

The church's foundation

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[0 : 0 0] Let us turn now to consider words you will find in the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 3 Reading from verse 10 1 Corinthians chapter 3 Verse 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me As a wise master builder I have laid the foundation another buildeth thereon But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid Which is Jesus Christ So if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, stubble Every man's work shall be made manifest

For the day shall declare it Because it shall be revealed by fire And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon He shall receive a reward If any man's work shall be burned He shall suffer loss But he himself shall be saved Yet so are by fire In this chapter Paul is showing the relationship that exists Between those who serve Christ in the church And the church itself And what he says in effect is that the preacher or the minister The builder, the builder, the worker Is just that He is but an instrument

An agent In the hand of God What is more he is A hired servant In the service Of the one who owns The church The servant he says Does the work which is allotted to him That work may differ As he tells us Apollos may plant The poor may plant In Apollos water But God Giveth the Increase The work may differ But in one respect The work Is the same It is nothing but Hired Service God He says Gives The ink Another thing he says Is that the work Brings its fruit The workman Receives A reward But the fruit Or the reward Is given

By God And therefore they are only Fellow workers Fellow labourers Working as he says For God So wherever the gospel Is blessed Every fruit Of the gospel Ministry Is as he puts it here God's Husbandry God's Work So that is just Another way of saying That the church That is the body Of believers Those who are saved Converted Saved by the grace Of God From the service Of sin To the service Of Christ The church Is the product Of God It is God's Gift And whatever work A person may do In that vineyard In that field Of service It is always God Who gives

The increase Now In this connection There are Two Metaphors That Paul uses Here to illustrate What he's talking about The first Is the metaphor Of the field The farm In which In which The labourer Works God owns The field And as the owner It is God Who gives The increase In that field The other Metaphors Which he uses Is the metaphor Of the building And it is that Metaphors Which he develops From verse 10 And which will be The subject Of our Our thoughts Here this evening Connection With this passage

[5 : 0 4] He says Speaking Of the members Of the Corinthian church Ye Are God's Building And then he goes on To speak about The way He himself Had Operated In Corinth And he says this According to the grace Of God Which is given to me As a wise Master builder I have laid The foundation And another Buildeth Thereon But that Every man Take heed How he builds Thereupon Now what he's saying Surely Is this That he had been Responsible For laying The foundations Of the church In Corinth He had come in there The foundations Of the sea Surely Is the preaching Of the gospel He had laid The foundation And he had

Built On that Foundation The building Of course The superstructure If the foundation Is Christ In the gospel The superstructure Must be Those who were Brought into the church Through the gospel And were placed In the church As the new testament Tells us Living stones In that building In that church Now that's how he had Operated He had laid the foundation He had brought people Through the preach of the gospel Or God had brought them Into the church And they had been placed By Paul As members In that church He had come into Corinth But he had moved out Others had followed him And so he says Others now Build Others carry on That building And he gives this warning To them That everyone Take heed How he builds Their apartment

And he goes on To speak About the nature Of the church In enforcing This warning He speaks First of all About the Foundation Of the church Other foundation Can no man lay Than that is laid Which is Jesus Christ So the first warning He issues is this Make sure That the foundation Always Remains The same Then the second Warning He adds is this Make sure That you use The proper Material In the superstructure So he lists Various materials Which can be used Not literally Applying the Matter Speaking of the Metaphor He says People can use People can use

On this foundation To build on this foundation They can use Gold Or silver Or precious stones Perhaps marble Or wood Or hay Or straw They can place In it What they want What they will But remember He says That there's a Day coming Which will Determine Which will Reveal Which will Bring to light The quality Of the materials Which have been Used The day Which will Come Will reveal By fire The nature Of that material And the fire Will try Will reveal Will determine Every man's work The builder's work Will determine Will show Clearly And publicly What

