



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Basic Bible Doctrine, 1 Corinthians 3:5-17

"The Believer's Judgment"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] This is another in our series of messages on basic Bible doctrine. 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 5 through verse 17. Let me read these verses, the apostle writes,

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are labourers 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 masterbuilder, 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 hath 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. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

I think any thinking and reflective evangelical Christian in our day would acknowledge that the fear of God and the judgment of man are lost notes amid the festive, indolent, collection plate passing, sabbatarianism of the United States of America. One of the reasons for the strength of Scottish Christianity for many decades was its firm and clear apprehension of the reality of the judgment of God. The Scots have often though to be very dour people, but while there may be some truth to that, there is another aspect of their character which is to be applauded. And that is that they did tend to look at things under the view point of eternity, or *sub specie eternitatis*. They understood the more significant things of life, and it's very interesting, I think, that the Scots have always had a deeper interest in philosophy than others in the British Isles. Their thoughts tended to go back to world views and the reasons for things.

And one of the things that was characteristic of them was the sense of the fear and awe of the eternal God. He never thought of God as a chum or a playboy with whom he could have fun. I think there was something of this in our Lord's life, too. When you read, for example, Mary's magnificat, one of the notes that comes out in that magnificat is the note of astringency. I think the Lord Jesus must have learned some of the astringency that characterized certain of his ministry from his mother and from his father. They definitely had a sense of the awe of God, and they also had a clear sense of God's holiness and righteousness and did not hesitate to pray that God would bring judgment and justice upon the enemies of God as well. I think the Lord Jesus learned to say, "Woe unto them" because he learned this from Joseph and from Mary. We tend to think of God in different ways. We tend to think of him either as a monarch, like a monarch on the

earth, or as a democrat who is president of a country, or perhaps some people think of him as a republican and president of a bank. Still others might think of him as a playground supervisor, who looks down every now and then and says, "That is naughty kind of activity that you are engaged in now." And many of us still think of him as really a kind of loving chum, a fellow with whom we can have a great deal of fellowship.

C.S. Lewis speaks about a little girl, in one of his writings, who on inquiring of her parents what God looked like, was carefully informed that God is a perfect substance. Now, to the girl a perfect substance meant tapioca pudding, and since she detested tapioca pudding, Mr. Lewis said she grew up with a marked prejudice against God. God the patriarch with a flowing white beard is perhaps as true an image as little girls, or big ones, are likely to hit upon. "This deceptive image," Mr. Lewis says, "formed by our petty preferences in tests and tastes or politics may do remarkable mischief. And God the chum, never to be dreaded because he is indiscriminately affectionate, even promiscuous, may be an even more treacherous idol and more potent for destruction of personality and of the civil social order than the vision of God that had Agag hued in pieces." It is helpful for us to remember that God is love, but it also helpful to remember that he is an avenging fire, and that also he is the God who desired to have Agag hued in pieces.

Now, both of these notes, the fear of God and the judgment of man, are found in the passage that we have just read for our Scripture reading. Even the Christian faces a judgment. We like to think that our judgment is over, because Christ has died for us on the cross. And it is true, as sinners we are judged at the cross, and we are judged as sons in this life in the sense that God exercises discipline. And we find that daily, God's discipline does have its effect upon us. Paul said if we don't examine ourselves, we can expect him to examine us and judge us with the discipline of the heavenly family.

Now, the Bible also goes on to say, however, that we are going to be judged as servants at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ; so while we are judged as sinners by what he did on the cross and the guilt and penalty of our sin is paid, and while we are being

judged as the sons of God now by the disciplines of God in our life, we shall be judged as servants at the judgment seat of Christ. Now, the apostle, in this passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, has been stating the causes of the divisions at Corinth. He said, in verse 2, "For to this time ye were not able to bear the food, neither yet now are ye able for you are still carnal. There is among you envying and strife and divisions, and therefore are you not carnal? One of them says, I am of Paul; and another says, I am of Apollos." And evidently from verse 22 in this chapter some had been saying "I am of Peter." Well, the result was that there were divisions at Corinth, and they had not understood the message, the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, nor had they understood the ministry. One of the things, particularly, that they have not understood concerning the ministry is, they did not understand that these men were simply servants of the Lord God.

Now, Mr. Prier went out because I know that you noticed that my voice changed. He doesn't know that I'm a ventriloquist, [Laughter] so he's run out to find out what the trouble is.

