

Be United: Build the Church

August 13, 2023

WORSHIP

God So Loved
Great Things
Complete

WELCOME

Take time to read 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 then discuss on how you understand the passage and what verses stand out in your reading and/or the message delivered last Sunday.

WORD

1 CORINTHIANS 3:10
(READ 1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-17)

¹⁰According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. ¹⁶Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

There was once a farmer who found an eagle's egg, which he brought to the hen house and placed with the chicken eggs. The eagle's egg hatched, and the mother hen reared him together with the rest of her chicks. He grew up and lived his life as a chicken, not knowing who he truly was. One day, he saw a beautiful majestic bird soaring above the sky. It was an eagle just like him, but he did not know it. This bird ignited a longing in him, a desire to spread his wings and fly. He decided to pursue his longing, and this changed his life forever. He found his true identity as an eagle, and broke free from his false belief that he was a chicken.

Just like this eagle, it is equally important for us to understand our true identity. For it is in knowing who we truly are, that we can live according to how we were meant to live. Last Sunday, Bro. Julius continued on our series on 1 Corinthians, taking us through Paul's letter urging the Corinthian church to remember their identity, and to fulfil the duty that comes with knowing who they are.

Know your identity

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (v16). Temples were very common in Corinth. The Corinthians worshipped many gods and they understood that temples were holy places, expressions of reverence and awe. The Greek words Paul uses in this verse leaves no question on what he meant. His word for "temple" referred not to the whole sacred structure but to the temple sanctuary, the holy of holies. His word for "you" referred not to the individual Corinthian, but to the collective church of Corinth. Paul was telling the Corinthian church that they together are a holy temple, the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, and they must unite and act accordingly. They must not destroy God's temple by failing to put God at the centre. They must not defile it by praising men, choosing to be of Paul or of Apollos, instead of praising God. "If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (v17). They must remember who they are at all times, and live a life that consistently reflects reverence and awe for God.

Fulfil Your Duty

Paul not only calls the Corinthians to be united in knowing their identity, but to also be united in fulfilling their duty. "According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each person must be careful how he

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builds on it" (v10). Attributing what he did to "grace of God which was given" to him, he laid a foundation in Corinth, and sought the Corinthian church to build on it with care. Paul knew that God's work did not stop with him, but continued through others who God too would use. The foundation Paul laid was no ordinary one, but the only true foundation that is Jesus Christ. "For no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (v11). To build on this foundation, the Corinthians must together exist for the purpose of exalting Jesus and preaching about Him. To build on this carefully, they must construct with the right materials – not with wood, hay or straw that are easily consumed by fire; but with gold, silver and precious stones that are able to withstand the test of fire, and have lasting and eternal value. For "each one's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each one's work. If anyone's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet only so as through fire." (v13-15).

Just like the Corinthians, we too are called as a church know our true identity as God's holy temple, and to fulfil our duty by exalting Jesus Christ and sharing Him with others. Regardless of where we are in our spiritual journey, we are called to grow in knowing who we are and progressively living transformed lives. For those who do not yet have a relationship with Christ, we are called to know and accept Him as our Lord and Saviour, and through this learn our true identity. For Christians, we are called to unite in fulfilling our duty, to go beyond attending church to joining a d-group, discipling others, serving in ministry, or sharing about Jesus to those around us. We are called to be united and to build God's church together.

Discussion Questions

1. Knowing our identity that collectively we are God's holy temple, how should this truth impact our lives?
2. How can we check if the things that we are doing are "Gold, silver, precious stones" which have eternal lasting value?
3. Share some practical ways on how you and I can fulfill our duty on building the church.