

The judging of the servants work

Part 1

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Duration	00:40:32
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/mt006/the-judging-of-the-servants-work

Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Listen to the Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 10, in the middle of the verse, I have laid the foundation, and another builds upon it. But let each see how he builds upon it. For other foundations can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, [00:01:01] the work of each shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire. And the fire shall try the work of each what it is. If the work of anyone which he has built upon the foundation shall abide, he shall receive a reward. If the work of anyone shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but he shall be saved, but so as through the fire. Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone corrupt the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, and such are ye. Desire, beloved brethren, to say a few words on the servant.

[00:02:11] In our reading, we were engaged somewhat with the responsibility of the servant. And I believe that it has always been so, but it is more particularly so in a day of departure and declension, when individual responsibility is paramount. We spoke of the Lord standing in the midst of the assembly in judicial garb. This scripture brings before us the judicial examination of the work of the servant. It should be said that the question of the servant's salvation is not raised in this chapter. It is a question of the work, how he builds, [00:03:10] and with what material he builds. It is important that the servant builds with the right material.

Otherwise, there is going to be a problem in regard to the public position. We know that in 1 Corinthians, in a particular way, the Spirit of God, through Paul, brings to us the internal order of the assembly. There are many things that occurred in the Corinthian assembly, which needed adjustment. There were some very serious things. Paul starts his epistle [00:04:07] by calling attention to the dignity and the glory connected with the saints. Then, he brought before the saints the various areas of problem. Now, I believe that if some of us were dealing with this matter, we would have dealt with the question as to the denial of the truth of God before anything else. This denial of the truth of God was a very serious matter. Because the resurrection of the dead is the fundamental truth of Christianity. Destroy the resurrection and there is no Christianity. That is what those Jews sought to do in Matthew, we are told, that they told a lie. They said that the disciples came and [00:05:04] stole away the body of the Lord. If the truth of the resurrection can be discredited, then Christianity is gone. There is no Christianity. And you would have thought, or I would have thought, that Paul would have tackled this matter first, but he dealt with it last. I would suggest, beloved brethren, that where there is a state of disunity, where there is a state of carnality among the brethren, there is no capacity for reception of the truth. We need to be in a spiritual state, amenable to the Spirit, and under the

authority of the Lord to receive the truth. Is this the reason why there is so much declension among brethren? Do we know what it is to be practically under the Lordship of Christ? [00:06:04] That we do what he says, when he says it, and how he says it, and that we are not allowing any other influence to carry us away? Are we prepared to make room for the blessed Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of truth, so that he can guide us into the truth? Or are we prepared to consider and to use our minds in the things of God, and so bring about ruin and destruction amongst God's people? This idea of the mind of man and the will of man in the things of God is not anything new. It took place in Israel. When the priesthood was established, [00:07:01] laid up on a bayou, they offered strange fire. What was the strange fire? The mind of man and the will of man entering into the things of God. They brought forward that which was not ordered by God. Then there was the question of the rebellion against the authority of the Lord in Corinth. A rejection of the Lord's authority.

Then there was also the question of the priesthood. There's a challenge to the priesthood. It wasn't a challenge to Aaron, it was a challenge to Christ. And so we have that. Paul tells us in the 10th chapter of 1 Corinthians, these things happen to them as types of us. Not they, not Israel is a type of the assembly, but the things that happen to them is connected with the ways of God and the governmental ways of God. Now we have had in the history of the church [00:08:08] a challenge to the Lord's authority, many challenges. There have been challenging challenges to many aspects of the Lord's glory. And the question is whether we are prepared to submit to the Lordship of Christ, because if we do not submit to the Lordship of Christ in a practical way, not by lip service, but in a practical way, then the question is, can I understand anything about the assembly?

