



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

“The Judgment of the Believers”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for today is found in the 3rd chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 5 through verse 17. We have been studying in our recent meetings the general theme “Death and Afterwards.” We have looked at physical death. We have considered the intermediate state. Last Sunday morning we discussed the bodily resurrection and the resurrection body. And today our topic is the judgment of believers, and we begin with the 5th verse of 1 Corinthians 3. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”

May I just interject a word or two as we read? The word minister does not connote at the time that Paul writes this the thing that it connotes today. Minister does not connote a man who has been ordained by a particular church or denomination and is therefore qualified to marry, to bury, to baptize, to preside at the Lord's table and to be the preacher in the congregational meetings. The word minister actually is a word that means servant. It is a word that means not just an ordinary servant either, but it means a table servant, a waiter at a table, a butler if you please, the lowest form of service. That's the term that is used. In fact you will be startled to discover as you read the New Testament in the Greek text that the Apostle Paul and the other writers of the New

Testament in a studied way avoid any terms that might suggest position in the church. There is no such thing. Servants, table servants, men who kick up the dust in waiting upon others are the idea. And even an apostle speaks of himself in that way.

Now that is necessary because we sometime do not understand that and we are inclined to think that because a man preaches that he is therefore a reverend and the only one qualified to carry on spiritual ministry. Now that is part of the Ecclesiasticism that has arisen since the New Testament time. It does not belong to the New Testament at all, and we want to follow the New Testament, do we not? One hundred percent agreement, I'm so happy. Some of you are looking like I've kind of slapped you across the face. You know, I didn't really mean it that way. The 6th verse,

“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 labour. For we are labourers 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, I have laid the foundation, (we would say today as an expert architect) and another buildeth upon it. But let every man take heed how he buildeth upon it. 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 upon it, 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 defile; (Now you have in your text “destroy.” These two words are the same. Let me retranslate the 17th verse, ‘If any

man ruin the temple of God, him shall God ruin’) for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

May God bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee and praise Thee for the privilege of opening the word of God and listening to the voice of the apostles as they have brought us face to face with the testimony concerning Jesus Christ. And Lord we pray that as we listen to it today in this meeting that we may be responsive to it. May the teaching that is contained within it lead us unerringly to him concerning whom the Scripture writes and speaks. We thank Thee for this opportunity and for each one present, and we pray Lord that the needs, the aspirations, the perplexities and problems that exist in the hearts of these who are gathered here may find their solutions in the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the Lord Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us and through whom we have everlasting life. And we pray O God Thy blessing upon us as we study the word. We commit this meeting to Thee and everyone present in it to Thee. May, Lord, those who are unable to be with us for various reasons find joy and fellowship with Jesus Christ as we do. And so we commit this meeting to Thee with thanksgiving and praise in Jesus’ name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we continue our series of studies in the general theme, “Death and Afterwards” is “The Judgment of Believers,” and our passage of Scripture is 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verses 5 through 17.

The fear of God and God’s judgment upon men is one of the lost notes amid the festive indolent collection plate passing Sabbatarianism that is so prominent in our Christian church today. It is very seldom that we hear any ministry from the word of God on the general subject of the judgment of God, the fear of God and how he is to react to

men and to their nature. One of the reasons that Scottish Christianity was so rugged for so many years was because the Scots had a genuine sense of the fear of God, and because they had a sense of the fear of God, and because they had a sense of the judgment of God upon man, the character of the Scots was a character that was stable and secure and interested in divine things. And this interest and stability and security reflected itself in the life of the Scots. They lived *subspecie eternitotis*; that is, “under the viewpoint of eternity,” and they did it because they had a strong sense of this fear of God.

Sometimes we are inclined to think that the Lord Jesus was simply the mild and gentle Jesus and that is all there is to it. I am not so sure that that is true at all. Have you ever read the Magnificat of Mary? You will notice that there is the note of judgment that resounds through that Magnificat. In other words, in the home, in the little village in which they lived if you had entered in and had heard Joseph and Mary and the children you wouldn't have noticed that everything was kind and gentle in that home. Now that is evident if you look at the sermons of our Lord Jesus. You know that there was a note in that home of the judgment of man and the fear of God. And there was a note of reverence and there was a note of awe. And in fact I think as one has put it, a note of astringency most likely in that home. We have lost that note. We think of God as kind and gentle but that's the end of it.

