

Ministry *God's Way* – 1 Cor 3:10-15

1 Cor 3:10-15 (start with 9b)

With the end of v9 and the start of v10, Paul changes his metaphor fr a field to a building

He's *been* talking about planting and watering and growth . . .

But now switches to foundations and materials and buildings

And with that change of metaphors, he also changes his focus from the worker, to the work – from *leadership* God's way, to *ministry* God's way

That's the issue at hand – Ministry *God's Way*

And with it comes 2 main principles – lessons we can and should learn, for a life of ministry we can and should live

And the first is this . . .

Good enough is not good enough (v10-11)

From v10-11, when it comes to ministry God's way, good enough is not good enough

When I was in between my junior and senior year of college, I lived with my brothers in

Des Moines for the summer, and worked with my brother Randy building houses

And Randy had a favorite saying for me whenever I'd get a little OCD

He'd say, "Nail it, it's not a piano." IOW good enough is good enough

Stop obsessing on every little joint and angle and nail placement, and get it done

Which was entirely appropriate for a nervous college kid with perfectionist tendencies, doing construction work

But when it comes to *God's* work, when it comes to the work of ministry, when it comes to people's lives – nothing could be *less* appropriate

Good enough is *not* good enough; Especially when it results in careless, shoddy work

- That's the gist of what Paul says in v10c – I laid a foundation, so *let each one take care how he builds on it*

Let each person doing the work of ministry, and we all should in the body of Christ . . .

Let each one take care to do it *right*; To do it well; To do it the best they possibly can

Good *enough* shouldn't even be in our vocabulary, let alone our actions

- Which means winging it is *out*
From leading worship to leading kids, making coffee to making people feel welcome . . .
We should be spending whatever time in preparation we need to spend, in order to do the work of ministry the best we can
Good enough is not good enough

And Paul gives us 4 reasons why in these 2 verses, starting with the fact that *God* is in it

When it comes to ministry God's way, good enough is not good enough . . .

• Because God is in it

Paul said in 10a – *According to the grace of God given to me . . . I laid a foundation*

Based on the gifts and talents and abilities *God* gave me – I applied myself to the work of ministry Paul says; I laid a foundation

And just like Paul, we too are gifted according to God's grace for the work of ministry

Oh, maybe not the same way or to the same degree, but God has extended his favor to each and every one of us, and failure to use those gifts of grace is unacceptable . . .

Whether it's a half-hearted use, or no use at all – God is not glorified when we slough off in ministry

"I think I'm just going to wing it and let the HS move" is a lame rationalization for a lack of preparation and laziness

And it betrays a "good enough is good enough" mindset; Don't go there

Second, good enough is not good enough . . .

• Because excellence matters

Paul says – *like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation* (10b)

Referring to someone for whom excellence is the norm

A skilled master builder is not only someone who's *good* at what they do, but *passionate* to do it well; passionate for excellence

Otherwise, they'd never be considered a master (restoration of house in Geneva)

But Paul was, and as our example to follow and imitate (1 Cor 11:1), we should be too

We too should have a passion for ministry like a skilled, master builder . . .

And approach it with a passion for excellence that precludes "good enough"

Third, good enough is not good enough when it comes to ministry God's way . . .

• Because others depend on it

I laid a foundation Paul says, *and someone else is building upon it* (10b)

Which means you're not an island unto yourself when it comes to the work of ministry
Not only are others working alongside you, or should be, but others are coming behind you as well

And they especially, will depend on the work *you've* done, to do theirs

The quality of your work now – your discipleship, your ministry . . .

Will to a large degree determine how, and how well, they do their work later

Like when a new pastor steps into an old church – the initial success of his ministry depends on the work done by the previous pastor

Or the same is true of a CM teacher – if they leave undisciplined, un-attentive, un-knowledgeable kids to the next teacher, it's a problem

Or a SM leader who fails to teach and lead his students in sound doctrine and right living – he makes it that much more difficult for the next leader to shepherd and lead

Good enough is not good enough b/c others depend on your work – *someone else is building upon it* (10b)

And last, good enough is not good enough . . .

