

## MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: 1 Corinthians

Building A Great Life

How To Evaluate Your Effectiveness in Christian Service

1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 10.04-05.10

It's good to have you here at Crossroads this morning. Today, we are actually going to look at a subject that most people don't like to think about. In fact, there's probably not a pleasant experience to even begin to talk about but it's where the text is going to take us. We're going to talk this morning about our judgment and what I mean by that is that day, when you and I will stand face to face with our Lord and our life will be evaluated. Now, I like I said a lot of people that just strikes fear in their heart immediately. I remember many years ago, a young woman who so was fearful of death, so fearful of meeting God that she avoided the conversation of death at all cost. She would not attend funerals, even of those who were close relatives. She would just almost completely attempt to ignore the reality of death. And maybe you feel that way. But you need to understand that the scriptures are very clear. Romans 14:10 says for we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil.

Now most people have this vision. They envision this long line and you're standing in this line and you're waiting to get to that point, that judgment seat and there lies your destiny either to hell or to heaven and that's kind of the modern concept of the judgment of Christ. But as believers you and I don't have to conjure up some image; don't have to have a great fear of this day of meeting Christ; don't have to have a fear of wondering if we make it into heaven or we're destined into hell. You and I as followers of Christ - that was taken care of. That was taken care of at the cross. Romans 8 says there is therefore no condemnation for those of us who are what? In Christ. When you place your faith in Christ you do not need to fear the day that you're going to meeting Him. Nor do you need to fear judgment.

You say, alright what kind of judgment are you talking about. Really, what is this that I am going to experience some day? Well, the scriptures give us a number of different judgments. Let me throw out a few. For example there is the tribulation judgment which is going to occur at the end of the world. There's that seven year tribulation. I'm sure that many of you have heard about that - out of the book of Revelation. There is also the final judgment of Satan and his angels which happens after the return of Christ; after the thousand year reign - the Millennial Reign of Christ. There's a judgment. Then there's also the Great White Throne Judgment, Revelation 21. The Great White Throne Judgment is usually probably what you hear most often about. It's the idea that all of the dead are raised and there is a time when they must face Christ. But the Great White Throne Judgment, listen to me, is for unbelievers, not for you if you are a follower of Christ.

If you are a follower of Christ you are waiting what is called the Bema Seat of Judgment and that word Bema is what you need to concentrate on. It comes out of the Greek culture of a raised platform overseeing the Olympic Games, specifically the Isthmus Games which was right there in Corinth. When we begin unpacking the passage you can imagine those who were living in Corinth had a certain relationship with this idea of the Day of Judgment. They

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would view it completely differently than we would. They would see it as the great Bema Seat or the day when they would receive a crown because that's the history of the word. The word is literally that there was a raised platform and whoever was officiating the games or maybe it was the emperor who would come and watch would sit on a chair on this raised platform and the athletes who had done well would come forward and they would receive a laurel wreath and he would place it on their head and that would be their reward. So, it wasn't this idea of punishment, rather, it was this idea of reward. So, when you hear this idea of the Bema seat of Judgment you need to think reward not punishment. You need to think of evaluation not condemnation. That's what this section deals with.

Let's turn there. 1 Corinthians, chapter 3. We're in verses 10 through 23 this morning. We just got out of a lengthy discussion of how to resolve conflict. That ended in verse 9. You might want to think of verse 10 through 23 as Paul's parenthesis. He's not done with that discussion but he's going to give us some clarity. Remember? What was one of the issues or the vision issues in the Corinthian church? It had to do with people finding themselves wanting to raise up and be under certain leaders and that was causing factions. There was a group that said I'm with Paul. Another group – I'm with Apollos. Another group – I'm with Cephas which is the Apostle Peter. Paul is going to level the playing field and he says no, you need to understand we're all servants of Christ. We're all, regardless of who we might be are going to appear before Christ. You are going to appear before Christ. I am going to appear before Christ. We need to prepare ourselves and have a right mindset. Literally he says you need to take care how you build your life.

