial and subsequent work in Corinth—3:10a-b

- 1) The apostle Paul—I laid a foundation,
 - a) ¹⁰ According to the grace of God that was given to me,
 - b) like a wise master-builder [*architekton*] (architect-engineer-building contractor)
- 2) Later Corinthian pastors build the superstructure—and someone else is building on it.

Warnings for these later Corinthian pastors—3:10c-15

- 1) But be sure they build carefully—3:10c-11
 - a) Caution is needed—*But let each one be careful how he builds.*
 - b) The foundation is exclusive—¹¹ For no one is able to lay any **foundation** (emphatic) other than what is laid, which (foundation) is Jesus Christ.
- 2) A day of evaluation of a pastor's work is coming—3:12-15
 - a) Current construction work—¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with ...
 - i) Noncombustible materials demonstrating God's wisdom—*gold, silver, costly stones* (granite, marble, etc.),
 - ii) Combustible materials demonstrating human wisdom—*wood, hay, or straw*,
 - Builders must follow the Owner's building Code
 - b) Future evaluation of a pastor's work—¹³ (the quality of) *each one's work will become apparent* [*phaneros*],
 - i) Why? *for the Day will make it clear* [*deloo*], (cf. Romans 14:10; 2nd Corinthians 5:10)
 - (1) *because it will be revealed/uncovered* [*apokalupto*] in fire;
 - (2) *and the fire will test* (the quality of) *what kind of work each man's is.*
 - (a) Cf. heating metal in fire
 - ii) Note the 3 distinct Greek words for exposing something
- 3) There are two possible outcomes of the fire test for pastors—3:14-15
 - a) Reward for faithful ministry in the gospel—*he will receive a reward.*
 - i) ¹⁴ *If the work that any man has built survives,*
 - b) Loss due to ministering according to human wisdom—*he will suffer loss*
 - i) ¹⁵ *If any man's work is incinerated,*
 - ii) Encouragement—*but he himself will be saved, yet in this way as through fire.*
 - (1) This verse does NOT teach any form of purgatory.
 - The fiery test exposes what has lasting value.

The danger of causing harm to God's congregation—3:16-17

- 1) Remember what the congregation is—3:16 ¹⁶ *Do you^{pl} not know* (1st of 10 uses in this letter) *that you^{pl} are the inner sanctuary of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you^{pl}?* (assumed "Yes" response)
 - a) Cf. 1st Corinthians 6:19 where individual Christians are called the inner sanctuary
- 2) Remember the consequences of ruining God's congregation—3:17 ¹⁷ *If anyone ruins the inner sanctuary of God, God will ruin him;*
 - a) *for the inner sanctuary of God is holy, which is what you^{pl}* (emphatic) *are.*
 - What ruins a church? Divisiveness, bad teaching, gossip, prayerlessness, bitterness, Biblical illiteracy, self-promotion, entertainment, dependence on programs, etc.

Take-home truth: God loves His church and holds its leaders accountable.