

Christ Fellowship 9/11/22

“The Only True Foundation” – 1 Corinthians 3:10-17

I want to brag for just a minute but it's okay because I want to brag on some of you. And what I want to brag about is God-honoring so, while nobody likes a braggart, I think it will be okay. I asked the group that gathered for Sunday night Bible study last week what they would like to see in a church building if money was no object. We are looking around for just the right building to hold our church temporarily and we have found a nice place in Chico where will be starting next Sunday but if we had unlimited funds to build a building, what would you like to see?

I asked that question last Sunday night and we just had the best discussion. And those that were here gave answers that made your pastor very proud to be your pastor. I didn't hear a word about beautiful facilities. Nobody wished for a fountain out front or for the outside to be Jerusalem stone and not one person mentioned anything about stained glass windows. If I remember right, everything that was mentioned was to enhance our mission to minister specifically to the poor, the addicted and the incarcerated.

They mentioned a bigger, better food pantry, more space for kids and youth, a place to house those battling addictions and work programs for those getting out of jail. It was a lot of fun to dream about what we could do if money was no object and I was so impressed by the vision that this church has. And since God is loaded, technically money really isn't an object and He will provide for us what He wants in the way of a building when He wants us to have it. And with that kind of attitude – that we want to minister to those most don't minister to – we can expect God to bless that kind of dreaming. So, good job, y'all!

Now, when you are building a building, I think it's pretty common knowledge that the foundation is not the place to cut corners or skimp. You want a really solid foundation. That's usually pretty easy to do around here. Our soil has so much rock, it's pretty good for building. Not so good for trying to plant a garden but if you have the equipment to dig down into the rock, you don't have to go far.

After you have the foundation laid down on solid rock, you can start to build what you want to build. And if you want the building to last and be nice for years to come, you use quality materials. You want the best quality wood and steel. You buy quality windows that won't leak in a year. You use bricks that have been tested and tried in fire or high temperatures. If you want a nice building, you have to use quality products.

Lastly, when you get your building built, you want to protect it. You get insurance, maybe some video cameras, fire extinguishers, security systems and such. You want to protect your

investment and you don't want people or weather or animals or anything else to destroy what you have built, right? Now, did you know all of that is biblical? It is. Turn to **1 Corinthians chapter 3** and we will see that Paul tells us basically all that is how to build and maintain a church.

Paul ought to know. He planted lots of churches and he knew how to build and maintain one. He is writing to a church in Corinth that he started a few years before but they are having trouble and are in danger of falling apart. Something to appreciate here – especially for us as we have been searching high and low for a building to meet in – is that Paul is not telling them how to build a physical building. He's telling them how to build a church. There's a big difference. But the method applies to a building or a church so let's look closer at what Paul the architect says in **1 Corinthians 3:10-17**.

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. 16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

A New York family bought a ranch out West where they intended to raise cattle. Friends visited and asked if the ranch had a name. "Well," said the would-be rancher, "I wanted to name it the Bar-J. My wife favored Suzy Q. One son liked the Flying W, and the other wants Lazy Y. So, we're calling it the Bar-J Suzy-Q Flying-W Lazy Y," "But where are all your cattle?" the friends asked. "**None of them survived the branding.**" (J. R. Love, Rushton, Louisiana).

Some churches are like that. They try to incorporate ideas from various people or other churches. They form study groups and committees, and they try all these different ideas and they try to do it all and then wonder why they fail. But here, Paul tells us the secret to building a healthy, strong church. It's not complicated but it's not necessarily easy.

As we move to Chico next week, we have the opportunity to start fresh. We have a clean slate and can be the kind of church we want to be. We can be a cowboy church or a biker church. We can focus on school kids or the military or whatever we want. But Paul is telling us here today that our foundation is the most important thing.

Read **verse 10** again with me. *By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it.* In the Greek, that phrase “wise builder” is the word “architekton” and I’ll give you one guess as to what word we get from that. Paul is saying he is the architect and has laid the foundation for this church in Corinth but even that is by the grace God has given him. He is not the foundation. He’s not even the designer. God is the designer and Jesus is the foundation and whatever we do in Chico, Jesus will be our foundation as well.

The foundation of some churches is their pastor. I don’t think anybody is doing that here but when your pastor is on TV and often gets to be on the news and starts to become a celebrity, that might get to be a temptation. And, yes, I have been on TV before a long time ago when I was at a Rangers game and the news panned the crowd in a three second video. I was like, “Oh, look! I think that was me!” So, yea, I’m kind of a big deal but please don’t be tempted to make me the foundation of this church. What? Nobody is even close to that? Okay, good.

No, when I am long gone dead and buried, this church will continue to thrive because Jesus is our foundation. And when I say that Jesus is our foundation, I mean His life, death, burial and resurrection is what we are all about. We sing about that. We do Bible studies about that. We talk about it, share what it means to us and how it has changed our lives and we focus on Him and only Him.

There are a lot of good books out there other than the Bible but do you know how much focus we put on them? None. There are lots of good stories in the Bible itself about inspirational people doing amazing things and we will talk about them and study them but only in the context of how Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that those people never could be. We might honor and look up to people like Abraham, David and Paul but we focus on the God they focused on and their foundation is our foundation. Our world, as a church, revolves around Jesus and it always will be.

Back several years ago, Saddleback Church in California was the megachurch everybody wanted to be like. They were growing and baptizing people left and right and so everybody wanted their secrets to growth. Well, the pastor, Rick Warren, was glad to share but when those pastors he shared with went home and started implementing what Warren had done, it just didn’t work out like it did for Saddleback. The problem was that their focus was more on programs and features than it was on Jesus and it just didn’t work. That’s why Paul says in **verse 11** to be careful how you build. Make sure that Jesus is the foundation.