Quality Was used In the building Of this house And he says That after That day If any man's work Abide Which he has built Thereupon He shall receive A reward It's quite simple I don't need to get Into any Frankel Over the application Of this teaching Over its meaning It's a Surely it's Made abundantly clear For us When we think Of the metaphor What he says Is this If a man Places in that building Material Which is durable And material Which is lasting And genuine He shall receive A reward Quite clear Isn't it Again This is a picture Which is painful Right throughout the bible As we shall see In a minute On the other hand If any man's work Shall be burned He shall suffer loss That is If he's used Material Which is combustible If he's used Wood Or hay Or straw Well That material

[10:08] Shall be burned He will suffer loss He himself Will be saved Yet so as by fire But He will not receive The reward Anticipated Or The reward Expected He's not saying That the man Is unconverted Is unsaved He's not saying The man shouldn't Have been a worker Shouldn't have been A builder Shouldn't have been A preacher What he's saying Is this That if the work That he's brought Into the church Isn't What it ought to be He will receive His reward Yet he himself Will be saved And I think That that is A clear teaching Of This passage Before us Tonight Some years ago There was a Godly woman In this congregation Nearly 40 years ago

She met a minister Who was On holiday In the town here Who had preached Some sermons In the city Of Glasgow And it was reported That one or two people Had been converted Through his ministry She met him On Cromwell Street And said to him I hear she said That you have Some lambs In Glasgow Speaking of course Spiritually And his answer To her was this Oh he said The great day Of judgment Will tell that And it is Without you To applying This passage In that light It is without you That I take it Here This evening So that you and I May question

Seriously And biblically Whether We ought To be In the church Of Christ Or not First of all In seeking To determine An answer To that question I want to look With you At what he Is referred to Here As the foundation Which has been Laid And there is No other foundation Except What he says Here That which is Laid Which is Jesus Christ Now again We don't have Too many Problems In trying to Understand What this means Let me give you Some well known Texts from the Bible Which illustrate The meaning Of this verse I believe Behold Says the Lord to the Prophet Isaiah Behold I lay In Zion A chief Cornerstone Behold I lay

In Zion A foundation Stone In the book Of Acts The apostles Preached And they said Neither is There salvation In any Other man But in Christ Jesus Paul Writes to Timothy Says That there Is one God And one Mediator Between God And man Jesus Christ The Lord He himself Says Besides me Again the Spirit of Prophecy There is No savior There is None Other And it Was he Who spoke And I use The words Advisoryly Of the Intolerance Of the Christian Faith In this Way I am The way The truth And the Life No man Cometh unto The father But by Me Now I say This to you In all Sincerity To suggest Even Anything Else Is totally Unbiblical Even to

Suggest That there Can be any Other savior That there Can be any Other way To god That there Can be any Other mediator Between god And me To suggest That there Can be Another It's totally Contrary To the Teaching of The bible Other foundation Can no man Lay Than that Is laid Which is Jesus Christ Christianity Said someone Is the Historical Realisation Of the Eternal Purpose Of god And god's Purpose Was to Save the World Through Jesus Christ And by Jesus Christ And hence He is Presented to Us As the Savior God God In Our Nature The bible Tells us When he Came into The world Why he Came into The world What he Did when He was

[15 : 15] In this World It tells Of his Resurrection From the Dead Of his Ascension To the Right Hand Of god The father Of his Session At the Right Hand Until he Comes Again To judge The world That's what The bible Is all About That is the Heart of the Christian faith Jesus Jesus Christ The son Of god Who Became Man And who Died In our Nature On the Cross For our Sins And is Rosen Again With power From the Dead And is Alive In the Power Of an Endless Life This Foundation That C.H.