Last section, agricultural metaphor. He says I plant, Apollos comes along and waters. Agricultural. This is architectural. You're going to see architectural metaphor used in this section. Construction language. What do I want for you today? What do I want you to learn. I want you to learn how to build a great life. I want you to learn how to build an effective life. What I'd like you to do is to be in evaluation mode as you work through this text. I want you to ask yourself am I using my life, my time, my talents, my gifts ultimately for the glory of Christ. That's what I want you to be asking of yourself as you look at this text.

Alright, let me read it to you and then we'll begin taking it apart. Beginning in verse 10. According to the Grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple

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God will destroy him for God's temple is holy and you are that temple. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise for the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, He catches the wise in their craftiness, and again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile. So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ if God's.

I want to begin by looking at verse 13. Verse 13. Notice the word Day. It's capitalized isn't it? Why is that? Because it's not referring to any day. It's referring to a specific day. He's referring to that Judgment Day. Let's go back to that earlier conversation. What judgment day is he referring to? Is he referring to the Great White Throne Judgment for all unbelievers? No. He's referring to the Bema Seat Judgment that is just for believers and what will we be evaluated on? Our life – whether or not we'll get into heaven or not? No. Look at the text. He says we're going to be evaluated each one's work. Not his eternal destiny. I want to make sure you understand it.

I read it to you a moment ago but I want you to see it with your own eyes. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Just flip there real quick. Keep your finger in 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 10. Notice. For we, who's the we? Is this the collective we of all of civilization? No. It's the we who Paul is writing to and who is Paul writing to? Remember you always have to keep things in context, right? Paul is writing to the church. He's writing to believers and so what is he saying? He says to believers, for we must all appear before the Judgment Seat, Bema Seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done. He's talking about works that we've done. Where? He says here, in the body, in this life. Whether good or evil. Alright, flip back to 1 Corinthians.

Don't forget in Romans 14:9 each will give an account, each will be given that opportunity to give an account of his life to the Lord. That's coming. This is a day of evaluation. Now listen, knowing this, knowing this day was coming for Paul – this was a great motivation. This was a great motivating force in his life. This was not something to dread. This was actually something he was looking forward to. Think about it. Think about the athletic metaphor of a Bema Seat – a raised platform at a game. Do you think those athletes after completing their athletic event were trembling in fear to go get their medal? No. Do you see that in the Olympics? Those three boxes. The gold medal guy – oh now I have to go stand on a platform. I have to get that reward. No. That's not what it is. It was something that they were looking forward to and that's the same way that Paul is viewing this. That's the same way he's writing to the Corinthians. What was the metaphor for Paul's life? It was athletics, right? He says I buffet my body. I want to win the race. He says I'm not out there just to run. I'm there to win and that's how he felt about his life. And he was waiting for that day when

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he had completed his race and he could go and he could be with Christ. So this is something of anticipation for him.

I was watching, I was actually living out the reality of this athletic metaphor yesterday. I was at the Ashland Cross Country Invitational. My daughter is running cross country and so we've been kind of indoctrinating ourselves in what this distant running is all about and it's really fascinating because these are athletes who literally will give it all in their pursuit of the prize. This was a large invitational. Several hundred runners were there and we came just at the peak time when the varsity was running so these were all the top-notch male athletes from around the area and to watch cross country can be somewhat of a gruesome event because literally the athletes leave it all on the field. I mean, they will expend all their energy to the point of exhaustion; to the point where they are actually physically sick. They'll just keep running. I was actually watching this happen and I'm thinking if that was me I would crawl up under a bush and that's where I'd lay for an hour. But this guy just kept going and it's funny. My daughter, Isabelle, twin A she was watching. She has a little bit of a weak stomach she looked at that and she's kind of investigating her own, what sport she wants to be involved in and she's thinking about golf right at the moment and she turned to me after she watched this spectacle and she said Dad, I've never seen anyone throw up on the golf course. I said yeah, you're right.