But now, I want you to turn with me to verse 5 through verse 9 of 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and listen to Paul's words concerning the relationships of the servants of God first of all. He asks, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" So the servants of God are ministers. That word, incidentally, is the word from which we get the word deacon. They are ministers. They are not party leaders. As a matter of fact, they are simply servants and they work together under God. We should never think of a teacher of the word of God as a person who is anything more than a servant of God. He's a person who works under the Lord God. One is not to be preferred to another. God gives different gifts to different people, and they're all equally significant. And it's well to remember, too, if there is any fruitfulness in the Lord's work, it is not because of the individual servant. It is because God has given some of his blessing. The fact that a person comes to know Jesus Christ as Savior is not traceable to the preacher. It's traceable to the work of God, and we all must

continually remember that. It is the word of God, as the Holy Spirit uses it that is fruitful. It's like planting a garden. Anyone can dig up a flower bed, and you can take seed and put the seed in the flower bed, but it is ultimately the Lord God who determines whether there shall be growth or not.

Now, I can stand up in the pulpit, just to give you an example, I can open the Bible and I can read the Bible and then tell you what the Bible, I think, means, but so far as salvation is concerned, and so far as development in the Christian life is concerned, edification, that is the work of God. That is not the work of me. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. So consequently, when something like that happens, it is not to be traced to the preacher. He's simply a servant who's giving out the word. It's to be traced to God. So Paul points out that Paul and Apollos are simply ministers "but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" He said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but it's God who gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth," it's God that giveth the increase who is the important person. And furthermore he says, "Now the one that planteth and he that watereth," in this particular case Paul and Apollos, they "are one." In other words, they are one in their aim and goal, and that is to give out the word of God. "And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." So that the workers and the servants of God are responsible to give out the word, as far as rewards are concerned, that will be determined by the Lord God.

Now, having spoken of the relationships of the servants to the Lord as being servants, and to one another as being fellow workers, he goes on to speak about the responsibility of the servants. And notice that the metaphor changes here. It is not longer an agricultural metaphor, but it is architectural. He says, "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's cultivated field, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder." That word translated masterbuilder is the Greek word *Architekton*, from which we get architect and

architecture. So, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise architect, a skilled master of architecture." Is that they way you say that? "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth on it. Let every man take heed how he builds upon it."

So, now he's going to talk about builders and works, not so much believers and life. And notice he begins with a foundation, because an architect must first of all, as he oversees the construction of a building, be sure that the foundation is laid properly. In verse 10, he says, "As a wise architect he has laid the foundation and others build upon it." And that foundation is a foundation that is founded upon Jesus Christ. Now, the primary characteristic of a foundation is its stability. It must be the kind of thing upon which a building can stand. And so, in ancient architecture, the stability of the building was the important thing. Now, in this case, since the apostle is thinking of the temple of God, the important thing is the foundation which is Jesus Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And therefore, the doctrine about him is the fundamental thing in the building up of a testimony for the Lord God.

Incidentally, one of the reasons that we are having so much difficulty in the Christian church, and have had so much difficulty in the Christian church down through the years is because it has not always been founded upon the proper foundation. Now, you can see some of this evident in the ferment that is going on now in several of the denominations. In the Lutheran church today, there is a tremendous ferment. In the Presbyterian church, there are tremendous problems that exist within those churches. In the Baptist churches, the same kind of ferment is taking place, and it is all traceable to the fact that there is a tampering with the foundation, the foundation of the word of God and the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ or the word of God as it reveals the Lord Jesus Christ.

I just received a letter from a member of my family today, and in this letter, again attention was called to a particular difficulty in a particular church in one of our southern cities, one of the large churches in which there is likely to be a division of the members

of the congregations. And ultimately, it is traceable to this very point that Paul makes here in verse 11. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So, any church that does not build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ can expect to have trouble. If we should ever, in Believers Chapel, come to the place where the teaching ministry of the word of God is not founded upon the foundation of the doctrine of Christ, we should expect to have more and more difficulties. The Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of all spiritual life. Only in him is there forgiveness of sins, and that is our fundamental need. So, he must always be preached as the gospel.