Spurgeon The great Baptist Minister Of the Last Century In London Is Surely That Blessed Cluster Of fundamental Doctrines Which Set For Christ Crucified As Our Salvation All The truth Of god United To christ And coming To us In christ Be it Election Or justification Or sanctification Or foreordination Or whatever All In christ The foundation Of which he Spoke When he Said to Peter This On this Foundation On this Rock Will I Build My Church Jesus Christ Himself And all That the Word of God Tells Us About Jesus Christ Now you Cannot Build Christianity Or a Christian Faith On Any

Other Foundation He Is The Only Savior The Only Head Of The Church The Only Source Of The Church's Life And the Only Hope That the Church Has In this World Her All And in All Is The Lord Jesus Christ Other Foundation Can No Man Lay Than That Is Laid Which Is Jesus Christ God God Is The Church Is The Church's Foundation You And I Have No Problem With That I'm Pretty Certain Of It No Problems At All You Probably Wonder Why I Took So Long To The Second Point The Second Point It Deals With Is The Super Structure The Building Itself And I Will First To Agree With You That Here Now We Have More Problems Than We Do When Dealing

With The Foundation Itself If Any Man Build On This Foundation Now He's Picturing This Building Going Up And He Sees That It Is A Building Which Is Built Of Either Gold And Silver And Precious Stones Or Wood Hay Stubble I Think This Is A Contrast There Are Two Sets Here There Is A Set Of Three Gold Silver Pressure Stone The Other Set Wood Hay Stubble Now The Difference Between The Two Is This Surely That One Is Durable Gold Silver Precious Stones Or Marble Maybe The Other Is Combustible Wood Hay And Straw Because It's Going To Speak About That Which Is Going To Try This Structure At At The End Of The Ages Which Is The Fire Of God At The Day Of Judgment This Building Is

Going To Be Tested And What He's Saying Is This There Are Some Materials Which Will Stand The Test Others Won't The Gold The Silver The Precious Stones Will Abide In And Through The Fire Wood Hay Straw They're Going To Be Burnt Up There'll Be Nothing Left Of That Building If That Is What It Is Built If That Is What Is Built Of So The Idea Here I Think Is That Of Durability Compared With What Is The With What Perishes The Idea Of Worth Compared With What Is Worthless So The Point Is Making Is This That The Building Surely Ought To Be As Worthy As A Foundation It Ought To Reflect The Foundation Upon Which It Is Built Now I

[19 : 51] Want To Bring You Back Here To The Last Words Of Verse 10 Let Every Man Take Heed How He Builds On This Foundation Quite Frankly My Friend And Quite Simple There's No Point In Beating Up At The Bush And There's No Point In Closing Your Eyes And Avoiding This No Point In Being An Ostrich And Peering Your Head Under Sand What Paul Is Saying Speaking About Quite Simply Is This That We We We We To Be Very Careful Who Becomes A Member Of This Church It Is Of Course Very True And This Application Can Be Made Of God Is Made Of It Though I Won't Make It That Every Person Must Be Careful How He Builds His Own Christian Life But Without a Shadow of out the warning here is addressed to the likes of me and to the elders here gathered before me who have the responsibility of admitting people into the Church of Christ and what Paul is saying is this make sure that you bring the right material into this building and that's why I said the outset that everyone who's a member of the church ought to question whether he or she ought to be in the church and ought to ask himself and herself why am I in it why am I in it every minister must ask himself why did I encourage a person to come into every Kirk session must ask every elder must ask why did we admit that person into the Christian Church now I'm not introducing into this context something that isn't that neither am I introducing into something that isn't in the Bible I take as my authority for this application that none other than the Lord himself who is the foundation of the Christian Church and who says in Matthew 13 over and over again in the chapter right here part of which we read in Matthew chapter 7 who says that this is the nature of the church in the world it is comprised of what wheat and tare there are in this net fish that ought to be there and fish that ought not to be there there are in the church people will continue and people who want people who will stand before Christ of the day of judgment people who want people who will enter into eternal life and people who want that's the nature of the church the church is mixed in it other true and the false many are there should be there and according to the Bible there are many there who should not be there at all the unconverted man said someone is better anywhere than in the church the unconverted man is better anywhere than in the church who then in the light of this context is to be there what are we to say of the material that is durable what is this gold and silver and precious stone what do we say of the living stone that Peter speaks of who are placed in the church of God bind his grace what do we say of those of whom Paul speaks of the vc in the vc in the vc in the vc ye are his building and those who are referred to by Jesus in the words of Peter on this rock will I build my church who are they what is going to abide what kind of person will stand well sure to this person the person who writes to salvation on Christ the person who grounds his acceptance before God