They were leaving it all there. They just were expending all of their energy to cross that line and to win the prize. And that's what Paul was talking about. Paul was saying to give anything less than total commitment is dishonor and that's the view point that he's coming here and he's saying, listen, I want to help you, verse 10 build your house so that the day that you come to that Bema Seat Judgment, that raised platform you will receive a reward for how you carried out your life. So remember, he's going to use this metaphor of building a home.

Now, if you're going to build something, if you're going to use construction language where do you start in the building process? You start at the foundation, right? That's where you start. That's where Paul starts. Look at verse 10 and 11. Here he says the first thing you have to do is you have to build on a sound foundation. That's number one. You build on a sound foundation and where is the sound foundation for Paul? Is it living an ethical life? Is it living a religious life? Is it living a life filled with tradition or is it a life filled with following some moral teacher? No. What is he saying? We have one foundation. That foundation is who? Verse 11. Jesus Christ. He says that's our foundation for life. Now, think about that for a moment. We can build our lives on many things. We can build our lives on a career. We can build our lives on chasing after pleasure. We can build our lives on building great wealth but what will that bring you to an end? That will not give you an effective life? Paul says you want to build an effective life you build it on Jesus Christ.

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Acts 4:12. There's salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we may be saved. We must be people who think beyond the dynamics of the physical.

One of our pastors this past week was visiting an elderly man – 87 years old, coming to the end of his life. And he's just now beginning to think about his eternity. He's a good man. In fact, I think he's a very good man. He's taken care of his wife. He's taken care of his children. He's managed his estate. He's managed his finances. He's prepared but he left one important thing empty – his eternal future. What profit is it if you gain the whole world but you lose your soul? So Paul was saying concentrate on your soul. Build a sound foundation.

Now, notice verse 10. What does Paul mean when he says He laid a foundation? I thought the foundation was Christ? Well, the foundation is Christ but notice what he says. Paul built upon Christ's foundation as what? The master builder. Do you see that? The master builder of the Corinthian project. This word master builder is one word - **ἀρχιτέκτων architékton**. Now obviously, what English word do we get from the Greek word architékton? Architect, right? So that's a pretty clear image. We have this image of an architect, right? An architect does what? Designs a home, right? Designs a building.

In ancient times the architect was more than the designer. He was also the builder so he was the master contractor. So Paul was saying of himself I'm not only the designer, I'm the builder. And what did Paul do with his life? He went from town after town after town and what did he do? He planted churches. We see that all throughout the first, second, third missionary journeys of Paul. That's what he did. He would gather people together. He would build a church. Because why? That's how God had gifted him. That was his passion. That's where he thought he could best use his life for serving Christ.

Now, notice he says, I laid the foundation, the foundation on Christ and others came and built on it. Important principle. Paul is here talking not only building, our involvement in building the church. In a moment we're going to slide into the idea of our personal involvement in building our own spiritual lives. But for a moment he's talking about the church. Notice what he says. He says, I laid the foundation on top of Christ' foundation and someone else came and they built on top of that foundation. That's true isn't it? That's exactly what Paul illustrated. When he planted the church in Ephesus who did he leave it to? He left it to Timothy, right, to run. When he planted church in Crete he left it to Titus. When he planted the church in Antioch he left it to Barnabas. When he planted this church in Corinth he left it to Apollos. He was allowing others to build on top of it. That was important for Paul. But notice verse 10. He said I did this according to the grace of God given me. Notice he was always giving the glory back to God. He was always making sure that people understood that the foundation he was building on was Christ.

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Now, why is that important? Because he says, look at this – verse 11. We ought to take care how we build our house. Who are we living for? That’s basically what he’s saying. Are you living for self? Or are you living for Christ? Why? Because some day that very issue will be evaluated. And if you’re living for Christ you will receive a reward.

Paul calls it the crown of righteousness. 2 Timothy. 4a. Peter calls it the crown of unfading glory. James calls it the crown of life. What are the natures of these rewards? What reward are we going to get? What is it going to look like? I have no idea. No one really knows. But does it matter. I mean, Jesus is the one handing them out, right? I want to be in that line, right? That’s the way you have to think. There’s coming a day and it might sound somewhat crass. What do you mean? You’re living so that you receive a reward? No. This is God’s system. If I live this way I will receive a reward. Now, the beautiful thing Revelation tells us we get to hand those rewards back to Christ. You get to give them back to Him in honor. Ultimately he is the center. He is the ultimate foundation. He’s our sound foundation.