That's why I think it's very important in the ministry of the word of God here, in the meetings in which we have an outreach to the community, that the gospel should always be proclaimed. And you'll notice, in the Sunday morning messages, at least so far as those in which I participate is concerned, the gospel as ordinarily been given in the particular message, even if it's a message that has to do primarily with Christian life teaching. Still, nevertheless the gospel is given forth, because it seems to me that is fundamental in all of spiritual living, individually and as a church. Only in Jesus Christ is there forgiveness of sins, and that is the fundamental need that we have. That's the first thing that we must receive in order to be fruitful in our life with the Lord God. Only in Jesus Christ is there strength for the present, and only in him is there hope for the future. And if we are to expect to be fruitful then in the construction of a testimony that will bring glory and honor to God, it must be laid upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Now, having spoken of the foundation, the apostle goes on to talk about the superstructure, and here he talks about two types of teaching and serving. Now, let me say this, that I think this passage has primary reference to the local church, and the laborers in the local church. Therefore, it is not simply a reference to a preacher or a teacher, but it's a reference to every single individual member of a church, because every one of us is a servant of God. We should not think of the man who preaches and teaches as the servant of God and the rest of us are not servants of God. The Bible teaches that

every single one of us is a servant of God. Every single one of us has a certain place in the local testimony. Each one of us has a certain spiritual gift, which we are responsible to exercise in the local church. That means that every one of you in this audience has a spiritual gift, at least one spiritual gift, which you are to minister for the benefit of the whole body, every one of us. And we shall be judged, Paul says, by the way in which we minister the gift that has been given to us. So, every one of us is a servant. We've been given a particular spiritual gift with which we are to minister, with which we are to serve.

Now, Paul says there are two types of ministry, two types of service. He likens it to building a building and using two types of material. He says in the 12th verse, "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones." That would be no flimsy superstructure. The idea of gold, silver, precious stones, the main idea of it is the idea of worth. That is, something that is truly worthy of the Lord God. I gather that what that means is that service is to be service in harmony with the teaching of the word of God, and a service that glorifies God, that arises out of faith, that has as its goal the glorification of the Lord God. And that kind of service rendered in the local church is a service that may be called adding to the foundation gold, silver, precious stones. That is no flimsy superstructure. That is a very valuable thing. And when a man in a local church, or a woman in a local church, ministers as a servant of God, out of faith for the glory of God, in whatever activity she may be engaged in or he may be engaged in, in the local church that is the kind of service that will receive the reward.

Now, in Believers Chapel there are going to be many, many women who are going to receive great rewards, laboring in the tape ministry, in the publications ministry, in the office, all of this is very significant. And Paul is speaking about it here when he speaks about putting gold, silver, precious stones. Now, you can build buildings in different ways. We had a building over on a street on which I lived several years ago, who didn't bother to put in sub-flooring. Well, we were not surprised, later on, to discover they were looking for him, but he had moved to Mexico in the mean time.

[Laughter] I noticed as I went by the house once or twice, that the work men were working in that house at night time, and that was little suspicious. We found out about six months later why he worked at night. And so did some people who bought the dwelling.

It is possible to build on the foundation wood, hay, and stubble. I think that we should each one of us think, when we are thinking about what we build, it's important that we approach it with the right attitude if we are speaking for Jesus Christ. We should speak as if we were in his presence. Longinus the great Greek literary critic gave his students a test. He said, "When you write anything, ask yourself how Homer or Demosthenes would have written it. And still more, ask yourself how Homer and Demosthenes would have listened to it." So, when we speak for Christ, or when we work for Christ, or when we do our simple service for the Lord Jesus Christ, we should do it as if we were in the presence of God; if it's speaking as if the Lord Jesus Christ were listening to us as we gave our messages. Wood, hay, and stubble; I'm afraid there is a great deal of wood, hay, and stubble that is put on the foundation in some of our evangelical churches. The ministry is very shallow and very superficial. It is not surprising that the members of the congregation are anemic; wood, hay, stubble.

You know, Luther once said concerning the Book of James, that it was a "right strawy epistle." That's where he got the metaphor. He was a man who was full of the Bible, and he didn't understand exactly how James could be harmonized with Paul. And so he said, "James wrote a right strawy epistle, because he thought that James, by not emphasizing the grace of God, and salvation apart from works as Paul had, therefore he had given us an epistle that was really not worthy of a New Testament apostle. He said he didn't mind if others regarded it as apostolic, but as far as he was concerned, he thought it was an epistle that was a right strawy epistle. That's what he was talking about. He was saying that James had just built some straw on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, notice what is stated in verse 13, you can build two kinds of material on the foundation, but a time of judgment is coming. "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." Now, you can see the apostle is speaking of a figure here. He is saying in effect that there is going to be a fiery judgment. And the works of individual believers are going to be tested by the fires of divine righteousness and holiness. This is Paul's metaphorical way of saying that your work must have the quality to stand in the midst of the divine judgment. Now, that which is unable to be touched by the fire abides, and a person will receive a reward for it. But wood, hay, and stubble will go up very quickly when the fires of divine judgment are kindled. It's a beautiful metaphor, really, because fire suggests the holiness and righteousness of God. And it suggests the testing of materials.