on Christ the person who knows he is justified in the presence of God on the basis of what Christ has done for us the person who perseveres because Christ has said to him because I live ye shall live us the person's faith is in Christ the person who's might has been turned round because he has come to love Christ and consequently to hate his sin the person who draws the spirit of the spiritual life and sustenance from the Lord Jesus Christ now that's not imagined that's real that's fact because this man again speaking later on to this very church said when you sit at the Lord's table he said what you do is you just saw the Lord's death till he come you're testifying to the world you're preaching be you male or female you're telling people what what the death of Christ means to you what what you tell him surely this has to be said to them together with other things that their all is based upon the foundation upon which they are set and I consider it therefore my duty to bring words of warning before you hear this evening oh I know full well what people are going to say I know that full well but then I have to live without as do my as do those who labor in the vineyard of Christ and I think at one point I want to make before I go any further so that at least your criticism is tempered is this to remember that Paul is here speaking not about sheep as Jesus said in wolves say clothing but he's speaking about men genuinely involved in the work of the kingdom of Christ men who came into Corinth after himself and who preached the gospel in Corinth he's speaking about no doubt his fellow apostles he's not excluding anybody from this and this context makes abundantly clear that the men who are involved in the building of the church were not unconverted but saved and the day of judgment is going to prove that they were saved though they were going to go into the presence of Christ minus the reward that they themselves expected the reward was burnt up in the gray congregation of the day of judgment so at least let that temper your criticism because I know that it would be leveled against me but I also know this and I say this in all honesty before God that this sermon tonight was not born in my mind as a result of what has been going on in Scotland in the past week at all

God is my witness to that I would far rather see the gospel of Christ being highlighted on the television than much of what goes with pop culture today my soul rejoices when I see and hear and read of people who are genuinely saved by the grace of God God is my witness and I hope that I love any man who preaches the gospel of Christ and in whose preaching Christ is central having said that it is necessary for us from time to time to look at our own standing in relation to the cross and in relation to the gospel and in relation to the church and ask am I a genuine member of the church of Jesus Christ and I would like therefore to bring before you one or two words of counsel and the first is make sure and this applies to and you remember something else that this applies to the likes of me more than to anybody else because I hope that I'm a builder in the church of Christ and I will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ and I will present myself there and I will have to answer as every office bearer in the church has to answer and every minister in the church has to answer for those whom we brought into the church of Jesus Christ and therefore my friend I would say this to you beware that you don't confuse natural religious feelings with the supernatural whatever else grace whatever else conversion is it is the supernatural work of the grace of God in the heart of the individual but there is another religious feeling of course there is we are all religious says the Bible there are some more religious than others you know that it is very easy to produce a natural religious feeling which falls short of a supernatural work of the grace of God and secondly beware of confusing strong natural religious feelings with the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit those who are those who are products of the revivals here in the island of Lewis will tell you and there are some people present no doubt who were in the revivals who were not saved but they will tell you that the atmosphere and the influence of that revival affected them they felt it now what they felt was natural and it fell short of the supernatural because it didn't produce in them the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit and then beware that you recognize the application of the truth by the Holy Spirit to your mind now there are many people in the church of Christ and I'm one of them who believe that this is the way in which the Spirit of God works he applies the truth through the mind to the heart to the heart now I'm not saying by that that every person converted knows everything up of the truth

