

The Singularity of the Foundation

November 27, 2017

Now I would hasten to add my thanks to all who have come. I recognize that for some of you it is a huge sacrifice of time and effort and I appreciate that. I know that for some it's a long journey to get here, and we don't take that for granted. And in light of that, I will do my very very best to be prompt to close the meeting on time, so that I don't take advantage of your kindness in coming.

Now this week, in the will of God we want to look at some subjects relative to the local assembly. And while there are a myriad of subjects that that could be covered, we'll have to limit ourselves. Tonight we'll be looking at the singularity of the foundation: one foundation for a local assembly. Tomorrow evening, in the will of God, we'll consider something of the centrality of the Lord's supper, how central it is to all we do, and to the very character of assembly testimony. On Wednesday night, Lord willing, we'll look at the necessity for prayer. Not so much the need for prayer, but what we need and are able to pray. So it might be better termed the necessities for prayer. Thursday evening, we'll consider the indispensability of boundaries. God believes in boundaries. He set a boundary about the Garden of Eden. Wherever God is working, he sets boundaries. Then in the will of God, Friday night we will take up the activity of shepherds and of shepherding in the assembly. That is the agenda then before us for the week. And I would covet the prayers and support of the believers as well in those efforts.

Now we're going to turn this evening to First Corinthians chapter one. First Corinthians chapter one. We'll just going to read a few verses here. in chapter one, beginning at verse number one. "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Now four things to notice about the people who comprised this company referred to as Church of God. They were saved. They were sanctified. They were separated. And they were submissive to claims of lordship. This then is the character of those that comprised the assembly, the church of God at Corinth.

Now turn for the rest of our reading to chapter three. I almost feel like I need to apologize to those who are older. This is very very familiar ground and what you have learned and enjoyed all of your lives. But we are to stir up our pure minds by way of remembrance, so there is always value to truth that we have appreciated for years. We'll

break in here at verse nine. "We are laborers—this is First Corinthians chapter 3 verse 9—we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder [a wise architect]. I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 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. If any man's work abide which he had built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Now we do know that God will add his blessing to the public reading of his word.

August 14, 1173. That is almost eight hundred fifty years ago. They laid the first stone for the foundation. And as they built that bell tower, in three years time it suddenly began to lean. They stopped building for a hundred years, and it's said that if they hadn't stopped, it would have collapsed. Even then, they kept building, and eventually there were seven levels to it. Upon the top they put seven bells.

But it leaned, and worry began to mount that it was going to collapse. Over the next eight hundred fifty years, because of a poor foundation, a foundation built upon an old estuary of sand only about nine feet deep, they struggled to fortify it, and to prevent it from continuing to lean. On one occasion, they drilled six hundred fifty holes into the foundation and poured in eighty tons of grout to try to stop the Leaning Tower of Pisa from falling over. Everything they did for eight hundred fifty years only made things worse. It kept leaning. Every intervention led to more leaning. In the late twentieth century they were able to suddenly stop it. But tragically, along with the fact that the tower became a tourist attraction rather than a functioning tower, its very function was impaired. The seven bells that they had placed in that tower could not be rung for fear that the vibrations would risk the collapse of the building. So its very function was lost, and the only function it serves today is for people to come and look at it, and to marvel at the stupidity of its designers. (Since I'm Italian I can say that.) The Italian designers who planned this building ended up with a leaning building. A foundation is vital if something is going to not only stand erect, but function as it is intended to function.

So are we are going to be looking now at the singularity of the foundation for a local assembly: the basis, the building, the beautifying, and then the burning.

It's all in this chapter. There's a field, there's a foundation, there's a fire, but we're going to be looking at the basis for an assembly, at the building up of an assembly, of the beautifying of an assembly, and then of the day when, at the *bema*, everything will be tested by the fire of God. So that's what is before us for the meeting tonight.