Anyone who is lawless does not understand in a practical way anything about the assembly, might know about it, but in a practical way we cannot understand or enter into anything [00:09:02] relating to the assembly apart from the Lordship of Christ. If we take account of the fact that Paul in Corinthians speaks of the Lordship of Christ so many times, but then when we come to chapter 11, how many times he speaks of the Lordship of Christ? He says, I receive from the Lord, not from Christ, not from Jesus Christ, but from the Lord. He speaks of the Lord's supper, he speaks of the Lord's body. Beloved, unless we submit to the Lordship of Christ, we cannot practically enter into any other truth. We talk often about the Headship of Christ. How do we know Headship if we don't know Lordship? We cannot, we cannot. There are those who, on the different ones, Moses, David, many others, they took orders, [00:10:09] they did what they were told. But there was an occasion when David was in rejection, and when it says that he longed to drink of the water which was in the well in Bethlehem, and three of his mighty men broke through and went to the well in Bethlehem, in the gate in Bethlehem, and they got the water and they brought it to David. I submit to you, beloved, that that is Headship. That's an understanding of Headship. He did not give anyone any direction to go and get the water. It was just a desire of his heart. And that's the essential difference between Lordship and Headship. That we are so near to the Lord, we refer to John in the reading, that he was in the bosom and on the breast of the Lord. It is in that position that we can understand the beatings of [00:11:05] the Lord's heart, what he desires, and Headship responds to the Lord's desires. Lordship responds to the Lord's direction. Paul uses that expression quite often, direction, the direction. Instruction, and it is important for us to be instructed. But what do we do with instructions when we have received them? If it is merely an academic exercise, then there is really not much for the Lord. I quite admit that we must first receive the truth in our minds, and that is the renewed mind. And it is assimilated in our system and becomes a heart matter, so that we respond from our heart. And it is not now a question that the crowd is going in a [00:12:05] certain direction, so I go along in that direction. And when the test comes, I do not know what to do, because there is nothing in my heart. It is all in my head. That is the principle of the Philistine. You know, they were in the land. They were in the land of Canaan,

but they did not go through the Red Sea, and they did not go through the Jordan. It is the accumulation in an academic way of information in the mind, and it has no effect on the heart. Someone has said that if we read the scripture in the presence of the Lord, and if our hearts are not engaged, then it will have no effect upon us. But if we read the scripture, and our hearts are engaged, we feel that God is speaking directly [00:13:05] to us. It has an effect on our hearts, and on our action, and on our practice.

Well, the foundation has been laid. No other foundation can be laid. Man might do whatever they wish to do. Christians might do whatever they wish to do. Servants might do whatever they wish to do. But no one can disrupt the foundation of Jesus Christ. No one. Not Satan, not angels, not man. No one.

No one. Now, here in this chapter, I could have read in Ephesians, or in Peter, and we would have [00:14:02] gotten the building from God's side, which is untouched by man's hand, and which therefore cannot be tarnished by man. But this what we have before us is man's responsibility in regard to the building. Paul says, let everyone be careful as to how he builds. Let, verse 10, but let each see how he builds. Later on, he's going to talk about the material. But how? What does that expression mean?

Let each one see how he builds. It is not unknown for brothers to say right things in the meeting, [00:15:03] and after the meeting to say, well, you know, I didn't really agree with what was said. It was just plain to the gathering. Well, the Lord might give you something to say. It is something difficult to say, because it might cause offense. It might cause your best friend to get against you. It might cause even your family to get against you. What do you do? I'm not going to say it. I'm going to disobey the Lord, because I have more respect for my wife, for my children, for my best friends in the meeting, than I have for the Lord. Who would say that? Nobody would say that. But isn't that something that happens in our actions on many occasions, that we're not prepared to listen to the voice of the Lord? We rather [00:16:10] play to the gallery. And what has happened amongst us? We've been playing to the gallery, and things have gotten worse, and worse, and worse. There are some places, some countries in the world, where brethren are at their wit's end. They don't know what to do. They're fearful of the future. Why? Because we have so deviated from the principles of God. Our practices are so far in variance to what God has established, that we have made shipwreck of faith. So Paul says, see how you build. If we're going to build something on the foundation of Jesus [00:17:09] Christ, we can only do it by the call of the Holy Spirit. That's the only way. There's no other way. Philosophy? Theology? Foreign to scripture. Foreign to the mind of God.

