

Be Careful How We Build

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

Introduction: If I were to wave down cars on Highway 44 for the purpose of teaching anyone who would stop God's plan of salvation and one person responded, was baptized but never darkened a church door again, would he be saved?

If a homeless person came into church to be baptized so he could get a free meal, would he be saved?

If a young person is baptized to prevent a well-meaning Brother in Christ from badgering him to be baptized, would he be saved?

If we baptize a loved one just before their impending death, would they be saved?

I often wonder if our efforts to teach the lost are misguided by our desire to baptize people because we know that baptism saves (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21).

I. Not all baptized people are saved.

A. Belief without repentance even if baptized won't save (Jas. 2:26). For example, Constantine the Great was baptized days prior to his death. Was he saved (Rev. 17:8 - Constantine was the beast that "was and is not.")?

B. A lack of desire to obey even if baptized won't save (Jn. 7:17). Many are baptized to fulfill a requirement but have no desire to obey the scriptures.

II. Take heed how we build!

A. Paul gives a warning about teaching others (1 Cor. 3:5-10).

1. Christians are "God's building" (vs. 9; 1 Pet. 2:4-5).

2. The apostles are wise master builders (vs. 10; Rev. 21:14).

3. Christ is the foundation the apostles laid (1 Cor. 3:11).

B. Christians are "living stones" being built into a spiritual house.

1. As saints, we are being built into the temple of God (Eph. 2:19-22).

2. When properly constructed, Christians (collectively) comprise God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17). What we are building with every conversion to Christ is a spiritual house, the temple of God.

C. "Take heed how he builds on it" i.e., the foundation (vs. 10).

1. We can build on the foundation with two types of materials. Those obtained at a price that are fire resistant like gold, silver or precious stones or those obtained at no cost like wood, hay or straw that easily burn up (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

2. Time will tell in the fiery trials of life what sort of material (living stones) each Christian has become (1 Pet. 1:7). The trials of life test our faith to see if we are found honorable.

3. We build on the foundation of Christ by converting, teaching, and mentoring others in the way of truth. The materials represent the quality of faith that develops from our teaching.

4. We each become the work of other Christian's efforts. If those we instruct are tried to be true, we will receive our reward.

Conclusion: We want to teach in such a way that people can truly be converted to the truth. A homeless person wanting to be baptized for a meal is building on the foundation of Christ with straw. Teaching a person how to become a Christian and then send him on his way is building with hay. Pressuring a young person to be baptized so he responds just to get someone off his back is like building with wood. When the fire of life comes, they will all burn up.

We must be careful how we build!