About five years before this chapter was written, Paul had gone to the city of Corinth. He had come with the gospel. You can read about it in Acts chapter eighteen. Souls were saved as the result of his eighteen months spent in the city of Corinth. They were baptized. They were separated from all of the evil, the immorality, the wickedness of the city of Corinth, and they were gathered together as an assembly recognizing the claims of the lordship of Christ. Paul says, when I was with you (chapter two) I desired to know nothing else except Jesus Christ and him crucified. That's the message I presented.

He said, I realize that in Corinth there was a tremendous attraction towards eloquence. There was a tremendous attraction towards personality cults. There was a tremendous attraction toward philosophy and psychology. He says, all of those things I purposely avoided. And in the very simplest of terms, I preached to you the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And they were gathered. But like all of us, they brought along with them some of the baggage of their society. They were enamored with great men, with great ministries, with great miracles, and so on. And so they brought that mindset into the assembly at Corinth. Paul was writing because that was affecting the assembly. It was having its effect upon their interaction, upon their functioning, and upon their usefulness, and so he is writing in his epistle to correct many of those issues.

And he comes then to the foundation for a local assembly. What then is the basis for a local assembly? What is its foundation? He says very clearly here, other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

You may say, well that's pretty obvious. But I want you just to think for a moment of the significance of the order in which Paul gives the names of the Lord Jesus. Now Paul, as you know, typically refers to the Lord Jesus as *Christ Jesus* or *Christ Jesus our Lord* or our *Lord Jesus Christ*. He very rarely speaks of *Jesus Christ*. Now that's in

contrast to the apostle Peter. The apostle Peter, who knew the Lord Jesus here upon earth, frequently refers to him as *Jesus Christ*. You read his epistles. He knew him first as Jesus, and then he learned of him as the Christ glorified. Paul, who did not know him on earth, speaks of him first of all as Christ. He had learned him as the glorified exalted man in heaven. He is the Christ, and he is Jesus. So Paul usually refers to him as *Christ Jesus*. Peter is *Jesus Christ* but here in chapters one, two, and three, Paul speaks of *Jesus Christ*. Now, what's the significance? What does the name *Jesus Christ* mean, in contrast to *Christ Jesus*? And why does Paul specifically say, that's the foundation I laid?

Jesus is the man the world despised. The world looked at him, and there was no beauty in him they would desire him. One of the translations of Isaiah 53 is, "he gathered no great men around him." He didn't gather the great, the important, the impressive. He didn't go for the stars of the day. He didn't go for the leading lights. He went for a bunch of fishermen, in the eyes of people fairly ignorant, unlearned men. He didn't gather any of the great of earth. He didn't have any of the charisma that men look for. He had none of the characteristics that men look for in a leader: aggressiveness and assertiveness and pride and arrogance. None of that was found in him. There was no beauty in him that men desire.

He was Jesus, despised, rejected of men, but he is the Christ, meaning God found everything he wants in him. Now Paul says, here is the foundation I laid in Corinth. The foundation I laid was a man who, as the world looked at him, it found nothing attractive in him. He did not buy into the values of his day. He was absolutely distinct from it all. But in contrast, heaven found everything in him. Now, he says, that's the foundation. Now, he says, make sure you build on that foundation. What does that mean?

Now, I am not a builder. Far from it. You wouldn't want to see anything my hand ever came to, as far as carpentry work is concerned. But I do know this, because I watched as they built a house for us.

Everything about the building takes character from the foundation. It's got to align with the foundation. So what Paul is telling us here is this, that if an assembly is built upon this foundation, and is built true to the foundation, it will not look very attractive to the world. It will not be buying into all the values of the world around us. It will not appear to men as something really important. Something really big, significant, and wonderful. Just as they looked at Christ and said, "insignificant," so they will look at an assembly and think "insignificant." Just as the Lord Jesus did not buy into the tech-

niques and the values of his day, so a local assembly is not going to conform itself to a society around it, to appeal to it and to attract it and to make it seem acceptable to it. So he says, here is the estimation of men. But here is the evaluation that God has made. God has found in Christ everything that brings him pleasure, and God will find in his tilled field, in his husbandry, in his building, everything that brings him delight and pleasure. So then the critical question becomes, can I be sure I'm building on the right foundation.

