

Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

Be Careful How You Build

1 Corinthians 3:9-17

1. **The Description of the Building** (v.9)

Paul has identified the local Corinthian church both as the field in which God is doing His work (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5-7) and as His building. This illustration is not of many fields or many buildings representing each individual believer in Corinth but one field or one building that is the local church in Corinth. The identification of God's ownership of the local church is significant; this was not a church that belonged to any particular group or individual, it belongs to the Lord.

2. **The Foundation of the Building** (vs.10-11)

This local church has been built upon the bedrock and cornerstone that is Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 16:18; Eph. 2:20). Paul acted as the skillful artisan and general contractor in overseeing the first several months of its construction where he labored in making the truth of Jesus Christ clearly known (cf. 1 Cor. 2:2). Any attempt to do differently something that Paul had already done would be laying a different foundation and so begin to erect an entirely different building (vs. 16-17).

3. **The Fabrication of the Building** (vs.11-13)

Both Paul and Apollos had been used of God to make significant contributions to the establishment and growth of the Corinthian church (vs.5-7), but neither of them were currently ministering in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 16:12). The factious present state of affairs in the church indicates that someone else, perhaps many people, has been building onto what Paul and Apollos had already built.

4. **The Evaluation of the Building** (vs.13-15)

The Lord will appraise the value of any work that is done by anyone who builds onto the foundation of Christ. The quality of anyone's contribution will not be in terms of relevance, popularity, or creativity but rather in terms of its endurance. God has judged believer's sins at the cross and His wrath has been satisfied, but the way in which a believer endeavored to shape and mold the local church will be appraised by God at the judgment seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph 2:10).

5. **The Identification of the Building** (vs.16-17)

The Holy Spirit indwells every believer to help, teach, comfort, and guide (1 Cor. 6:19; cf. John 14:26; Rom. 8:16, 26-27; Gal. 5:17) and is a foretaste of His promised blessings (Eph 1:14). In addition to this blessed reality, the local church is a temple of God in which the Spirit of the Lord indwells. The church of God can never be overcome (cf. Matt. 16:18), but individual local churches are susceptible to being corrupted or destroyed from within (cf. Acts 20:30). The Lord will not deal kindly with those who destroy His local church (cf. 2 Pet. 2:12; Jude 10).