Every age has its own particular God and you can see it reflected in its literature. In one age God is a mighty sovereign who sits upon a throne, and that's the end of it. In the next age, he's a beneficent despot. He's still mighty but beneficent. And then we come on down to the present age and someone has said that the God of today is a republican and he works in a bank, but I think really the God of today is everybody's chum. He's the kind of person you know that you like. I heard of one Christian man who said that he liked to think of God reverently, but he really had to go on to say that he thought that God was a good fellow and he rather liked him. I don't think a Christian could ever say that he likes God. It's just not the word. I don't think that he could ever

refer to God as a fellow. And that if we do, we betray the fact that we do not understand the God of the word of God. He is the God of supreme majesty. He is the God who is the ultimate judge. He's the God before whom you must stand someday, you who are Christians. We've lost this note. I hope we recapture it in Believers Chapel. I hope we never get to the place where we think of God as a chum. At the same time I hope we do not get to the place where we think of God as someone far off with whom we cannot have fellowship. Let's not lose the notes of the fear of God and the judgment of man.

These notes are before us in this passage which we are to consider today. We know of course that the man who has never responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ faces judgment. We're going to talk about that judgment a few Sunday's from now. But it's a very, very solemn thing to realize that you and I who are Christians face a judgment too. Every one of you in this auditorium who has believed in Jesus Christ shall someday stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. You shall stand before the one who made the scourge of small chords and drove the Jews and money changers out of the temple. You shall stand someday before the one who when the soldiers and the Jews came to take him in the Garden of Gethsemane replied, "I am he," and at that moment they all went back and fell to the ground. Someday you shall stand before that person. If you are in this auditorium and you have not believed in Jesus Christ it shall be your terrible responsibility to stand before this God at a great white throne. For those of us who are believers in Jesus Christ, we too shall stand before him at the *bemah*, the "judgment seat."

Now that's the thing of which Paul writes in this 3rd chapter of 1 Corinthians. Be very clear on this fact. Every single individual was judged as a sinner at the cross of Christ. There Jesus Christ crying out, "My God. My God. Why hast Thou forsaken me?" bore the judgment of every single human being. That was the judgment of sinners, and it has taken place. We who are Christians are being judged as sons in our daily lives. That's discipline. These are the things that come to us day by day, the tragedies, the good

fortunes, the misfortunes, the problems, the perplexities; all of these things are part of our daily judgment as sons of God if we have believed in Christ.

Now we who are Christians also face a judgment as a servant of God. We were judged as sinners at the cross. We are judged daily as sons of God in our lives. We are judged as servants at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Then our lives come before the Lord Jesus for review. There we stand before him, and we begin at the beginning of our Christian life and we move through our Christian life to the end, and we are to receive from our Lord Jesus an evaluation of the things that we have said and done and a reward or lack of reward is to be given. That's a very solemn thing. That's something for every one of you to think constantly about.

It wouldn't hurt you if every morning you got up and looked at that kitchen sink if you thought about the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, wouldn't hurt you a bit if when you got before your desk every morning at 8:30 or 8:00 if you had right on your desk, “I must someday stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.” You'd be a better worker, a better business man, a better housekeeper and above all a better Christian. And you'd have a sense of the fear of God and also the sense of the coming judgment of man upon you. And you young people, you get up in the morning and you rush to get ready to meet that deadline for school. It wouldn't hurt you a bit if you too thought about the fact that you must stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ someday. It would help you in school. It would help you as you think of your life's calling. This is a tremendous subject. It has the greatest of practical applications.

I look out in the audience and I see some of you are doctors. Some of you are salesman. Some of you are bankers. Some of you are ordinary working men, like I am. This is not a just evaluation always, but all of us; every single one of us regardless of our station in life, what a tremendous difference it would make if this was a constant theme with us, the judgment of God upon me.