It would be tragic to put all your energy into something that wasn't built on the right foundation.

Now God is the assessor of all of all that men do. We're not here to criticize and judge what may be gathered on some other basis. God is the judge of all of that. But I want to be sure that everything I am doing, all of my efforts, all of my energy is being devoted to what is being built upon the right foundation. So we are not gathered, we are not building upon a group of doctrines. That may come as a surprise. It's not as though we have a group of Brethren doctrines, and we have ten of them, and, you know, we've ticked off all the boxes, so we're good. It's not that at all. We are gathered to a person, and everything that we do and believe and hold flows from who that person is. We don't have a rule that women are silent and have their heads covered. We're gathered to Christ, and in recognizing his headship, our sisters cover their heads. Our brethren uncover their heads. Our sisters our silent. Our brethren speak publicly. We are gathered to the Lord Jesus, and as head he has poured out gifts, multiple gifts, and as a result there is not a one-man ministry. There is a multiplicity of ministry in a local assembly. He is the chief shepherd, and there are under-shepherds. So it's not a matter that we have certain doctrines that we follow, and as long as you follow these doctrines, that means you're doing the right thing. We are gathered to a person. We recognize that we're not gathered to a doctrine, such as baptism. We're not gathered to a man, like Martin Luther (who prayed that people would not be gathered to his name). We're not gathered to a method. We're not gathered to a form of government.

We're gathered to a person. And we are built upon the foundation of that person, a person the world despised, a person the world rejected, a person the world found nothing attractive in—we're linked with him. He is the basis, so that everything must be consistent with who Christ is. Everything is built upon who he is. We're reminded here not just of the foundation, but that this foundation is the basis for what is called God's building, God's house. When you think of a house you think of at least three things: you think of ownership, you think of occupancy, and you think about order.

Now if I were to come to your house, you have absolute sovereign right to say what goes on in your home. I don't. I'm a visitor. I have to comply with whatever the house rules are.

This is God's house. He has absolute sovereign rights to determine behavior in the house of God. So when Paul picks up his pen in first Timothy chapter three, he tells us how—moral obligation—one ought to behave in the house of God, which is church of the living God, pillar and ground of the truth. So as an owner, sovereign rights are his, and not mine. But when you think of that, as well you think about the the occupant. It is house of God.

The first place in your bible that expression occurs is in Genesis chapter twenty-eight. Now, it's not a local assembly. It's Jacob coming to Bethel, the "house of God." You recall, he's running away from his brother, and he is trying to escape for his life. He lights upon a certain place, and at night he takes a stone for his pillow, and falls asleep, and has that dream where he sees the angels of God ascending and descending, and God standing beside the ladder. He awakens and he says, this is an awful place. Now that's the true meaning of the word, awful, meaning this is an awesome place. This is the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. So the first place you find a house of God mentioned in the Bible. It's linked with at least four or five things that will be linked with the house of God throughout the rest of the word of God.

Number one, it's a place of God's residence, and it demands reverence. This is an awesome place. This is the house of God. So wherever God's residence is, it demands my reverence. Now reverence is a principle that each of us has to apply in our own ways.

When I grew up (and you will think I grew up in the dark ages, and I guess I did), reverence meant you only wore a white shirt on Sunday, and you only wore black shoes. And if you really wanted to be reverent, you wore white socks. Don't ask what that has to do with being reverent. You know, we have strange ideas sometimes. That's how they applied reverence. And you never chewed gum in meeting, and you tiptoed into meeting, and once you sat down you never got up until the meeting was done. You know now I'm not saying that's the definition of reverence, but what I am saying is, in the presence of God decide what is reverence. Don't throw everything out because of what we think of what those people used to think of reverence. It still demands reverence. Make sure you have some standard of reverence that you apply to your own life. When you're in the presence of God his residence demands it.

