

# INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
February 19, 2017  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Leviticus 19:1-2,17-18, Matthew 5:38-48

Hymns: 466; 473; 314; 309

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

<sup>10</sup>According 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. <sup>11</sup>For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ...

<sup>16</sup>Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? <sup>17</sup>If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

<sup>18</sup>Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

<sup>19</sup>For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their *own* craftiness"; <sup>20</sup>and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

<sup>21</sup>Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours:

<sup>22</sup>whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. <sup>23</sup>And you *are* Christ's, and Christ *is* God's. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

### INTRO: Learning from a Master Builder

Sometimes when we are trying to learn something we can learn from our mistakes. However, while we will always strive not to repeat mistakes in any endeavor in life, there are some endeavors in which mistakes can be tragic. Then one needs to learn from a master. In the trades apprentice systems are used so that a beginner can learn from those who know better. So one begins as an apprentice electrician, after some training one may become a journeyman, and finally after some years of experience and study one might qualify to be a master. We want a master in charge of electrical work in our homes. We at least want those who have learned from the best.

So it would be foolish of me who has no experience and indeed very little knowledge to attempt to build my own home. In the end it would be certain disaster. There are some things which we should not just muddle through. People's lives could be put at risk.

So it is with spiritual building. In this world there are many who claim to be experts in things spiritual and in building up people spiritually. Often the ideas that form the basis and foundation of their building are flawed. If the spiritual foundation is seriously flawed this can end in grave disaster. Even after the foundation is laid it is important to continue to follow the manual of God's Word, to use only the best materials the law of God and His gospel, and to take great care in how one builds. People's souls are at stake, and one must edify, which literally means "build up" rather than guess at what might be best and use flawed materials, while building on a weak foundation.

In our text this morning Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is presented to us as a master builder, one prepared by the Lord to direct us to build spiritually upon --

### **THEME: Christ: the Only Sure Foundation for Faith and Life**

So how does Paul begin but to instruct on --

#### **I. Building on this Sure Foundation.**

**1 Corinthians 3:10-11** “According 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. <sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

On his missionary journeys Paul preached to the people of many cities, always with the same message, Christ crucified. He was mocked, he was imprisoned, he was beaten, he was stoned, but he was not deterred. As a wise master builder Paul knew that the church’s foundation had to be Christ crucified! Was there any alternative? Others thought so. Many wanted Paul to compromise and include the Old Testament ceremonial law as being essential to salvation. That would have been a different foundation of faith and life. It would have placed the works of the law, the accomplishments of man alongside of the work of Christ. The works of the law cannot save.

The ceremonial law found its fulfillment not in pious people striving to observe them to perfection, but in Christ. Every sacrifice, every feast, every ceremony, every restriction of the law, all served to point to the Promised Savior and demonstrate the need for a Savior to set us free from the condemnation of the law. Christ alone was the fulfillment of the law, even as Jesus Christ alone perfectly kept the law for our righteousness. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that atoned for sin. The blood of goats and lambs and bullocks could never atone for sin.

Jesus brings hope of life and eternal salvation to all who believe, for all who turn and look upon the cross with eyes of faith.

This was Paul’s message. This was the foundation which Paul laid upon which others could build with confidence. That was true for those who served as pastors in the Corinthian congregation, and it stands true yet today for pastors and missionaries and lay people alike. There are so many pressures to accommodate different ideas, to make room for newer views, to allow for some merit to come from those who are being saved. Those ideas have made serious inroads into many Christian churches but it is really nothing different than what Paul faced. People get caught up in personalities and fanfare and the accomplishments of man rather

than in the One who really and alone secured our salvation, and that One is Christ crucified.

“How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word  
What more can He say than to you He hath said  
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 427:1)

What is being built upon this foundation is a glorious temple. Paul’s message to the Corinthians and then also to us is astounding:

## II. “**You Are the Temple of God.**”

Paul takes what is often thought of as a corporate illustration and makes it very personal.

**1 Corinthians 3:16-17** “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? <sup>17</sup>If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.”

Yes, it is true that the Church made up of the believers in this world is the temple of God. It is made up of living stones, and we are those stones. However it is also true for each of us individually that we are the temple of God. We are the temple of God because we have been redeemed unto God by Christ; and the Holy Spirit who called us to faith in Jesus has thereby set us apart from the world. He has sanctified us for a special purpose, that we should be the temple of God.