• Because the work is important

After saying at the end of v10 – *Let each one take care how he builds upon it* . . .

He then supports it in v11, saying – *For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

IOW there's only 1 true foundation on which to disciple the believers and build a church

Only one foundation that will support a real work of ministry

Only one foundation that will last for all eternity; And that's Jesus Christ

There *is* no other genuine foundation that can be laid

And no more significant foundation on which to build

We're talking about God in the flesh here, not some joe-schmoe who thought more highly of himself than he ought

We're talking about the one who came from heaven – the Lion and the Lamb
The Light of the *world*, who takes away the *sins* of the world; The one who lives

- Which means our work on his behalf, our work built on his foundation – is of the *utmost* importance
Get it wrong, and u get the whole the whole ministry wrong, the whole church
Just like a poor foundation puts the entire building at risk

When it comes to ministry God's way – good enough is not good enough b/c the work is important

And others depend on it; And excellence matters; And God is in it

That's the first principle; The second, from v12-15, is that . . .

The right stuff matters (v12-15)

When it comes to ministry God's way – the right stuff matters

And I'm not talking about th personal charisma or superior intelligence of our astronauts
I'm talking about the building blocks of ministry – that kind of stuff (12-13)

Paul lists 6 different types of building materials here – *stuff* if you will
Metaphors for the spiritual things and spiritual activities of ministry

And though he doesn't distinguish between the types of materials when he lists them here, it seems fairly obvious that some are better than others

And the same is true of our work of ministry – some methods, some mindsets, some “materials” are better than others

- The question is, what *are* they?
And the answer is – we don't know exactly, b/c Paul doesn't say
But if the context of the previous chapters is any indication, and I think it is, then the *right* stuff certainly includes the gospel – Christ crucified on our behalf
And the righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption that goes along w/ it
We need to build with that

Not to mention pure motives, godly conduct, and faithful service

Those are some of the *good* building materials, the *right* stuff for reaching the lost and building up the saints

- The wrong ones, the less desirable materials, would be the beliefs of man-made religions, or secular ways of thinking, or wrong living, or unwholesome talk
Those would be bad building materials

And somewhere in between would be the non-biblical thinking of moralists and motivational speakers

Not all bad, and sometimes even biblically based

But not necessarily *Christ*-centered or God-*glorifying*

And therefore not the *best* stuff for doing the work of ministry

- But let me ask you something – as long as it works, what's the problem?

As long as the ministry perpetuates itself, why not build it on pleasantries and platitudes?

What's wrong with a combination of metal and wood and maybe even some occasional hay every now and then?

Which makes me think of those wooden roller coasters at theme parks

I mean, why go to all the fuss with bolts and welds and angle iron to build a metal one, when *wood* will do the job?

As long as our church *stands*, and the ministries stay on track . . .

And the theme park remains open – what's it matter? Who's gonna know?

And the answer is, everybody; Eventually, everybody will know . . .

• Because your work will be exposed

The right stuff matters when it comes to doing ministry God's way, b/c sooner or later, your work will be exposed

13 – *Each one's work will become manifest*

That is, it *will* be exposed for what it is – good *or* bad

Why? B/c *the Day will disclose it* (13b) – referring to the Day of the Lord

That time period leading up to, and including Christ's return

Our work of ministry will be disclosed at that time, if not sooner, *because it will be revealed by fire* (13b)

Which is almost always a reference to *judgment* in the Bible when used in conjunction with the Day

Fire, or judgment, for the purpose of purification or consumption – depending on the work of ministry that's being exposed; depending on the building materials used

So the Day of the Lord is that time period of *judgment*, leading up to and including his return – that will expose your work for what it is

Which means the right stuff matters – b/c wood will get u only so far

Second, the right stuff matters in ministry . . .