But as well he spoke of it being the "gate of heaven." I used to think he meant, this is the closest place on earth to heaven. But that's not what he means. In the Old Testament, the gate was a place of authority. It was the place where decisions were made. Remember that when Abraham wanted to purchase a field to bury Sarah, he sat in the gate. You remember that when Boaz wanted to purchase Ruth to be his wife, he went to the gate. Remember how they spoke of Lot? He was a judge sitting in the gate. So the gate of the city was the place of authority. In a local assembly, the place of authority and administration is through the Word of God. This is our authority. The Word of God in the hands of men who are responsible to lead the assembly is God's authority. And it is administered through the Word of God to us.

There is no higher authority for believers upon earth than a local assembly. There is no group of assemblies. There is no group of preachers. Nothing goes higher than the oversight of an assembly; that's Matthew chapter eighteen. Tell it to the church—that's as far as it goes. Now that has implications, but we don't want to stay there right now.

One or two other things just to mention. It was a place as well of angelic attendance. The angels were ascending and descending. It was a place of angelic interest and attendance. The first place you have "house of God" mentioned in the Bible, you also have angels. What does Paul say when we come to First Corinthians chapter eleven? "For this cause ought a woman to have a sign of authority on her head because of angels." You might say, why would angels be interested in a woman in a local assembly having her head covered, and being in the place that God has given her?

Where is the first place an angel speaks in the Word of God? If this were a Bible reading, I would ask for volunteers, but it's not. The first place an angel speaks in the Bible, he says to a woman, return and submit, Hagar (Genesis sixteen). There were angels who once had the privilege of standing before the sapphire throne of God ministering in God's presence. And one third of them decided they did not want to submit. and they fell. They followed Satan, Lucifer, in his rebellion and they were cast out, so that there were angels who refused to submit. They had the privilege of actually being in heaven, before the presence of God, of being before that incredible majesty. And they fell. Now angels that did not fall what are called the elect angels. They are looking on and they see us upon earth. They see individuals who intelligently, who voluntarily, and who gladly submit and to the place God has given them. That's why he says in First Corinthians, "For this cause ought a woman to have a sign of authority on her

head," because angels are looking on, learning the great principle of submission as displayed by our sisters.

There was commitment and consecration. You remember that the first thing Jacob does after he awakens is to set up a stone pillar. He pours oil upon it, and makes his vow that if God will be with him and bring him again to the place he would give him a tent, and so on. So there was commitment and consecration. The house of God requires commitment and consecration, if we are going to see it flourish and be all God intends it to be.

Let me quickly come then to the the building, or the framework, if you will, of this house: "let every man take heed how he builds thereon." So this is very practical. It has searching implications for us. There was a mentality which was a barrier that hindered building for God: competitiveness. That was going on at Corinth. Everyone wanted to be the star. Everyone wanted to have the front row. Everyone wanted to have their fifteen minutes of fame. Paul had to deal with that. He had to deal with it in Rome, when he was imprisoned, and he wrote to the Christians in Philippi about it. He was in prison, and some were preaching Christ out of strife, supposing to add gall to Paul's bonds, making Paul feel like, here I am, helpless, and all these men are out preaching and they are getting all the attention. Paul said, It doesn't matter to me. I'm not in this business for competition. I'm thankful Christ is being preached. But competitiveness can enter. So can conceit: thinking everything begins and ends with me. And what about conflict: butting heads when they gather in the assembly. That can hinder usefulness, that can hinder building. And of course then there's complacency. What good am I? What use am I? I can do so little. I can accomplish so little. I mean, I'm hardly noticed in the assembly.

