

1 Corinthians 3: 1-17 — Builders and Their Work

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The believers at Corinth were carnal — they walked according to man. Hence, there was an exaltation of men, they held mens' persons in admiration. Carnality rallied around *leading ministers*. *True servants* were of God, proved to be such by their ministry, which promoted divine results. One planted, another watered, the increase was of God. Both were united in their service. Paul said, "We are God's fellow-workmen." "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building." Note the "we" and the "ye." There were those who ministered the word, and those who were ministered to.

The apostle Paul, according to the grace of God which had been given him, as a wise architect laid the foundation of the work in Corinth, another built upon that foundation. All saints are not viewed as builders here. The assembly was the sphere of the building activities of those who took the place of being God's labourers. The assembly at Corinth had been reared upon a good foundation — Jesus Christ. The apostle, in his ministry there, had put durable material in the foundation.

"Now if any one build" — The apostolic work had been done, the sound foundation laid, others had taken upon themselves to build upon it! Not all had been given grace for building as the apostle had for founding. There was a day coming which should be revealed in fire, then would every man's work be put to the test. Gold, silver, precious stones, would abide the searching fire of holy judgment, for such was the product of divine exercise. All else, wood, hay and stubble, the product of human exercise, would be consumed.

Three kinds of workmen are specified:

- 1) Verse 14 — a builder building good material upon the foundation,
- 2) Verse 15 — a builder builds bad material upon the foundation.
- 3) Verse 15 — a builder sets out to destroy (corrupt) the temple of God.

In 1) the builder and his work are of value. 2) the builder (but *not* his work) is of value. 3) neither the builder nor his work are of value, indeed they are the reverse, hence the builder shall receive that which he would do to the temple of God which is holy — Him shall God destroy.

The local assembly is "temple of God" and is the sphere of the work of each. One builds that which is of God. The second, himself saved through the searching judgment of God, loses all that which he had built for it was but the product of human effort. The third, a pseudo servant of God, bends all his energies to defiling that temple — he will perish with his work!

Obviously this Scripture presents the assembly as the sphere of ministerial activity.

All believers are not viewed as builders in this passage, while all are affected by the work of those who do build. God grant that all who do minister amongst their brethren may do so as the apostle Peter says in his 1 Peter 4: 7-11 — "But the end of all things is drawn nigh: be sober therefore, and be watchful unto prayers; but before all this having fervent love among yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins; hospitable one to another, without murmuring; each according as he has received a gift, ministering it to one another, as good stewards of the various grace of God. If one speak — as oracles of god; if any one minister — as of strength which God supplies; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might for ages of ages. Amen."