

CHRIST, THE ONLY FOUNDATION

BIBLE TEXT : I Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-23.

LESSON 390 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

¹⁰ Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

¹¹ For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

¹² Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

¹³ Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

¹⁵ Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

¹⁶ And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

¹⁷ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

1 Corinthians 3:1-23

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.

² I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*; neither yet now are ye able.

³ For ye are yet carnal: for

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Babes in Christ

1. The Apostle called some of the Corinthian Christians babes in Christ, I Corinthians 3:1, 2; Ephesians 4:14.
2. Strife, carnality, and divisions were condemned in those who would be Christians, I Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:3, 4.

II The Minister's Place

1. Planting and watering are duties of the minister, but God gives the increase, I Corinthians 3:5-7; Psalm 126:5, 6.
2. God's true ministers are of one accord, I Corinthians 3:8, 9; Romans 12:5.

III God's Building

1. The Christian builds upon Christ, the Gospel foundation, I Corinthians 3:10, 11; Isaiah 28:16; II Timothy 2:19.
2. Some build with good material; others are content to use poor material, I Corinthians 3:12; Revelation 3:18.
3. Fire shall try every man's work, I Corinthians 3:13-15; Hebrews 12:27.

IV Temples of God

1. Redeemed people become temples of God, and God's temple must be kept undefiled, I Corinthians 3:16, 17;

2 Corinthians 6:16-18

¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2. There is no place for "the wisdom of this world" in the temple of God, I Corinthians 3:18-20;

James 3:14-18

¹⁴ But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

¹⁶ For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

3. All the redeemed belong to Christ, and Christ is God's, I Corinthians 3:21-23;

Romans 14:8

⁸ For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's

NOTES:

The Apostle had laboured long and ardently in the city of Corinth. The Lord Himself in a vision had told Paul there were many people in that city to be won for the Gospel. Much opposition was encountered, especially from the Jews contending for their own ways and traditions; but the Word of God won its way, nonetheless, and many souls were born into the Kingdom of

whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

⁴ For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

⁶ I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

⁷ So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

⁸ Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

⁹ For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

¹⁰ According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

¹⁶ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

¹⁷ If any man defile the temple of

Heaven.

Within a short time after Paul's departure from the church at Corinth, reports began coming to him that all was not well within the church. One of the chief causes of distress was the fact that among them were some who divided themselves into factions, each group choosing one of the Christian leaders as their champion. The Apostle Paul condemned this condition, saying, "Is Christ divided?" Jesus also spoke about divisions: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matthew 12:25). The true love of God precludes contentions, divisions, and manifestations of carnality from the hearts and lives of those who are real Christians.

Abominable Pride

This condition of contention in the Corinthian church stemmed from pride and carnality in the hearts of some. "Only by pride cometh contention" (Proverbs 13:10). The Bible states with finality that pride has no place in the heart of those who serve God: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, . . ." (Proverbs 6:16, 17). "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:16).

Carnality dates back to the Garden of Eden. Inbred sin was injected into the heart of man when our forefathers disobeyed the commandment of God. They came out from under the power and dominion of God and went under the command of Satan. Through rebellion against God and obedience to Satan they took upon themselves the very nature of sin. They lost the nature of holiness and degenerated into a state of carnality.

Necessity of Sanctification

Sooner or later, the sin-principle in the heart impels every person to commit sins of some kind. Whenever man repents of his sins and turns to God, those sins are forgiven. But, there still remains in the heart the sin-principle, which was born in him, handed down from his fore parents. God has made a way, through the offering of His Son, whereby the saved man might be sanctified by a second, instantaneous work of grace in the heart and the principle of sin be eradicated. It is necessary, therefore, to seek sanctification.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (I John 3:9), yet there will be hindrances and tendencies in the heart that cause trouble and spiritual suffering. The justified one will often have occasion to flee to God in prayer -- not that sin has been committed, but there is a longing in the soul for a deeper experience with God -- to be sanctified, and find in God that perfect rest of the soul. If the hindrances and tendencies in the justified heart are not taken to God in prayer and the remedy sought, there is grave danger of their growing and once again getting the upper hand. This seems to have been the condition among a number of the converts to Christianity at Corinth. They had not gone on to perfection, but had lapsed into sin.

Without Spot

In writing to the Ephesians the Apostle said: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). In pointing out the sin in the lives of some of these Corinthians, the Spirit, through Paul, was attempting to bring these people to the high standard of Christian grace. That theirs might be also a church without spot or wrinkle was the goal set before their vision.

God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple ye are*.

¹⁸ Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

²⁰ And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

²¹ Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;

²² Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

²³ And ye are Christ's; and Christ *is* God's.