But now notice our lives, or works as believers will be tested. Look at verses 14 and 15. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives he will receive a reward. So obviously our lives are going to go under some type of scrutiny and some kind of test. He says if anyone’s work is burned up he will suffer loss though he, himself will be saved. See, the scriptures are pointing here. It’s not eternal damnation at stake. It’s your rewards that are at stake. So, let me just say that redemption is not at stake. Your reward is at stake. It will be tested which means proved worthy.

Do you realize that every home, every building that we’re in has to go through a series of tests before it can be occupied, why? To make sure that it is sound; that it is safe; that it was well constructed. That’s the same thing that you and I are going to undergo. We’re going to undergo some type of test. What does that mean? We really don’t have a clear idea but we do know it’s not something to fear. And if we’re living our lives for Christ it’s something we can anticipate.

So, we build a sound foundation, what’s next? What’s the next thing that we need to have? We need to have stable building material, right? Well, he talks about that in verse 12. Look at the text. What kind of material are we to use? Gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, straw. By the way, he’s not saying that we literally are to build our lives with gold and silver, precious stones. He’s not alluding to some kind of financial success. You understand. He’s using this as a metaphor. Gold is a metaphor for some level of service. Now, here’s the service. What is that level of service, right? What is the gold level of service? What’s the silver? We want to know that because we really don’t want to be in that straw level of service, right? We want to stay away from that straw. Unfortunately, no one knows the answer to that. This is a metaphor is only used once and is never in any other scripture that explains it.

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I looked through about two dozen commentaries and no one really has a clear understanding of what this means. So, I can't help you. I can't help you by saying here, this is what you do and this is a gold standard of service in the eyes of Christ but we can figure out a few things. Look at the text carefully. Notice that there are two categories of building materials here. You have to think about this in a realistic sense. If you were building a home what kind of material would you want? You would want quality material, right? So, clearly there's some quality material, gold, silver, precious stone. That's the first category. That's a quality material. Wood, hay, straw – inferior material in comparison. What else can you figure out? One's enduring. One's temporal. One's going to last what appears is forever. The other one has a very short life span. So, what does that tell you? What does that suggest about your service to Christ? That whatever we do it ought to be something that has eternal nature to it; that's enduring; that has quality behind it.

Is that your life? Serving Christ. Or in evaluative mode, I'm not judging. In evaluative mode would you say no, I'm more of a wood, hay, straw person. How do you move to what we were saying – I'm presenting a life that really looks more like gold, silver, precious stone. I thought carefully about this. I knew you'd be thinking about this. I knew you'd be evaluating. I knew that you'd take this seriously. So I can't just give you some lame explanation. So, I turned this on myself. How do I evaluate my own life? And there's two aspects that I try to watch. Number one – I try to be concerned with what I do and then number two – I tend to be concerned with why I do what I do. Those are the two – service and motives, really. Think about it. When you're serving Christ what do you do? I'm concerned about what I'm doing in my service and why I'm doing it.

Peter says each has received a gift, he's talking about spiritual gifts. He says use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's very grace. Do you understand that? Just jot this down. Romans 12, 4 through 8. It's just one of many different passages that speak of our spiritual gifts. But the bible speaks of us as a collective body with individual parts. It means that you're a part of a larger whole. You're part of the body of Christ. He's given you certain gifts, spiritual gifts, something that's not natural. When you came to Christ you received a spiritual gift or ability or desire or a passion not to serve yourself but to ultimately to serve the body. Scriptures say use that gift. So one of the ways that we evaluate our lives is are we using the gifts God's given me to the best of my ability?