Now then the Apostle Paul, I'm so thankful for Paul, he knew exactly how to write to me. I find that always when I open up Paul's writings and he begins to speak, somehow or other, what he says seems to go right home to me. I do not feel like Linus who said when he read the epistles of Paul that he felt like he was reading someone else's mail. There is a sense of course in which that's true. If you're not a Christian, you are reading someone else's mail, but for me it comes right home to me. I look right over the shoulders of the Corinthians, and I say, “That's for me. That's for Lewis Johnson.”

Now the apostle has been dealing with a problem in the Corinthians church which all churches have. It's the problem of men, and unfortunately the Corinthians were carnal Christians. They were carnal in this sense, they thought, first of all, that the gospel was a philosophy instead of a means of salvation. They thought it was something that they should learn like they learned their courses in philosophy or psychology or sociology, and they themselves looked for the finest expression of the Christian truth as they thought, and therefore they differed among the purveyors of that truth. They differed among themselves with regard to these men. Some of them said, “I'm a follower of Peter. I like his blunt direct and legalistic approach.” Now I added that word “legalistic.” Peter wasn't legalistic really. Others said, “No, I like Paul. He seems to me to really come home to the hearts of men.” And then others said, “No I like the orator. I like what is to be said to be put in pleasant sounding language. Apollos is my man.” And so they were dividing up among themselves over the ministers, over the servants. Think of it, dividing up over the butlers who served them at the table.

So the apostle had to straighten them out. He pointed out to them that the gospel is not a philosophy. It's a salvation. It's designed to bring men from death to life, and we should think of it as a message like that. You've misunderstood the message your Corinthians, and furthermore you've misunderstood the servants. You don't understand the relationship between these men. I, Paul and Apollos, we are fellow workers. We are not competing with one another. It's like planting a garden. I have planted the seed.

Apollos has come along with the water pot, and he's poured the water upon it. Neither one of us can give life to the seed. Neither one of us can give life to the Corinthians. It is God who does the work. We know that in our gardens, don't we? We go out, and we plant a little bush. It doesn't make a bit of difference whether I water it or whether my wife waters it, or really which one of us plants it. It's God who really brings that plant to life and beauty, and together we rejoice over it. She puts a seed out in my garden, and I look and say, “What in the world is that?” She says, “This is so and so.” And I see her watering it. I'm kind of anticipating already what it's going to be. In fact I think I kind of know. It's yellow. She loves yellow. My garden looks like yellow through the summer time. So I know that it probably is a yellow plant of some kind. God is the one who is responsible for the life. Why should you divide over me or some other servant of the word? After all I can do nothing with the word of God. It is the word of God that brings life to you, not my preaching, not me. It is the word that is living. And so Paul said, “You Corinthians remember that.” I and Apollos are fellow workers under God. God is the important one.

Now we servants, Paul says, have responsibilities, and here Paul changes his metaphor from agriculture to architecture. He says in the 10th verse that he has laid the foundation like an expert architect. I laid the foundation because I came to Corinthians and I planted the church of God there. “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.”

In ancient days stability was the chief thing one must have in constructing a building. The floods were well known things in the east, just as they are in Dallas in the spring. A house not built upon a rock, but built upon the sand, was sure to be swept away by the floods which would inevitably come. We've watched people build houses in Dallas. I've been here long enough to know where some floods have been. I'm kind of startled to look over and see in some spots where I've seen a flood in the past a lovely

little home. And I'm anticipating the day when that home will be five feet under water because the floods come. We saw that last spring didn't we? In the east they had to build a house upon a rock. It must be upon a rock. It could not be upon sand. Paul says, I've founded the church of Jesus Christ in Corinthians upon a rock and that foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now remember the apostle has in view in this passage not of believers and life. He's not telling us how to become a Christian. He's talking about builders and their works. Now, of course he is speaking primarily of himself and of Apollos, men who were not ministers in the sense of which we speak of ministers, but men who had been given a spiritual gift of utterance. Apollos had that gift. Paul had that gift. Paul was an apostle. He was a teacher, and Apollos was a teacher. These men were teachers, gifted by God. Now, of course he has them primarily in view for every teacher shall someday stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. But he is not speaking of official teachers only. He's talking about every gifted man, regardless of what his gift may be, primarily of the teaching or utterance gift, but nevertheless including every single individual who serves in the local church of Jesus Christ. For that is what this passage has to do with, the local church, not the church universal, the local church. It has to do with Believers Chapel ultimately and your relationship to the building which is founded upon Jesus Christ.