but what I am saying to you is this that sufficient light comes with the truth to the mind to convince them that they are sinners who need a savior who convince them and this after all is Jesus definition of conviction of sin when the spirit of camp is come he will convince us sin because they do not believe in me and through the mind the realization dawns that I'm a sinner who needs a savior the savior is the savior presented by the Lord by the word of God I can come to him as I'm drawn by the spirit of God and I can only believe in him as I'm enabled by God to believe because faith is the gift of God I know that and I grasp that and I cry to God in my need save me give me give me the faith that will enable me to receive Jesus Christ as my savior then the other warning I would address to you is this beware of confusing emotional response with the winning of the will for Christ beware of confusing sympathy with others a sympathy for yourself again I claim as my authority the Lord Jesus Christ who on the road to the to Calvary or to Golgotha said to the women of Jerusalem women of Jerusalem don't weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children another warning I would address and this I'm afraid has been something which has carved into this island over the past number of years that you beware of of of of of thinking that a biblical commitment to Christ is following a manual that gives you set rules and set principles and set guides for following Christ for example and this is definitely new here read this learn this say this and pray this and people are led to believe that if they do these things they are brought into the kingdom of Christ coming back to this thing that I mentioned of confusing emotional response to the winning of the will for Christ this is connected with the necessity of bringing the truth to bear upon the understanding now of course

I know that as preachers there are means which we have to employ to get people to listen to the truth to listen to the gospel when I'm preaching for example I find it extremely difficult to preach to people switch off so I consider it my responsibility to switch them on I don't like people falling asleep though I have sympathy with them under the preaching of the gospel and I don't like seeing people distracted and people talking to one another when I'm preaching don't like to see people looking at the ceiling or looking at the window or examining the structure of the church or so on or perhaps the person beside them or the person in front of them and even occasionally the people behind them because you get the impression that people are switching off so a preacher has to keep his eye on these things he's in this great business of communicating the truth making the truth relevant and making the truth intelligent and intelligible so very often one of the best ways of getting people's attention is tell them a story using illustration there are times when a story can be quite telling a story can be quite moving

[35 : 38] I heard a minister once saying about to a huge congregation shortly after my own conversion if I wanted he said I could move this congregation to tears and I believed him but you could do it if I told you at night a very touching story about a mother on her deathbed and her son was with her and I told her with feeling and with emotion myself I wouldn't be surprised there were many people here who would shed tears but the point I want to make is this that you've got to be very very careful that you don't confuse or equate an emotional response to the will being one for Christ another one I want to speak about is that you avoid the danger of thinking that because you who have been troubled by a particular enslaving sin in your life that because you have been enabled to break from that enslaving sin that you equate that with the peace of the gospel of Christ in your soul

I'm sure that for a person whose life has been made a misery and who has made other people's lives a mystery as well through enslaving sin when that person is enabled to turn away from it and to reform his or her life it comes as a great relief to that person and to those connected with him my friend that is not the peace of the gospel very often the euphoria and the experience that comes with that dies away and then what are you left to lean on your own resolve your own commitment your own break or Christ you see the point that the apostle is making here is surely this and the point that Jesus made over and over again make sure that the basis of all your hope and the foundation of all your peace is Jesus Christ the Lord oh my friend we have all to guard against the danger of self-deception and though I'm more aware as I said earlier those comments of mine may lead people to criticize I'm sure that for the genuine believer in Christ it will lead him and her to self-examination and to prayer for diligence in their relationship to Christ it will lead them to fear lest they are not genuine and lead them to take account of this that they themselves are built on the right foundation finally and very briefly there is a third point that Paul here deals with and it is the fire that is to come to test every man's work now some of you may be present here from the Roman Catholic persuasion some may have some connection with the Roman Catholic Church and I'm sure that you know as well as I know that a part of your church's teaching on purgatory is built upon these verses and I would say to you in all honesty and with all sincerity that that is a misguided application of these words because the fire that Paul is here speaking about is not a fire that is going to purge it's a fire that is going to discover the fire isn't going to clean anybody the fire is going to destroy some and it's going to reveal others it is therefore not purifying in any way it is the fire of discovery and the fire of judgment and the picture you have here it's a picture of as well of a fire sweeping through a building and leaving behind it only the foundation and the durable part of the structure when is this going to happen he refers to three times the day shall declare it and this is none other of course on the day of judgment it's appointed God has appointed a day in which you will judge this world he has begun a good work which you will bring on to the day of Jesus Christ in that day as a new testament you will see the difference between the counterfeit and the real on that day the day of judgment and that day is going to be a come and that day is going to be accompanied or the judgment