Now, that verse is very interesting for many ways, but notice that he says, "and the fire shall test every man's work of what sort it is." In other words, the important thing about a Christian's work is not the quantity of the work that he does; it's the quality of the work. The fire will test every man's work, of what sort it is. In other words, our work is to be work dominated by faith and the glory of God, and if it arises out of faith and is directed toward the word of God, it has the quality which God recognizes. But if it's just a piling up of works of the flesh done in a local church, not out of faith, and not for the glory of God, but for the glory of self, then that's wood, hay, and stubble, and that's going to be burned up. There is hardly one of us who could not look around and say, "Well, there are sometimes, some occasions in the local church in which I have said or done something that really was said for my own glory, and not for the glory of God." That's wood, hay, and stubble. "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

I had a friend, many years ago. I've told this story before, and some of you who have heard the message previously on this particular topic, I know will remember it. But I have a friend who has been a Christian worker for many years, and I was listening to

him preach one time, and he referred to this passage about the fire trying every man's work, of what sort it is, and the wood, hay, and stubble; the gold, silver, and precious stones being placed in the fire. He said he had a dream one time that he stood at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, and he said at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, he was there and God, by the angelic beings, took all of his works and put them in a great big pile.

And then he said that a little angel came out from the side with a match in his hand. And he said it was a great big pile of works, and he was feeling rather good about it, until the angel came and put the match to the pile. And he said, "You know, it was very much like a hay stack burning in a field." He said, "I could just see my works, the flames shot up like this." And he said, "Finally another little angel came out from the other side and swept up a few little jewels in this pan, and walked off." And he said, "That's all I had left." Well, I'll never forget that story, because it really spoke to the condition of many of us. I'm just so afraid that when the time comes for the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, we're not going to really have much reward.

Fortunately, the Bible says we're all going to get some reward. We read in the 5th verse of the 4th chapter that fact, and the apostle does not use a metaphor here. He says, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." So, every believer is going to have some praise from the Lord God. Every believer is going to have some reward. The reason for that is that there must be some manifestation of faith in Christian works. And so, everybody is going to get something at the judgment seat of Christ. But some of us are going to be really surprised.

Now, in verses 14 and 15, the apostle speaks about rewards for the servants. He says, "If any man's work abide which he hath 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, let me remind you that when the apostle speaks here about rewards, he's not saying that these have anything to do with our salvation. There is no difference among the sheep of God. Every single one of us who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ stands in a righteous position before the Lord God. Every one of us has righteousness acceptable to the Lord God. Every one of us is justified. We have the right to stand in the presence of God, because Jesus Christ has paid our penalty, and so I do not stand on any different level from you, and you do not stand on any level from the level on which I stand. We all are alike as the Lord's sheep. But in service there will be a difference. Some will receive great reward. Some will receive little reward. All shall receive some reward. So, the difference here that is spoken of is a difference that exists among servants of the Lord. It does not have anything to do with our salvation.

Now, he first of all speaks of the wise builder in verse 14. "If any man's work abide which he hath built upon it, he shall receive a reward." Now, wouldn't you like to know what the reward is? What do you think it is? A new Cadillac? [Laughter] Well, the Bible doesn't really tell us what our reward is; the Bible doesn't even tell us what our inheritance is. Remember, Peter says, "We have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." But I think I would like to say, "Well, Peter, what is it?" Because that doesn't really tell us anything, except that it has certainly qualities that characterize things down here on the earth, an inheritance undefiled, that is it's not capable of being defiled like everything else down here. An inheritance undefiled, one that does not fade away; things down here fade away. It's incorruptible; things down here corrupt. So, it really doesn't tell us anything about what our reward positively is, our inheritance positively is, it's just what it is not. And I think that the reason for this is simply that we could not understand in our present state, what the reward is if it were described for us. We could not understand what our inheritance is, it's beyond our comprehension. So, he does not say anything about what the reward is, but we shall receive a reward if our work abides.