We have to change our thinking relative to service and relative to usefulness for God. We have bought into the thinking that the more prominent the gift, the more public the gift, the more seemingly successful the gift, the greater the honor God gets, and the greater the reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

That is absolutely wrong. It is one hundred percent wrong.

God does not reward gift. God does not reward "success." God rewards faithfulness. What that means is, if you have been given a Sunday School class to teach, five-, six-, seven-year olds, and you do it to the very best of your ability, with all of the ability God gives you, and you do it faithfully, your reward at the judgment seat of Christ will very likely be as great as the public individual with a greater

gift, if he has been faithful with his gift. God will reward faithfulness. So whatever you have been given to do; whatever whatever ability God has given you; whatever place you can fill in God's assembly; if he has given you that gift, there is no one that can do what you are doing as well as you are doing it. We fail to do what we can do because so often we lament what we can't do. But just do what God has given you to do.

We have the potential of honoring him and also reaping a tremendous reward at the judgment seat of Christ. I have to hurry. These verses, I'll just mention them without any detail and without any elaboration. What is the mentality needed for building. You'll notice that there is an awareness that, number one, God is the ultimate blessing. Number two, there must be an acceptance that, even though God is the ultimate blessing in verses six and seven, I must assume personal responsibility to do what I can do. He speaks as well of the ambition to glorify God alone (verse five). He speaks of unity in labor (verse eight). So this is the mindset: it's all for God, it's all about him, it's all for his glory; but yet, I've got to bear my responsibility. Work in unity with my brother. We're not in competition. The work is one, and we seek to help.

What is it that people seek so often, and think that we're lacking? Number one is size, isn't it. It's not very comforting when your Christian friends ask you where you go. You say, I meet with believers who gather to the Lord's name. They ask, how many are there? Well, there are about forty-five or fifty. They say, we've got five hundred. We don't have room in our parking lot for them all. Because somehow, size means they're right.

And of course the other thing that people buy into is not size, but success. "We had an evangelistic campaign, and we had fifty decisions in one week." And you slog away at the gospel, and have a month of tent meetings, and maybe three or four people are saved. And they look at you. Why waste your time?

You invite them along to your meeting, and they think it's pretty boring. There's no band. There's no videos going on around you. You just sit there.

Size; success; the sensational. Where does that come from? Where do we get the idea that size means everything is right? That's from the religious world.

What about the idea of success? That comes from corporate America. That's the business world.

What about sensationalism? That's the entertainment world.

All of those standards somehow become the standard against which people judge an assembly.

Now look the foundation. The foundation wasn't very sensational. The foundation wasn't marked by great size. In fact, when the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest evangelist, left planet Earth, what were there, five hundred people that he could count as followers? That wouldn't be considered a very successful ministry in today's marketplace. And as far as success? He died on a cross, labeled a criminal, labeled an impostor, scorned and rejected. There was no sensationalism. And Paul says, an assembly built on that foundation is not going to carry the insignia of success in the eyes of the world, or sensationalism. It's going to be marked by just exactly what marked the foundation.

Can I say something about beautifying. Let me just dip back into the Old Testament again for just a minute. One of the most unsung—I'll use the word heroes, poor word to use but for want of a better—one of the most unsung heroes in the Old Testament is a man named Ezra. Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord. And to do it and to teach it. That's a moral order that is vital (Ezra chapter seven), to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach it in his own life. You know what happened because of that? Here's what we read, that he beautified the house of the Lord. He made the house of God beautiful to God. He was a man who wanted to build, a man who wanted to contribute. Here Paul speaks about how to beautify the house of God. Gold, silver, precious stone. Here is what is attractive to God. Here is what is of value. Gold is small but weighty. You link it of course with the person of Christ. It may be small but it's got weight to it. The wood, hay, and stubble is impressive in its size, but it's not going to stand the test of the fire. But the gold, while it's small, has tremendous weight and character. What he is telling me is this that there is nothing too precious when it comes to building for God.