will be accompanied with fire now remember that the language here is figurative what he speaks about is this that the divine character with whom we have to deal will reveal himself in this way in time it speaks of the ordeal of the judgment and strangely enough there is no organization on earth there will be more exposed to the fire of judgment than the church of god itself the church is not being going to be excluded from the judgment we will all appear before the judgment seat of christ and that is why i quoted someone who said earlier said it were better for the unconverted man to be anywhere than in the church of christ because that person will be destroyed he will be burned up and he will be declared he says again in three uses three words in this in verses 13 and 14 the day every month what should be made manifest the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire there will be a public manifestation to all who are gathered there the discovery will be made to everyone as to who was genuine and who was not now as i said earlier it is not always possible to make that assessment accurately in this world there are times when it is absolutely impossible and mistakes are quite genuinely made you've heard of some people who said that they've got a glimpse into heaven they were surprised that some of the people that they saw and they were dismayed at some that they didn't see at all now be that as it may there is no doubt whatsoever but that the bible makes this emphasis that some will be quite genuinely accepted as member of the church in this world who are not genuine at all the day will declared every man's work of what sort it is will be tried the value of what it did in this world the value of my work and the value of their work and the value of every other man's work will be declared in that day because the membership of the church of christ will be tested by the holy searching penetrating inquest of god the judge oh the solemnity that applies to this and the reason my friend why everyone in this building tonight ought to ask who's am i in what relationship do i stand to the church ought i to be there what do i have my advice to you and to me is this come first to christ and then to the church come first by the church i don't mean the building i hope you don't misunderstand me i mean the membership of the church of christ on earth every man he said will receive his reward the preacher and this is what

it's this is what he says the preacher of whom he's speaking of here the preachers rather are genuine converted men who have who have an interest in and a concern for the cause of christ and these are verses which strike terror into my very bones the preacher will be saved but his work will be destroyed and the picture you have quite simply is this some will stand there with the reward others will stand there as it were alone others will stand there as if by fire as if he was saying this as though it were by the skin of their teeth the ministry now then i don't think that any minister recognizing the responsibility of preaching the gospel and the responsibility of assessing the commitment and the confession and the profession of people who are brought in through his ministry i don't think that any minister could have the temerity to stand in a pulpit and find fault with any other minister the searchlight must turn upon himself and so my friend if you were tempted to leave this building tonight and perhaps with a smirk on your face and say ah i wondered when he was going to get at billy gray you wipe the smirk off your face because it's not of him i'm talking but of myself so of those who heard him that i'm speaking but of you who hear me so those who made a claim of commitment anywhere else to christ that i'm addressing these words to it's to you in this church and storm away in your relationship to the lord jesus christ because the gospel bids you believe and it's you who have to answer the question am i a believer in christ what gives me an interest in the church what brings me here why the interest in religion and the things connected with it i pray with you make sure above all else of this that your heart is set on him that your will is one for him because at the end of the day no matter what you have or who you are or where you've come from or what change has come into your life unless it is a change from nature to grace from a state of unbelief to a state of faith in christ if you stand at the day of judgment with all who have preached the gospel to you you will be destroyed but they will be saved ah my friend surely it belongs you and me tonight to pray to god

search me and try me and save my soul and make me a real genuine member of the church which is built upon christ that is praying have mastery upon our souls we besiege thee bless us with thy presence and with thy peace and make thyself known to us in the power of thy saving supernatural grace and the praise shall be thine in christ amen psalm 50