Now you know of course today that there is a great deal of ferment in the church of Jesus Christ. In the local churches around the country regardless of their denominational affiliation, there is a great deal of unrest. There is unrest, for example, in the Presbyterian church over the new confession. And no wonder that there is unrest. For the greatest theologians of the Presbyterian church, USA have come out a few years ago with a confession that was diametrically opposed to the standards of the Westminster Confession upon which the church rested for many years.

Now there has been a modification of that standard fortunately. Fortunately I don't know whether I really ought to say that or not. There is a great deal of hypocrisy

there, for how can the greatest theologians come out and state what they think is the teaching of God's word on the Confession of Faith and then because of a public outcry change their definitions. Do you think that they really have changed their viewpoints? Perhaps, I guess as Christians we should give them the benefit of the doubt, but I must confess I'm suspicious. There is a great deal of unrest in the Methodist church. Activism and interest in social things is predominant and not interest in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so on down the line, and also in many of our evangelical churches there is great unrest; unrest because of various things, some of them similar. We are living in the second generation where men have neglected to have that personal relationship to the Lord which was responsible for the foundation in purity of the church of Jesus Christ.

Why is there unrest in the church today? There is unrest because men have moved if ever so slightly in some cases, they have moved from the foundation. Instead of Jesus Christ and the word concerning him being the foundation we have moved ever so slightly in some cases. In other cases we have moved completely away from it, and the church is resting upon the shifting sands of human reason and human opinion. It is no wonder that there is unrest in the church of Jesus Christ today. And there will remain a situation of unrest and uncertainty and ferment as long as we neglect the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not surprised at all when we hear of the new morality. Why should you be surprised? I'm often startled at some of our theological students who are so naive as to be surprised when something like this happens. If we move from the doctrinal foundations we shall surely move out into the sands of immorality and new morality if you wish to call it that. The foundation of all spiritual life is Jesus Christ. In him alone there is forgiveness of sins. “Neither is there salvation in any other for there is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved,” Peter said. Only in Jesus Christ is there strength for everyday living. Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ

who keeps on pouring his power through me.” And only in Jesus Christ is there any hope for the future.

About thirteen years ago Billy Graham visited Winston Churchill at # 10 Downing Street. He said afterwards that when he walked into the room where the man of the century was, he looked down and Mr. Churchill was hunched over a table and he looked up at Billy and he said, “Young man do you have any hope?” There is no hope apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to impress that upon you today.

You are a young man. What are you living for? You are a young woman. What are you living for? You go out and live for your athletic achievements, and you have a glorious time for a few years, but soon reflexes are not what they used to be. It's not long before your superiority is no longer superiority, and if that's your life, it's gone. You who are a business man, you live for business success, and so you go out and you work hard. You sacrifice everything for your business success. And then the time comes when you discover that age has caught up with you and there are younger men in the organization. There are younger men not only who are there, but who want your job, and they're working hard to get it. They're anxious for you to step out, and the time comes when you must step out, and life is over for you, or you live for your family. You pour everything into your family and the time comes when your family is grown and gone, and life is gone. But if you live for Jesus Christ, life just begins in this life and continues throughout all eternity. Jesus Christ is the only foundation for spiritual living. You shall never, never fulfill God's word and will for you until the time comes that Jesus Christ is first in your life. So the foundation is Jesus Christ.