You know, education is a good thing, and it is a bad thing.

We say we must secure the best education for our children, because they must have good jobs, and they must live well in this world. Well, the question is whether we have missed the boat, beloved, whether we have missed our calling, [00:18:07] whether we have forgotten that we are pilgrims and sojourners in this world. I'm not speaking against education. Paul was perhaps the most educated man in his day. But the difference with Paul is this, that he placed his education at the feet of the Lord. Now, if anyone can be educated and place their education at the feet of the Lord, it will be a wonderful thing, because Paul was mightily used of the Lord. There are others of whom they said they were unlettered men. They were mightily used of the Lord. We cannot restrict or limit the Lord in any way. He does not need us to be educated. He does not need us to be educated. He does not need our minds to be trained in order to use us, [00:19:01] and he does not need our minds to be

untrained to use us. But the question is what we do with what we have. Paul tells us what he did with what he had in the Philippines. He not only counted certain things lost, but he counted the continuous, present continuous process that today, and tomorrow, and the day after, he continues to count these things as faith that he might gain Christ. Is that the desire of our hearts, beloved brethren?

Or is it the desire for hearts to be well accepted amongst the brethren, well accepted in society? Now, if anyone builds on this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, those three [00:20:05] things are good material. Good? Gold? Yes, gold is that which is of God.

As our ministry brings out from the scripture that which is of God. Or is it just plain up to the natural and fleshly aspiration, expectation, desires of one another?

I would like to build with gold. Silver. Well, you know in the tabernacle system, the boards, you see the boards were on sockets of silver. That's the basis on which we stand in the presence of God.

[00:21:08] On the basis of redemption. Does our ministry carry that character? That our basis before God is redemption, the redemption which is in Christ Jesus? Do we speak about being saved and being lost? We say, oh, this is something unknown among brethren. Is that so? Is that so? That there are those who believe that something has to be added to the work of Christ at Calvary in order for salvation? Have we brought from the established churches or the so-called [00:22:01] Church of God and Church of Christ and prophecy of this and prophecy of the other thing, the principles that they enunciate which undermines the work of Christ, the finished work of Christ at Calvary? Well, I would like to minister on the basis of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. There was a document that was put out by the Roman Catholic Church in relation to this economical movement and they wanted various religious organizations to sign this document and they had some fundamentally right things on the document in the broad print. Justification by faith. Salvation through the blood of Christ and so forth. But there were some godly men who got hold of this document and decided to examine it carefully. They started to read, as we say, [00:23:04] the fine print and they found out that it was not justification by faith only, but that you had to do something for your justification. It was not redemption by blood only, but you had to do something in relation to that. Now, that's the way that Satan works in a supple way and we need to be careful, beloved brethren. I would like to build with silver, if I'm building at all. And then it speaks of precious stones. These glitter, particularly when the sun strikes them. May I suggest that this is speaking of the glories of God? I'd like to speak about the glories of God, the glories of Christ, the glories of the Spirit, the glories of the Father. That's what I would like to speak about. I don't want to deal with the matter of wood, grass, [00:24:05] or straw. They are descending, moving in a descending level. Wood is much harder to be burnt than grass and straw burns easier than grass. It's a deterioration that is spoken of here.

I don't know who would like to build with these things, deliberately, unconsciously, inadvertently, but I say for myself, beloved, that I would like, if I build at all, to use gold, silver, and precious stone. I trust that all of us here, and we're all building, but this is particularly for the servants. But our sisters, can our sisters build? Scripture speaks about a woman praying [00:25:04] and prophesying. Philip had some daughters who prophesied. Isn't prophecy building? If the prophecy derived from the Spirit of God, then it would be the material that would reflect that which is of God. If the prophecy is from some source, some other source, or it speaks about, in 1 Corinthians 12, he speaks about spiritual manifestation. But first of all, he says, I will have you know that no one speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit says curse on Jesus, and no one can say no Jesus apart from the Holy Spirit. That's a test

of the Spirit, beloved. So let us be careful that if we're prophesying, it is by the Spirit, and that we pray in the Spirit. [00:26:07] Now, there's going to be a judicial examination of that material that is used in the building.