Now, that's predicated on a concept that you know you're gifts, right? How do I figure out my gifts? That's simple. Where do your passions lie? Not, where you're cajoled or you're manipulated into serving. Where's your passion lie? You see, we can bring up a few fourth graders, fifth graders and parade them across the stage with sad faces saying there's no one here to teach me and no one here. And someone's going to feel guilty and they're going to end up back there and they're going to discover in the first thirty minutes whether they have

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the gift of teaching fourth and fifth graders or not. And if you don't have that gift you're never going to want to go back there again, right? But then there's going to be someone here who's going to say I love fourth and fifth graders. I'd give my life for them. I want to teach them. Where does the passion lie? Or you might say, you know what, I don't have any desire to be involved in missions. That's just not my thing. Give me something local. I want to be involved here. I want to build something. I want to do something. I want to clean something. Where's your passion? But if you have a passion – you say, you know what, my heart breaks for those orphans. When I hear about Asia's Hope I want to go there. I want to hold them. I want to serve them. I want to give to them. Guess where your passion lies? It's not that difficult. If you're a teacher – teach. If God's given you the opportunity to give generously, give generously. If God's give you the opportunity to be merciful – be merciful. That's what the scripture is saying. Romans 12.

So what are we called to do? We're called to give our lives in the area of where we're passionate. That's service.

Second things is why do you do what you do? Is it to receive public recognition? Be a part of a group? Or I think the third and most dangerous, listening? It's for self satisfaction. See, it's dangerous at times to get into a mode to do something because we feel good about it. I'm not saying that you shouldn't feel good about it. That's not our primary motive. Can I be just brutally honest with you? I think I've been given the gift to teach. I'm called to teach. But there are many weekends I would rather not be up here teaching. I'd rather be lounging around, maybe in somebody's boat or just enjoying the weather, or out hunting. I mean, I would rather, it's not always something that you desire to do but who do you do it for? You do it ultimately that Christ is glorified. That's why we do what we do.

Paul says, Christ looks over in the scheme of our lives. Are we leaving it all on the field, to win the prize for Christ? That's stable material.

The last thing is we have to have a suitable plan. Right? Got this. We have a sound foundation, stable material. You have to have a suitable plan. You have to know what your life is about. We see this in verse 16 through 23. Look at this. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple God will destroy him for God's temple is holy and you are that temple. Stop right there. If this sounds like a rebuke it's because it is. Paul's rebuking the Corinthians, why? For causing division in the body. Lesson to be learned here. Paul is saying listen, do you not know...this is derogatory...he says your lack of service and your constant strife in the body is destroying the church. God's not going to stand for that. Ultimately you will be destroyed. What is Paul is saying? Then you need to get involved in service. You need to get involved in a productive life.

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In fact, he says how to do that. Verse 18 through 23. I'm not going to read the whole thing but I want you to drop down to verse 21. He says for all things are yours. What's that mean? All things? Remember what they were dividing about? They were dividing over leaders. He says all these leaders, all these teachers are yours. So stop fighting about it. Then he says something that I think is applicable to us. He says all things are yours. The world is yours, life is yours, death is yours, the present, the future – all yours. What is he talking about here? What is he saying here? Do you hear what he's saying? He's saying Christ has given you an abundance of blessing for adopting you into His family. He's given you life here in the world. He's given you death where you don't have to fear death like the rest. He's given you look – look at this list that he's says. He's given all things to you. He's given the present. He's given the future. Christ has given you all this so serve him.

There's coming a day when you will stand before Him. You want to have the plans of your life, looking forward to that day. So many times, do you know what we do? We're just people of habit. We live one day after another. Do you know what someone who's living a life, says I want to give it my all? They're planning forward. They're planning beyond today. You've got to planning for the Day? Do you get it? You've got to be planning for the Day when you will be there, standing before Christ. How do you want to present your life?

I think this is Paul's mentality. He's saying to the Corinthians stop the conflicts that are dividing the church. Serve the church. Receive your blessings in Christ because the Day is coming.

Now, is that your life? Is that your life? We just sang, trust God and Dan had a little line in there that he was drawn to. I was drawn to a different line. It was the ending line when we were singing back to God here I am Lord, use me. Are you saying that? Here I am Lord, use all of me.

Let's pray together.