Now the apostle speaks of the super structure in the 12th verse, “Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.” There are two types of teaching and two types of service that which you may classify as gold, silver and precious stones. Boy I want to tell you that's no flimsy super structure, gold, silver and precious stones. But I'm kind of glad my house is not made out of gold silver and

precious stones. Some of my friends might come over and take it away. But mainly I wouldn't be too happy with this because I'm not sure that it would be stable. So I would gather from this that the apostle is not so much speaking about stability here as worth. And he says there are some kinds of labor that we bestow upon the church of Jesus Christ that is worthwhile. It's like gold, like silver, like precious stones. It's worthwhile in the sight of God. Some teaching, teaching for example, that is under the ministry of the spirit of God. Teaching that is taught from the spirit and through the human being goes out toward the people of God in purity and in the demonstration of that spirit of God. Teaching in accordance with the will of God, teaching that comes to men in this way, that is gold, silver, precious stones in the sight of God.

There was a Greek literary critic by the name of Longinus who used to tell his pupils as they were ready to write something he used to say to them, “Now write as you think Homer and Demosthenes would write, or better,” he said, “Write as you think they would listen to your writing.” And I think that all service of our Lord Jesus is to be done in the same way. It's to be done as if our Lord Jesus were listening, as if our Lord Jesus were seeing. All preaching is to be preaching that is preached as if our Lord Jesus were listening. All service is to be service as if our Lord Jesus were seeing. Wonder if that would make a difference in your Christian service? I wonder if that would make a difference in your ministry of the word of God in your Sunday school class. Suppose you had as a pupil next Sunday morning at 9:45 Jesus of Nazareth, would you prepare differently? Would you be a little more careful of what you said? As you taught would the words that you say be somewhat different in flavor? I think they'd be greatly different. I think there are lots of things you wouldn't say if he were there.

“Gold, silver precious stones,” and then, “Wood, hay stubble,” I'm sure glad my house is not made out of wood, hay and stubble. It would have been in Collin County by now after the last few days. Luther, you know, said about the Epistle of James that it was a right strawy epistle. This is what he was talking about; said as far as he was concerned

James when he produced the Epistle of James produced wood, hay and stubble, a right strawy epistle. Now Luther was wrong. It was gold, silver and precious stones. Luther was the one who did not understand. But at least he knew his Bible, and he knew the text to go in order to use to evaluate that which he thought was contrary to the will of God. And then also you know there is going to be a test.

I was in the insurance business, and I know that things used to be tested by Underwriter's Laboratories. You remember things used to have a seal on them "Tested by Underwriter's Laboratories." If it was put in the fire and tested by them you could be sure that it had stood the best of human standards. Well here is a fire that is much greater than that. We read in the 13th verse, "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 notice, it does not say that every man's work shall be tested as to how much it is, but of what sort it is. You see God is not so much interested in how much endeavor we are engaged in, but what is its quality? Is it gold? Is it silver? Is it precious stone or is it wood, hay, stubble? Now obviously quantity must have something to do with this, but you'll notice the text stresses quality, of what sort it is. You see it is far more important that we be sure that our work which we do has the divine approval than how much it is. Now I think I know, I think I know, many Christians who are engaged in many, many activities so that they cannot do any of these activities really well. And the result is, I believe at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ a lot of it shall be burned up as wood, hay, and stubble. It's quality is deficient.

Now there are also rewards, and so the apostle goes on to speak of these rewards in verses 14 and 15. You know there is no difference among us who are sheep of our Lord Jesus. If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ you are one of his sheep. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them." Every single believer is a sheep of the Lord Jesus. There is no difference. You have the same spiritual privileges, the same spiritual rights, the same spiritual responsibilities, the same position in the body of Christ that I

have. I have the same position you have. We are all alike as sons in the family, or as sheep under the shepherd. But there is a great deal of difference in service, or among the servants of God. And that difference is going to be manifested at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Listen to what he says, “If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.” This is the wise builder, and he has built something that is gold, silver, precious stone. He has been a servant of God and directed by God in such a way that the work that he has done has served the purpose of God. That man shall receive a reward.