It says, the work of each shall be made manifest. Not a secret thing. This has to do with the kingdom. And remember, in the meeting, in the reading this afternoon, we were speaking about the kingdom. That's the way the Lord was looking. He was looking towards taking the kingdom and the power. It was not a relationship with the assembly. It was not even a relationship with Israel. But it was a question now of looking towards taking the power and the glory. And it says, the day shall, [00:27:05] each shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire. Now, fire is indicative of judgment. So we're talking about the works being judged, not the servants being judged. Not the servants being judged. The works The fire shall try the work of each, what it is, what character, what quality it is. The fire is going to examine. There's going to be a judicial scrutiny of what the work is.

Now, this is a very solemn thing to contemplate. Particularly for those of us who seek in any way to minister the word amongst the saints. It's a very serious consideration. [00:28:03] Paul could say that he was not conscious of anything in himself, but he who examines me is the Lord. What a scrutiny that is. To expose ourselves to the scrutiny of the Lord, and to get the approval of the Lord, is more important than man's approval. The fire shall, the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire, the fire shall try the work of each, what it is. If the work of anyone, anyone, anyone, which is built upon the foundation shall abide, he shall receive a reward. Now, this is speaking of the servant who is saved, no question as to his salvation, and his work proceeding from God, the word from Christ, the activity by the Spirit of God, [00:29:09] that it is of God. No fire can do anything, any damage to that. No fire. He shall receive a reward. It is a reward for being a faithful servant, for doing what the Lord has told him to do, for doing it the way the Lord has told him to do it, a faithful servant. I trust that we would all covet to be faithful servants. If the work, verse 15, of anyone shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but he shall be saved, but so as to the fire. Now, this is a servant, he is saved, no question about that, but he is built with bad material, bad material.

[00:30:04] But he is built with bad material, bad material.

He was not working by the power of the Spirit of God. He was not getting the word from the Lord. You know, in one of the Psalms it says, the Lord gives the word, great the boast of those who publish it. We want to get the word from the Lord. And primarily, on the Lord's day, when the Lord comes amongst us, if he comes, because if we are not meeting unto the name of the Lord Jesus, he is not going to come. If the conditions are not such morally that the Lord can come, he will not come. But if we are meeting unto the name of the Lord, having judged ourselves in the light of the death of the Lord Jesus, not just judge wrong things that we might have done, that is important, but it's not only to judge the wrong [00:31:05] things that we have done, but to judge the reason why we did those wrong things. To put it all in the death of Christ, so that sin is not brought to the Lord's table. Everything, second and judge, before we arrive there, and we are gathered unto the Lord's name, he comes, says I will not leave you orphans, I'm coming to you. He will come, he is faithful to his promise, but he will not come if conditions are not right. He might have to stand outside and knock. But if there is, there are conditions suited to his presence, he will be there faithfully in the midst, and he gives a word. That's the normal way that the Lord gives a word, that the Lord's day, he gives the word, and we take that word and we publish it throughout the week. [00:32:03] I'm not saying that he doesn't give a word other times, he does. If you're going to minister the word, whether voluntarily or being asked

to do so, I would think that the normal thing is to ask the Lord for a word. And when you've gotten that word, to seek the help of the Holy Spirit, to present that word, not only in accuracy according to scripture, accuracy doctrinally, but also by the power of the Spirit of God, so that there is a communication taking place. That the word is communicated by the Spirit, it is spoken by the Spirit, it is received by the Spirit. That's what we get in chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians, how the divine article is communicated, that that which is infinite is brought in a form that finite man can communicate it without it being a word. And that the Spirit of God is the medium both for the communication [00:33:10] and for the reception of that word. Now this man, this servant, he did not minister according to that which the Lord gave. He is perhaps like the one who, when he got his talent, he went and hid it in the ground because he said that the Lord is a hard man. He sows, he reaps where he has not sown, and he gathers where he's not, and so forth. And he brought forth no fruit. He might be, but this man, his works are burnt up, consumed.