What an amazing act of grace and salvation! The Holy Spirit has taken vile sinners like us, common filthy things that we were, and has set us apart for a holy purpose. We have been made God’s own special people. We have been made the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit. We, YOU are God’s temple.

Do you understand the implications of that amazing truth, that act of grace? Paul is quite specific in making it clear that this does have great implications for our person, for our lives. How are we to behave with our body now that we know that this body, and yes

that is exactly right, YOUR body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? You can't just do whatever YOU want with God's temple, which temple you are! You dare not defile your body with sin, with excesses, with abuses of profligate living and immorality. We need to consider that as we make our way through life and face the temptations of the world. It is not just us that we consider, in fact we have become secondary in our consideration before the Lord. We daren't do whatever might please the flesh. We dare not live by the adage "If it feels good do it," not if that would defile God's temple. I mean, there are things that you just don't do in church, right? I mean, how could you disrespect your God and Savior, and the Holy Spirit who sanctified you with a deliberate violation of His temple? You are that temple!

And the personal consequences of such a willful violation, a defiling of the temple of God by rejecting the gospel of Christ: it would be devastating. The consequences for turning away from the truth are more than devastating, they are eternal death.

But you are God's temple. By the grace of God in a miracle of salvation YOU are God's temple.

So Paul says:

### **III. Do Not Deceive Yourself.**

**1 Corinthians 3:18-20** "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.<sup>19</sup> For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their *own* craftiness";<sup>20</sup> and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

Paul understood the allurements of the world, and not just with the appeals to the flesh or material gain. Worldly wisdom is crafty and deceitful and enticing. It is not uncommon that young Christians face a crisis of faith, and many turn away from the faith at universities which serve as centers not only of knowledge, but of philosophy, of worldly wisdom. Almost every discipline of study, almost every profession in this world has not only necessary knowledge for the Christian to learn to get a job and have a career, but it will also have ideas and philosophies that run counter to what

we have learned in Christ. Ideas about morality and justifications for approving that which we know to be against the will of God is one thing, but mastering a professional discipline has a whole different set of dangers to one's faith. One can easily be drawn into the worldly wisdom that undermines one's faith.

This is where one can deceive oneself into thinking that we have become enlightened with a greater understanding than we possessed before. Then we were children and suddenly we are no longer gullible enough to believe all the myths of Scripture. Then we were naïve, now we are sophisticated. All of a sudden we realize that we don't agree with everything God's Word declares. All of a sudden we realize that truly there is good in all people that will merit consideration of salvation by God. Suddenly we realize that the different world religions aren't really all that different we are all simply trying to be better people with some small differences in expressing our faith in God. Suddenly we are no longer wise with the wisdom of God, but fools who think the gospel is quite gory and gross and even profane to think that God would have someone brutally tortured and killed, and to think that act of inhumanity could atone?!

Don't be deceived. If you have become wise in the way of the world, become a fool before the world, that you may be wise, for God has caught the wise of the world in their own craftiness. He knows their thoughts, their wisdom to be futile. It leads to nothing. It is an empty shell. It has no hope.

Hope is what we have in Christ. Indeed we have everything in Christ. Even as we suffer loss of all things for Christ, even as we endure loss in this life and derision from the wise of this world, we have all in Christ. How does our text conclude?

**1 Corinthians 3:21<sub>b</sub>-22** “For all things are yours: <sup>22</sup> whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. <sup>23</sup> And you *are* Christ's, and Christ *is* God's.”

Jesus died for us. He bought us with His holy precious blood. We are redeemed to God. We are Christ's, and Christ is God's. So the result is our good and blessing. “The meek shall inherit the earth.”

All things are yours in life or in death in this present world, or that which is to come. All things are given us freely by our Father in heaven. It is all ours in Christ!

“Now I have found the firm foundation  
Which holds mine anchor ever sure  
‘Twas laid before the world’s creation  
In Christ my Savior’s wounds secure;  
Foundation which unmoved shall stay  
When heav’n and earth will pass away.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 385:1)

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.