Now let me just stop for a moment. How precious is the assembly to you? Is it merely a matter of convenience? Is it a matter of family ties? Is it a matter of comfort? They are nice people, they get along well and they have nice snacks at noon on Sunday and they make the coffee very nice, and it's just a nice place to be. Are you willing you're willing to pour your life into what pleases God? Nothing is too precious. Nothing is too valuable. That's the gold and silver. Nothing is too costly; it deserves my best, not what just gets by. Now that's going to involve choices in life. I've got to think about this. Will

it please God? Will it enable me to contribute to the assembly and its future and its blessing? That's going to affect my career. It's going to affect where I live. It's going to affect who I marry. It's going to affect who my friends are. It's going to affect my leisure time, how I spend my extra time. All of that is going to be centered around this. Am I going to be able to give God my best? Or is he only going to be able to get what's left over? After everything else he deserves my very best in life.

Have a vision for building for God. It's hard to stress enough just how vital it is to desire to build, and to have the right vision for building. Back in 1978, a man named Ron Nachman lived in Israel. After Israel's Six-Day War in 1967, he realized how valuable, how important an area north of Samaria was. It was a desolate, deserted area. The Arabs called it the 'hill of death' because it was so barren and so desolate. But he knew this was a strategic place, if they were ever attacked again. He thought, we have to have a city here. We have to have a presence here. And so, in 1978, he led forty-nine families out from civilization to a barren desert area in Samaria. It was so devoid of anything, helicopters had to drop in water, had to drop in tents, had to drop in supplies. He had a vision. He wanted to build. He wanted to build something in light of the future. Today that city is a city of twenty thousand people called Ariel, city of the 'lion of God.' A computer center and a university are there, because of a man who had a vision and wanted to build. Have you any vision for the assembly? As you see children running around you, do you have a vision for those children? Do you have a vision for the neighbors? Do you have any kind of vision to to see the assembly grow and prosper? Are you willing to pour yourself out that it might be accomplished and might be blessed? Nothing is too good for God's assembly: the gold, the silver, the precious stones, all are vital and can add tremendous value to God's assembly.

But we're reminded here not only of the material but of motives and methods. We've touched on these already, building for God on the right foundation. So let me just come then to the *bema* that we're reminded of at the close of the chapter. if any man's work abide, we're reminded here in verse twelve and verse thirteen, every man's work will be manifest. The day shall declare it, for the fire shall try it. Now notice what it says. I wish I could somehow stress these words and imprint them upon young minds. It will try every man's work not of what size it is.

But of *what sort* it is.

God is more concerned with quality than with quantity. He is concerned with what kind of work it is, of what sort it is. Is it the kind of thing that reflects his glory? The gold. Is it the kind of thing that reflects the redemptive price of Christ? Is it the silver, the kind of thing that reflects the glories of Christ? Is it the precious stones? Is that all of that. It's obvious, isn't it, that the fire is going to consume the wood, hay, and stubble. It will be no more. But what is of value to God is going to last eternally. So let me just quickly then mention to you in these last few moments the test of the fire. The day will declare it. We are reminded here of a day declaring it, of fire devouring it, and of his eye discerning it. Is what I am building into God's assembly—now, I am honest enough to realize that at the very best, our motives are not as pure as we'd like them to be. Even when you think your motives are pure, you quickly find that they're not. And you begin taking pride in your pure motives, and you go down that rabbit hole, and you just feel like giving up. But you'll understand, that God deals graciously with us despite our our lack of absolute purity and our motives. There's only one man that ever moved here whose every motive was absolutely pure and devoid of any thought of self. Self is so incurably evil that it always looks for some credit to take, some some honor to get, from whatever it is doing. But God is able to deal with all of that and separate all of that chaff out the wheat. But his eye in that day will discern whether what I have built by my efforts is of value. Now I know that this chapter is primarily dealing with teaching, and with men who teach the Word of God in God's assembly, but all of us are either building up or breaking down one way or the other by the contributions we make. We are doing one or the other. So the principle of this chapter, while it may be in its strict interpretation limited to those who teach, the principle flows beyond just the context. We are all building. Everyone is either adding to or taking from. That day is going to declare whether we have added to or taken from God's assembly.