[00:34:02] He suffers loss, loss in relation to the reward connected with the kingdom, not in relation to his own salvation. He's saved, that's through fire. But no, beloved, I know the time is getting away, and I believe there's one or two other brothers who'd like to speak. I'd just like to make this point very quickly. The third servant is not a believer.

The third servant is not a believer. He is perhaps a religious leader.

Perhaps some great religious leader like the Pope, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the head of other religious organizations, or it might be an ordinary brother or sister in some organization, sisters, or should I say sisters, someone, a woman proposes, propounds [00:35:08] doctrine. She teaches. The assembly doesn't teach. A woman shouldn't teach, but she teaches. And invariably, she's going to teach wrong things, because if the foundation is wrong, then you can't expect what is right to flow from a wrong foundation. If the spring of the water is poison, beloved, it's going to be poison right down the line. So in the days of Elisha, when the water was bad, he went to the source of the water, we're told. That is what we need, the source. The source from which we get our spring. We get our spring. The source from which we get our ministry.

The source, the medium by which we minister what we get. This man [00:36:04] is anyone corrupt the temple of God, and here we're speaking of ministry primarily. It might apply to other things, but we're speaking primarily of ministry, because it's talking about building, it's talking about speaking about the things of God, it's speaking about ministry, speaking about prophecy, speaking about revelation. Not new revelation, but revelation in the sense in which it is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 14. And revelation is connected with prophecy, and teaching is connected with doctrine, or knowledge, as the word is. If it's any of these things, is it flowing from a divine source? This man, or this woman, whoever it might be, is corrupting this temple, introducing fundamental error [00:37:01] that would destroy the souls of saints. Not in its ultimate, because once someone is saved, they're not even the hosts of hell, can do anything about that. But you can lead astray a brother or a sister in terms of the testimony. The brother for whose sake Christ died, Paul tells us in Romans. But fundamental doctrine which destroyed the foundation of Christianity, like those who denied that the resurrection was passed and overthrew the fate of some. Like those in Corinth who says that there is no resurrection of the dead. And other, like those who say that the means to interpret scripture is by philosophy and theology. Yes, that's fundamental error that will undermine the principles of God and will bring about breakdown and ruin amongst God's people. [00:38:06] This man who does this, he will be destroyed.

If anyone corrupts the temple of God, him, not what he does, but him shall God destroy.

For the temple of God is holy and such are ye. Beloved, we are the temple of God. The spirit of God dwells in us. Later on he speaks of individuals, the individual believer being the temple of God, the spirit of God dwelling in our bodies. Our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. But here he is speaking of the assembly as the temple of God, the place in which the spirit of God dwells and the place in which we should be careful in its presence. I trust, beloved brethren, [00:39:01] that we will be careful about what we have, what we build, what material we use to build. If we have been building with wrong materials in the past, there's always opportunity for repentance and a change of heart. There's always opportunity to make up time. Paul uses the expression, redeem the time for the days are evil. Redeeming the time means to make up time. Even the Nazarite, if he failed in his vow, he had an opportunity to start again. He lost the days up to the time of failure, but he can start again and he can make up for those days. I trust that our hearts will be challenged, beloved brethren, that we will see that we cannot destroy God's foundation, but we can build with wrong material, with wrong motives, and we can bring [00:40:02] about ruin, falling away, and the Lord will deal with that in a judicial capacity. I trust that we might recognize the seriousness of the verse quoted earlier today, that judgment begins at the house of God.