By the way you'll notice that reward is not described. What we've been saying all along, the Bible tells us that there is heaven, that there is an inheritance, that there is a home there, but it doesn't tell us much about it. You know why? Because you couldn't understand it. Immediately you're thinking about a new continental or a thunder bird or a ranch style home in heaven, an estate, a ranch with horses on it. That's what you're thinking about aren't you when you think about reward. Of course you are. Don't sit there like you're not. That's what you are. Oh, I know you're not really specifically thinking about that, but really that's the kind of thing we think about when we think about reward. That's why the Bible says nothing about it because you see we couldn't understand it. It's so wonderful that you and I could not really comprehend it at all, so it's simply a reward, but I'll tell you I sure want one of those. I really do want a reward when I get to heaven. I hope I'm going to get one, some. Don't you?

“If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss.” If that first man is the wise builder, this man is the unwise builder. As a matter of fact he's--do you remember, some of you, do you remember that old, old, old comic strip--Oh, I know you wouldn't remember it, you're too young. Hairbreadth Harry, at the last moment, no matter what the situation was, at the last moment Hairbreadth Harry came through. Bill McCrae is looking over here at me and is trying to understand but he is too young. [Laughter] At the last moment he came through always. He was the superman before superman,

Hairbreadth Harry, that's the kind of Christian we have here. “If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he, himself, shall be saved; yet so as through fire.” And you know the picture is of a house that is going up in smoke and a man grabs his pajamas and perhaps one change of clothes and he flees out of the house just as the whole thing collapses in ruins. That's the picture that Paul gives us of the man who has built wood, hay and stubble upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Saved? Not by his works, nobody is ever saved by his works, but here is a man who is saved in spite of his works. His character exceeds his work. Vernon McGee likes to say you know there are lots of Christians at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ who are going to smell like they've been bought at a fire sale? [Laughter] “If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he, himself, shall be saved; yet so as through fire.” You see our works burned up but we ourselves saved. Once a man has put his trust in Jesus Christ he is safe and secure forever. Isn't this a wonderful text on eternal security? All of our works may be burned up but we ourselves are saved. I don't want to be that kind of Christian, but you know even he is a testimony to the grace of God, tremendous testimony to the grace of God. Everything goes up in flames but he himself. He's saved.

“Yet so as through fire,” this text has nothing to do with purgatory. That word “by fire,” does not mean “by” in the sense of he was saved “by” the fire, but he was saved through the fire, saved as passing through the fire. The Old Testament picture is the picture of Lot. He was a man who was in Sodom. He made a wrong choice. He decided he was going to live for this life, and he lived for this life. And finally the time came when God said Sodom's going up in flames Lot, get out. And Lot got out. As a matter of fact he even lost his wife in getting out, but he got out. Everything went up in smoke except Lot. Everything upon which he had his life, and mind you Lot was a just man, the Scriptures of the New Testament in 2 Peter, chapter 2 speak of him as that righteous man, but everything lost, saved so as through fire. I wonder if at the judgment seat of Jesus

Christ some of you who are listening to me will not remember this sermon. When your whole life goes up in smoke and there is nothing left but you, no rewards.

Now Paul also talks about a foolish builder in verses 16 and 17. This man is the man who ruins the building with heresy, and the church of Jesus Christ is full of men today who are going about tearing it down. That’s what he means. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man ruin the temple of God, him shall God ruin; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” Here in a man who comes in, in the church of Jesus Christ where the saints of God and the sheep of God are and outrages the church of Christ by preaching a different gospel. And now the church of Jesus Christ, largely in its outward profession is in the hands of those who do not preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are still godly men in many of our great denominations, and we all thank God for them, but by and large the control of the great religious organizations today is in the hands of apostates.

Often times they are very deceptive. Often times they do not speak as blatantly as Bishop Pike, or as a Harry Emerson Fosdick, but if they don't they are even more dangerous. These are these foolish builders who outrage the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the men who stand up in Presbytery meeting and when a godly man stands up to question a young man who has denied the virgin birth, denied the substitutionary atonement says, “Now, surely this is not the time for us to engage in theological dispute. This young man obviously does not understand everything yet, but he’s a fine young man and we are not going to dismiss him from the Presbyterian church because he doesn't agree with us on some of our fine doctrinal points are we? No.” And he is received in this man is the man who tears down the church of Jesus Christ.