Now, once Jesus and only Jesus is the true foundation of your church, you can start to build on that foundation. Let’s read **verse 12** again. *If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is...* Now,

notice that there are two categories here - the quality materials and the cheap materials. And the materials that you build a church on are not necessarily our wealth or our talents or even our spiritual gifts. The materials we build our church on are our good works. We know that we are not saved by doing good works. That's not what we are talking about. We are talking about what kind of church we want to be.

Jesus is our foundation and then we build the kind of church that God leads us to be by doing the good works that make us into that church. Every Christian is a builder. Every church member is a builder. And God wants us to build with the best materials because God is worthy of the best and only the best will last.

As we move our church to the new building in Chico, there will be plenty of opportunities for you to do good works and build upon our foundation of Jesus. We are going to need lots of people to help move furniture, to clean, to cook, to help organize, to stack chairs and unstack chairs. But let me give you a scenario. Ol' Bob over here is going to help move, clean and stack and his materials that he is building with are pure gold. But then ol' Frank over here is also going to help move, clean and stack the exact same amount but the materials he is going to use are all wood, hay and straw.

Bob is a good Christian man and Frank is a good Christian man. But Bob will be rewarded when Jesus comes back and Frank will not. Do you know what the difference is? Motive. It's all about motive. God sees your heart and rewards you based on the motives in your heart. 1 Corinthians 4:5 tells us that. Why we do a thing is as important or maybe more important than what we do.

When you give your time, talent or treasure to the church to grow and build the church, God is looking at your heart, not the gift. I'm looking forward to knocking on doors in Chico and passing out fliers to advertise our church and to talk with people about their relationship with the Lord and if you want to help with that, I would welcome it. But if you do it because you feel compelled to do it or because you want to brag about it later or so people will think well of you...maybe just stay home. You just leave that wood, hay and straw there at the house, okay?

But if you are anxious to see people – especially the poor, the addicted and the incarcerated – come to have a life-changing relationship with Jesus and you want to knock on some doors or mail out fliers to see that happen, then, yes, bring that fine gold, silver and precious stones on with ya. It is going to be hard work, all of it from this afternoon on to next week and every week trying to get the place ready and trying to build on our foundation and the building of our church into what God wants for us to be. It's all hard work. The only easy day was yesterday, as they say in the military. But God requires it. He deserves it. And He rewards it!

Jesus says in **Revelation 22:12**, *“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”* There is a lot to do and if you are content to do what you can and do it with the right motives then God will call that pure gold and you will be rewarded for it when He comes back. And Jesus said His rewards will be great. But if you do it to be seen or do it to tell others what you did or do it so you can make you look good, then those materials will be burned up. You don’t lose your salvation. That’s not what he is saying. But you do lose your reward.

So, Jesus is the foundation of our church and we build on that foundation with our good works and then we want to protect what we have built, don’t we? Look at **verses 16-17** again. *Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? 17 If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.*

Remember, Paul is talking to the whole church here, not individuals, per se and as the church, they are – and we are – God’s temple. Christ Fellowship is the temple of God. He resides here, not in this building but in this group of people. He is here. He is present. He is with us in a real way whether we meet in a building, a barn, a tent, a house or an empty lot. God is living in us and because God is living in us, we are holy. We are set apart for God’s work. We are not common people. We may not be famous or rich or talented but we are holy and precious to God.

Now, look closer at **verse 17**. *If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person...* That word “destroy” in the Greek is a fun word to say. It is “phtherio” and it means in both cases in this sentence to corrupt or bring into a worse state. So, if anyone does anything to us as a church that hinders us, corrupts us, distracts us from what we should be doing or in any way hampers our ability to worship or fellowship or minister as God has called us to, God will destroy or “phtherio” them.

We have lots of funny and crazy stories to tell about over the years we have been a church. Some of you remember the crazy lady that came down the aisle talking loudly on her cellphone as I was trying to preach. I’ll tell you that story later if you haven’t heard it. The same with the lady cop that felt she needed to stop our worship time so she could retrieve a wallet somebody had taken. Did you know that it is actually against the law to disrupt a worship service? Seriously.

But it is not only against man’s law. Any corruption, hindrance, distraction or division of our church is against God’s law and God sees that as a grave sin and will repay the person or persons responsible. Our foundation is Jesus Christ and if any other so-called foundation

threatens His church and His bride then they will be held accountable. That is sin and will be dealt with harshly.

We don't have to fight back. We don't have to argue or get revenge. We are God's sacred temple and He – the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing, Almighty God will protect us and fight for us, for His temple, His bride, His church for His glory and for our good! Thank you, Lord!

All we have to do is keep Jesus first and foremost, the foundation of everything we do. Then we build on that foundation with our good works motivated by our love for God and our desire to be rewarded in Heaven because that will be the proof of our love. And we then protect the church as God's holy temple as we are unified with God's gift of unity and by His mighty right hand. Again, it's pretty simple but not necessarily easy.

In fact, it's impossible without God's help and if you are not a true believer then you don't even have that. **Romans 5:10** says we were all enemies of God before we became Christians. That's a scary place to be. Are you sure today that when you die, God will say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."*? Or will He say, *"Get away from me. I never knew you."*?

Have you truly repented of all your sins, turning away from that lifestyle and asking God to forgive you of your sins? Have you asked Jesus to be your Lord and Savior? If you haven't then let's make today the day of salvation. Do it right now as the music plays.