• Because your workmanship will be tested

The Day will disclose our work, v13, *because it will be revealed by fire* [the judgment of God], *and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done*

That's not just what kind of work, but what quality

The quality of what *each one* of us has done – used 2 times in this verse, as if to emphasize that there will be no coattails available on judgment day

You're not going to slide by on the merit of someone else's work

No, there's going to come a day when the quality of *your* workmanship is going to be tested

Kind of like there's going to come a day when the structural integrity of each and every building in San Francisco is going to be tested; it's inevitable

And the testing is not going to be like the warm glow of a candle . . .

It's going to be the raging fire of God's wrath, when he pours out his judgment during the Great Tribulation, the Day of the Lord

Which is another reason I believe we're going to go through it as believers
Otherwise, contrary to this passage, we have nothing for which to concern ourselves
We can build however we want, using whatever materials we want . . .
B/c we're supposedly going to be raptured out like some people advocate
I don't think so

B/c this passage says that the church, the building, our workmanship – will be tested at that time
Which means it has to be there; The church has to be present

- So how's the quality of your workmanship?
Are you influencing others to live as *godly* people, or just good people?
Are you teaching those around you to do what's *right*, or to do what *works*?

Make no mistake, it matters
B/c your workmanship *will* be tested, and lives hang in the balance

Third, it matters . . .

- **Because your reward depends on it**

The right stuff matters in ministry, b/c your reward depends on it

14 – *If the work that anyone has built on the foundation* [the foundation of Jesus Christ and him crucified] *survives, he will receive a reward.*
If the fruit of your labor lasts, survives God's appointed time of judgment . . .
If those you've led to the Lord persevere to the end . . .
If your ministry of love and faithfulness has multiplied itself in your recipients, resulting in a similar ministry of their own . . .
You will receive a reward it says

- Again, what that reward is, or to what Paul is referring, we don't know
It could be the reward of increased ministry right now, or the privilege of seeing more and more lives changed, up close
It could be the reward of God's commendation – “Well done, good and faithful servant”
It could be the crowns of righteousness, and glory, and life eternal
It c/b the enjoyment of all the people you've influenced for all eternity (1 Thess 2:19-20)
It could be the fullness of joy in the presence of God, and pleasures forevermore at his right hand (Ps 16:11)
Or all those put together

Whatever the case, when it comes to ministry God's way, the right stuff matters – b/c your reward depends on it

And last, the right stuff matters in your work of ministry . . .

- **Because nothing else will last**

Nothing other than the right materials and right workmanship, will last – will make it through to eternity

15 – *If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*
It's only *God's* work of ministry, done *God's* way, with *God's* stuff – that will last

Everything else will be burned up
And I'm not talking about all things material, like Peter says regarding the heavens and the earth in 2 Pet 3:10

I'm talking about the result of ungodly, unbiblical, self-serving, or disingenuous efforts to influence others or gain a following – it's going to be for naught
Do that, use that kind of stuff for the work of ministry – and your work won't last, even if it does make it to the Day of judgment

- And when it's destroyed, reduced to nothing as if it never was . . .
You will suffer terrible *loss* the Bible says (15)
Not only for all the effort you expended with nothing to show for it . . .
But loss in terms of *regret* for the opportunity you missed to do what's best
Including the gut-wrenching loss of loved ones and friends, who you gave the impression were okay before the Lord, when they really weren't

For which, your only consolation will be your own salvation
And then, only as through fire – that is, by the hair of your chinny-chin-chin
You won't lose your *salvation* for failing to build the church with the right stuff . . .
But you will lose your reward (**Summary**)

- Don't fool yourself into thinking that the work you're doing for the Lord is good *enough*, just b/c it's sincere
Or that the time, talent, and treasure you're expending is the right stuff, when you know it's not

Use the *best* of what God has given you, to *do* the best you can
Otherwise your loss will be great, even though your destiny is secure
Pray;