Let me remind you of something. I think in our day we evangelicals have forgotten one of the great texts of the New Testament. It is 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 15. Paul says to Timothy, “I'm writing to you that you may know how you ought to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God,” he’s talking about the

local church. He’s been talking about elders and deacons. “That you may know how to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth,” the local church, it is the pillar and ground of the truth. We shall never have anything in Christianity if we do not have a local church.

I am so glad for the work that organizations like Campus Crusade, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Youth for Christ, Dallas Theological Seminary and so on are doing. These organizations have been necessary because we in the church of Jesus Christ have failed to do what we should have done. We can always do more than they if we have the vision and if we have the compassion and if we have the motivation because we have the Scriptures and the full plan and purpose of God is to take a man out of the world and set him in the church of Jesus Christ and doing the work of God in the local church. That is God’s pattern in the New Testament. We have failed. We should have some fasting and prayer. We should have a great deal of confession. We have failed.

We have allowed men to come in. We have failed to exercise discipline when they came in. We don't want to judge anyone do we? We want to be nice and sweet don't we? We want to be kind and gentle don't we? And so we allow the serpents in to bite our sheep of God. This passage has a tremendous practical application. All of the responsibility of teaching Sunday school, all the responsibility of teaching in brigade, our responsibility is to take the word of God and train up a young person in that word so that he is able to teach others also.

Oh the responsibility of every gifted believer, those who have gifts of administration, elders. Elders who do not do their duty, may God have mercy upon them. Deacons who do not do their duty, may God have mercy upon them. Ministration, helpers in the church, even the church secretary, the man who helps, and the woman who helps at the baptisms, those who play the piano, those who serve at the Lord’s table, those who arrange the chairs before the Lord’s table, those who are responsible for the elements, the building committees, the other committees, the man who is responsible, or

the woman who is responsible for the church picnic, these are things that are done under the eyes of God. And at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ every single thing that we have done shall come into review. Men who have the gift of giving and you have not exercised that gift; oh for lots of Barnabas' in the church of Jesus Christ, what couldn't we do if we had the money? What couldn't we do in Believers Chapel if we had the money? And oh the responsibility of all witnessing believers, everyone of us, every single one of us every day, almost always we are given an opportunity now aren't we? The judgment seat of Jesus Christ is the review. Oh to be faithful there.

My time is up. Do you know what our basic problem is? Our basic problem is the thing that I began the message speaking about today. It's we have an unworthy concept of God. We don't realize that God is a sovereign God. We don't realize that we're dealing with someone who has his hands upon everything, the almighty one. We do not realize that this God with whom we have to do is the God before whom we shall stand someday. We do not have today the God of John. We do not have the God of Daniel. We do not have the God of the great men of faith. Jonathan Edwards, our greatest theologian, said once when he was walking in a meadow that he was so struck by the majesty of God that he was almost smitten senseless. Somehow or other we have lost the in the church of Christ, and because we have an unworthy concept of God, we have no fear of God, and we're not afraid of judgment. And Christians of all people ought to be afraid for they should know God best. “Behold I am vile. What shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth,” Job said. “And when he had spoken such words unto me I sent my face toward the ground and I became dumb,” Daniel said. Oh, may God so move in the fellowship that every single one of us shall get an impression of the sovereignty and transcendence of our God that we too may know what it is to be dumb before him. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, who are we to talk to Thee? Thou art the great and sovereign God. Thou art the one who doest hold all of our breaths in Thy hands. And Oh Father we pray that there may come upon this congregation the sense of the fear of God and the judgment of God, and may we not forget that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ to receive the things done in the body whether good or bad. We thank Thee for the security that we have in Christ, but give us Lord, no sense of security in our service, but also motivate us that we may desire to win that reward from the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ. God with us through this week...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]