So you have the option, you have the privilege, you have the potential to build for God in your own day. You may think that your contribution is very small. You may think that your ability is very limited. You may think that your gift is small in comparison to others. You just give what you have. It's wonderful to go through the word of God and look at individuals who had very little, but who gave what they had. There was the little maiden down in Naaman's house, and she simply told what she knew. She didn't give a long sermon; she just told what she knew. There was a boy that had five loaves and two fishes he gave what he had. There was a woman who had an alabaster box of ointment, and she poured it out upon the one she loved. There was a widow with two mites, and she's become an object lesson for the last two millennia. People who had very little, and yet they became tremendously use-

ful in the work of God. So don't sit back and say that there's very little I can do.

Let me just take you to Luke chapter nineteen for a moment. The Lord Jesus Christ told a parable because they were looking for the kingdom of God to come, and he spoke about going into a far country and dividing up the pounds. Listen to what he says to the man that gains ten. We think, there is a success story. He says, you've been faithful in very little—very little. You see, the most any of us can ever do is very little. When you think of the great kingdom of God and you think of the great work God is doing down through the dispensation, we're all just little little pebbles, but thank God we can do something, we can add something, to what God finds pleasure in.

So here is a day of the test of the fire. The truth will then be manifested, of what sort it is. We mentioned that God is more concerned with character, with quality, than quantity. This chapter details for us foolishness, emptiness, craftiness. It says, all of those things have no place in building for God. God is not interested in the foolishness of man's wisdom. He is not interested in the craftiness of men. He is not interested at all in the emptiness, the the vanity of what people do. He says, all that is going to be burned up in light of a coming day. It all means nothing. There will be something that will pass the test of the fire. A testimony for eternity. If we turned back one chapter. listen to what Paul says. He is dealing with the issue of people judging him for his motives. He says, that doesn't bother me. He says, I'm waiting for a day when everything will be made manifest, when the secret things will be revealed. What is dark will come into light. He said then, not till then, shall every man have praise of God.

Would it be worth pouring your life into the assembly, making all of your choices, not on what I would like, not on what is going to get me a lot of money, not what is going to further my career, but would it be worthwhile making every choice based on what is going to honor him, and how it will help the assembly, if I knew in the end, that when I get to heaven, he would say well done?

To be able to walk into eternity, with the praise of God ringing in my ears: then shall every man have praise of God. We are reminded here of something that is going to last eternally: the honor of the rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.

It's only a year and what, three or four months since the Rio Olympics in 2016. There were individuals who sacrificed years of their life to perform there. Now, if you've ever known anyone who's trained for an

Olympics you'll know what I'm saying. They literally train years of their life, sacrificing legitimate things. They spend money for personal trainers. They try to hone their skills to the very best of their ability, because they're going for the gold. You know, the people that won the gold at Rio in 2016, their medals are already corroding. They used an inferior metal. And they're writing back to the Olympic Committee complaining that their medals are already tarnishing. It's almost prophetic of what we have in the word of God, in a corruptible crown, things corrupting. Imagine spending your life with a goal of trying to get that precious metal. And as you watch it it just kind of crumbles in your very hands. Here's something that will never never cease. What you and I do to build on the right foundation, what we add to the foundation, what we build on the foundation, if it passes through the fire, and it withstands the test of the fire, then shall every man have praise of God. It's worth going in for. It's worth giving your very best years and effort to see God's assembly blessed and prospered.

A man named William James (he's not a believer by any means; he was an American philosopher) said this, and while he was not thinking of spiritual things I think it has tremendous relevancy. He said, the best use of your life is for something that will outlive your life. May God bless his word.