But then he speaks of the unwise builder. This is a Christian who just manages to escape, everything else lost. Now, I know most of you are not old enough to remember the comic character, Hairbreadth Harry. Hairbreadth Harry always arrives at the last minute to rescue whoever needed rescue. Well, they're going to be some Hairbreadth Harry Christians. They're going to lose everything, but at the last minute, they're going to get through. He says, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Now, first of all let me point out here that this does not mean that we are saved by fire. That word "by" is really a word that in this particular context has the force in the original text of "through fire." That is, "he himself shall be saved; yet so as passing through fire." So, the picture is of a man who is in a burning house and just manages to escape with his life. He flees out amidst the smoke and the flames, and is saved. That's the picture of saved, yet so as by fire. This doesn't have anything to do, at all, with purgatory. It has often been said, by some, that this text has something to do with it, and that we shall be saved by fire in the sense that the fires of Purgatory shall remove all of the defilement that is left when we die. That, of course, is not a biblical doctrine. This text does not mean that at all. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet like an individual passing through fire."

I would think that we have an illustration of just such a man in the Old Testament character, Lot. Now, Lot is one of those individuals who the Bible says very plainly is a Christian. He was a righteous man. He vexed his soul when he sat at the gates of Sodom, but he was a man who chose the worldly path of life. When the time came that there was strife among the herdsmen of Lot and Abraham, and they shall that they must part, Abraham said, "All right, Lot. We'll give you first choice. What do you want?" And Lot looked out and he saw the plains by the city of Sodom, and that was like the garden of God, and so he said, "I'll take that part of the land." And so, he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Scripture goes on to say, "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners

exceedingly." So, Lot's love of the world, and love of material things determined that choice.

Now, he was a believer. Later on you'll find Lot is not only toward Sodom, but he's actually sitting in the gate of Sodom. He's become an important man in that community, probably one of the judges. He sat at the gate, that is the place that judgment took place in those old places. So, he had probably become a very important man. But he was in a very wicked place, and the result was that finally when the time came for Sodom to be destroyed, God in great mercy forced Lot out. But the striking thing about it is that when the word came that God was going to destroy the place, and it was given by those angels to Lot, when Lot warned his family about it, they mocked him, because he had lost his testimony. But he was a saved man. The Bible makes it very plain, he is a saved man, but he's a worldly Christian who desires the things of this world, and to have significant influence in this world. That's the thing that dominates him, and so finally Lot would have gone up in the smoke of Sodom had it not been for the fact that the angels actually thrust him out, and brought him out. And Lot's wife was so occupied with the things of Sodom that she turned back and became a pillar of salt. Forever after a monument of the believer whose real interest lies in the things of this world.

Now, you know what happened to Lot afterwards. The end of his life was characterized by shame and disgrace. Lot was a believing man. Now, you can say this about Lot, too. He gave a testimony, and no doubt, at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, or whatever judgment Lot faces, he shall receive some reward. He did give testimony, and he gave testimony when those angels came into Sodom. But basically, his life was a lost life. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Vernon McGee likes to say that at the judgment seat of Christ many Christians will smell like they've been bought at a fire sale. [Laughter]

Now, he doesn't stop with this. He goes on to speak about, you see there is a wise builder here. The wise builder builds gold, silver, and precious stones on the

foundation. The unwise builder, he builds wood, hay, and stubble on the foundation. But there is another builder here, and Paul has some very sharp words to say about him. He's the foolish builder. In verse 16 and 17, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" I think, incidentally, he's talking about the local church primarily, but these principles pertain to all of our Christian service. But look at verse 17, "If any man defile, or corrupt, the temple of God, him shall God corrupt; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." So, it's possible on the foundation of Jesus Christ to lay two kinds of material. You can lay gold, silver, precious stones; that is pleasing to the Lord God. That is rewardable material.

On the other hand, a Christian believer may on the foundation of Jesus Christ put wood, hay, and stubble. That is unrewardable material. That will be burned up in the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. But it is possible also for an individual in the local church to destroy the foundation, destroy the temple, corrupt it. And you can do that by preaching or teaching heresy, by turning against the doctrines of the word of God. That man, God says he will destroy. So, the man who defiles the temple of God, God will defile him. The same words are used there; it would have helped if they were rendered the same way. If any man corrupt the temple of God, him shall God corrupt, because he outrages the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and brings in false teaching. I think we have here listed in this verse, the 17th verse, all of the liberal teachers and apostate ministers of Jesus Christ, that is like Judas was an apostle of Jesus Christ that is supposedly representing him, that have ever appeared in the church of Jesus Christ. In the 20th century we remember men particularly like Harry Emerson Fosdick, a man who knew a great deal about the doctrines of the Bible, but who preached contrary to them; or many scores of other individuals who knew the facts of the gospel, but who turned away from them. A Chuck Templeton, who was a very prominent man in Youth for Christ circles, who was very closely associated with Billy Graham, and now just a liberal. Many others

like this, they corrupt the building of God with heresy. God says, "They shall be corrupted."