Holiness and Oneness

As has been pointed out, this state of experience does not stem from one's own ability to make himself holy or direct his thoughts into higher channels. Holiness is wrought out in the heart through the Blood of Atonement. The Bible gives us clearly to understand that sanctification is not for the sinner. Sanctification is for the Church. As Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His disciples, who in turn were the nucleus or beginning of Christ's Church, He prayed: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. . . . They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. . . . That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:9, 16, 17, 21).

God answered this prayer of Jesus, as He answered every prayer that Jesus prayed, for from that time we read no more about contention among the disciples. They had been contending with one another at one time as to who was to sit next to Jesus in His Kingdom, but after this experience there is no more mention of that. On the other hand we read that when the disciples gathered in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost, when God was ready to pour out the Holy Spirit upon them and give them the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they showed complete evidence of being sanctified wholly, for "they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). Sanctification produces oneness. Sanctified souls are at one with one another, at one with the Word of God, and at one with the triune God.

Only Servants

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). Paul saw no reason for contention or partiality toward the leaders in the Corinthian church. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." The Christian leaders enjoyed unity and oneness among themselves; why should the church try to separate or differentiate between them?

The ministers and leaders have their responsibilities, surely. The gifts and calling of each minister might be a little different, but as the minister labours with all his heart the Lord sees to it that his efforts are not in vain. One of our present-day ministers points out this truth: The Water of Life is the important thing for the soul; the vessel through which it is poured makes no difference whether it be made of silver or whether it be a gourd.

The Apostles were not the authors of the Christian faith, although they were God's chosen instruments to reveal the Gospel to the world. Even the Apostolic ministers were nothing of themselves, for they could do nothing successfully except God was with them and gave them the increase. God makes use of many instruments, fitting them into the particular place for which they are best suited. Paul did well in the work of planting the Gospel; Apollos followed with the watering vessel; but God gave the increase. The success of the ministry must come from the divine blessing. The most successful and faithful of ministers have a keen knowledge of their own insufficiency, and are very desirous that God should receive the glory for any success accomplished.

The Master Builder

The Apostle leaves the figure of the planter and takes up the thought of Jesus Christ as the only Foundation upon which to build, and the individual Christians as builders upon that foundation. Upon this Foundation all faithful ministers of Christ build. Upon this

QUESTIONS

1. What was the nature of the contention in the Corinthian church?
2. Why is contention wrong?
3. What is God's cure for contention and carnality?
4. In what sense could Paul call himself the "wise master-builder"?
5. Upon what Foundation is the Christian Church built?
6. Who are the builders of the Christian Church?
7. What are some of the materials used in building?
8. In what way will the work of each man be tested?
9. How may each of us be sure of an eternal reward?

Rock all Christians found their hopes. The doctrine of our Saviour and His mediation is the principal doctrine of Christianity, lying at the bottom of our faith, and being the foundation of the whole Gospel. The Apostle described himself as the "wise master-builder" who had laid this foundation in the hearts of the Christians at Corinth — not in the sense that he had originated the foundation, but only that he had preached Jesus Christ in that city, the only way to salvation for mankind. It was now the responsibility of the people how they builded upon this foundation. They had begun to build well, but the Apostle feared that unsuitable material was being used in some of the building.

Testing Time

Some build upon the true foundation "gold, silver, precious stones." In other words, the ministers and Christians of this group do the works of God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength as unto the Lord. Unlike the Pharisees, they not only "pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin," but they observe also the weightier matters: judgment, mercy, and faith (**Matthew 23:23** ²³ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.). Unlike the rich young ruler, they withhold not their goods from the poor (**Matthew 19:21** ²¹ Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.), and the last mite is willingly given unto the Lord (**Mark 12:44** ⁴⁴ For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.). It is wonderful that one can use the things of this world and the treasures of this world for the Lord and for the Gospel, building upon the true and only foundation, and God will in turn credit them to an eternal account, giving that faithful builder an eternal reward.

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." This verse of Scripture seems to show that not all people have the same burning zeal toward the Gospel. The people of this group are building on the foundation, too; but their building materials are "wood, hay, stubble." They are saved, but they do not put forth their utmost effort to see other souls saved. Their treasures are too much in earthly things, rather than the things of Heaven. Their hearts may be filled with good thoughts and heavenly aspirations, but these thoughts and resolutions are not put into continual practice nor carried out to any appreciable extent.

God's fire will try every man's work. There is no reference here to anything in the nature of what some people call purgatorial fires. The Word points simply to the means of testing and revealing the quality of a man's work.

The final examination of the Christian will not be to determine how much he has learned, but how faithfully he has laboured, and with what attitude of heart, that his eternal reward might be given accordingly. God's fire reveals and tests. The gold, silver, and precious stones will not be impaired in any wise, but only brightened into greater lustre by the heat of the flame. On the other hand, the wood, hay, and stubble will go up in the flame, and die down into nothing but ashes. Some men's work will crumble and perish, while other men's work will stand. May all heed the Word of God, and so labour that their deeds may be accounted worthy of reward!