

# 1 Corinthians 3.5–15

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## *We build with God*

Amington (Online)

Sunday 30 August 2020

Build, build, build (5)

### **Building**

Did you know the tallest building in the world is a library?  
Mmmhmm: it has the most stories.

During lockdown I started a new business building model yachts in the loft. I don't know what to do though because sales are going through the roof.

We are thinking today about *building*. Last week we were thinking about how God is the one who builds. Jesus said, **'You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church'** (Matthew 6.18).

This week might sound like more of the same: **only God makes things grow** (7), **we are God's building** (9). Except this time, Paul wants to teach us about how we need to *join in* with what God is building.

# Electricity

*Have a lamp and heater – unplugged – and an extension.*

I have here a lamp, and a heater. This little heater is particularly useful in the winter – it lives in my study and keeps me warm during the winter without having to turn the heating on for the whole house.

They do different things, yes? The lamp gives light *switch it on and off again*, and the heater gives, well, heat *switch it on and off again*.

They do different things – useful things – but on their own they are completely useless. They both need something extra to work: electricity. *Pick up extension, plug them in and switch them on.*

In some ways this is like Paul and Apollos. They both had a particular function – Paul **planted the seed, Apollos watered it** (6) – but what made it *actually grow*, wasn't them, but God.

Paul founded the church in Corinth. Many of the Christians there had become believers through his ministry. Apollos was one of the leaders of the early church, who arrived there after Paul had left; he was a powerful teacher and preacher. They both had their part to play in the growth of the church in Corinth – but ultimately it was God who was making it all happen; what they did was *join in*.

# Builders

So the question is, what is God building, and how can we join in?

The first question is easy – we got the answer last week: Jesus is building his church. By which he means not bricks and mortar but a family of people.

Which means we join in by being part of that family.

When I married Jess I joined a new family: the Brocklebanks. In some ways they are very like my family, in other ways they are very different. What's important is that I do my best to join in, even if they do things 'wrong'.

Becoming a Christian is like joining a new family. In fact, it's not 'like' joining a new family, it *is* joining a new family. To build our life in that new family means we need to learn the family ways. For example, at a Brocklebank Christmas I can't pretend like I'm at a Green Christmas... well, I could, but it's not a good recipe for family harmony!

As with any building, first you need a foundation. For Christians **that foundation is Jesus Christ** (11). He is our Lord and our God, he is like us in every way but without sin, he is our Saviour. He lived and died and rose again for us – so we might live. He offers forgiveness and cleansing to all who ask. This is the foundation of the Christian life. It can never be moved, it can never be shaken.

Onto that foundation we build – and as Paul says **each one should build with care** (10). He contrasts different materials (12): **gold, silver, costly stones** – things which can survive the intense heat of fire – **wood, hay, straw** – things which are burned up by fire.

Now I don't know if Paul had these verses in mind when he wrote that, but immediately they remind me of the psalms:

The decrees of the Lord are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.  
They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold.

*Psalms 119.9-10 (NIV)*

The law from your mouth is more precious to me  
than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

*Psalms 119.72 (NIV)*

Or maybe this from Proverbs:

[Wisdom] is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.

*Proverbs 3.15 & 8.11 (NIV)*

God's law, his decrees, his wisdom – these all refer to the Bible. These words are like precious stones with which we build our lives – if we read them, if we *listen* to them, if we *follow* them. As James said (1.22): **Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

But if the Bible's words are like bricks, the mortar which holds it all together is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to read the Bible, to listen to it, to follow what it says. The Holy Spirit gives us faith, gifts, ministries. The Holy Spirit grows fruit in our lives, he changes us, transforms us. He is like the electricity in the lamp and the heater: he is the one who makes us into the people God is calling us to be.

How do we join in with what God is building?

1. We stand on the foundation of Jesus Christ, turning our back on everything the world holds dear, on the money and power and desires that are so tempting.

2. We read and listen to the Bible. We don't decide which bits we like and ignore the rest – we listen to all of it, even the hard bits – which aren't all in the Old Testament; some of the hardest things come from the mouth of Jesus.
3. We open ourselves to the Holy Spirit. We ask him to fill us with faith and power – like the electricity that fills the lamp and the heater, and enables them to do what they were made to do.

I apologise if you feel like I'm teaching you to suck eggs. Although to be honest that phrase is meaningless these days as I don't know about you, but I have *no idea* how to suck eggs.

And maybe you don't really know how to build a life of discipleship – or maybe you need a little prod to remind you.

Friends, God is *the* Builder. We are *his* building. But by his grace he calls us to join in, to build *with* him.

This is what God made you to do: to join in as he builds his church.

If you feel like something is missing in your life – whether you call yourself a Christian or you don't – maybe *this* is what you're missing. Are you willing to give it a try?