Well this passage then has a great deal of extremely important practical application to local church life. Paul says the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. He's talking about the local church. The pillar and ground of the truth, we have a responsibility. We have a responsibility in our Christian service. We have a responsibility in our promulgation of the truth. And as a church in a community, we have a responsibility to the community and to the whole of the world. Oh the responsibility of teachers, teachers in the Sunday School, teachers in the adult classes, teachers in the pulpit. We are responsible to receive the things that have been given to us, and to communicate them to faithful men who shall teach others also after we are gone.

O the responsibility of all gifted believers, whether they be administrators like elders and deacons; whether they be engaged in general ministry like helpers and church secretaries, and those who have parts, simple parts it may seem, in the conduct of the baptisms or the Lord's Supper or ministry of a personal kind to other believers. We have a great responsibility.

O the responsibility of giving. For God has given us great possessions that we are trustees of, and we are responsible to minister them under the direction of God the Holy Spirit. Would that there were lots of Barnabases who give, not simply because they are besieged with requests for money, which is unscriptural, but give out of gratitude for what Christ has done voluntarily. Before these organizations can sit down at their typewriter and write up a prayer letter and send it to you with an envelope, "Please send back money." What we do need are individuals who are exercised to give and give voluntarily as a service to the Lord God, not because somebody has managed to extort it from you by methods that do not bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ.

And O the responsibility of all witnessing believers; in the very next chapter the apostle will say in the first two verses, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of

Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Faithfulness that is the important thing in our Christian service, faithfulness to the word of God, faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

There is a story I like, which is told by a man by the name of Dr. Cooke, who preached in Belfast in Ireland. It was about a gunner who was in the British army under Wellington at Waterloo. And he was in this extremely decisive battle, and right in the midst of all the fighting that was taking place at its most severe point, this gunner was there, and afterwards, when the flow of the battle had come over him several times. At times he said he didn't know if he was among the French or among the English. He was right in the center of things, and one of his friends said to him afterwards, "What did you do in that supreme hour of darkness and solicitude?" He said, "I stood by my gun." Now, in Christian work, in Christian service, in Christian living, that is what Paul is talking about when he says, "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

This passage also, I think, has application with reference to our basic problem of an unworthy concept of God, with which I began the message. Many of us have not come to appreciate the God of the Scriptures as we should. I certainly include myself among that company. But the God of Samson or the God of John or the God of Jonathan Edwards, that transcendent glorious being that brings awe and submission is, I'm afraid, lost to us today. In our Christian church we are much more anxious to go to church to hear a converted opera star or a half-converted Cowboy or something like that, rather than to enter into the service before the awe-inspiring triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have lost that sense.

When Daniel met God, he fell on his face before that particular person. When Job came to understand who it was with whom he was dealing, he said, "Behold I am vile. What shall I answer Thee? I will lay hand upon my mouth." Daniel said, "When he had spoken these words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb." The Apostle Peter, in the boat when the miraculous draft of fishes took place and he realized

that the Lord God of Israel was with him in that boat, he said, "Depart from me from, for I am a sinful man, oh Lord." And John the Apostle, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, fell at his feet as if he were dead. It's a serious thing, my dear Christian friends, to be related to the God of the Bible. And the judgment seat of Jesus Christ is an appointment that you have, and an appointment that I have. And it's certainly the part of a wise masterbuilder to be sure that we are laying upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones.

May God help us to evaluate again our lives and seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit to be in such a relationship to him, that what he do in our daily Christian life, and in our life in the local church, and as a church as a whole, that it be according to the Scripture for the glory of God, and having its origin in a true trust in him. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these words that have come to us from the Apostle Paul. And they remind us again of the solemn fact that every man's work shall be tried and tested with regard to its quality. Oh God, help us in our Christian service to so labor that we may be found faithful. We pray for each one present here, and ask, oh God, that Thou will give them faithfulness in the service of the Lord God. Give me faithfulness Lord. May the result that Thy name is honored and glorified in Believers Chapel, in the Sunday School classes, in the other meetings of the church, in the life of the church corporately, and individually in this community. For Jesus' sake, Amen...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]