

Dr. Carl Ellis

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Preacher: Dr. Carl Ellis

[0 : 00] Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I felt the need for some additional prayer, so I ducked out to the prayer room. People thought I wasn't here. It's all right to pray, isn't it? All right. Praise the Lord. All right. First Corinthians chapter three. We'll start at verse nine. It's the apostle Paul writing here. For we are co-workers in God's service.

You are God's field, God's building. By the grace that God has given me, I lay the foundation as a wise builder, and someone else builds on it. But each one should build with care, for no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has already been laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, and costly stones, wood, hay, and straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the day will bring it to life. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If what is burned, if it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss, yet will be saved, even though only as one escaping through the flames. Amen. Let's pray. Lord, thank you so much for our word this morning, and we pray that you will give us tender hearts, and that you will be with us by your spirit, that we might live out what you are challenging us about today. In Jesus' name, amen. Okay. I was talking to Ron Swofford out in the hall this morning, and I thought, hey, I said, this message is right down your alley.

I was talking about building contractors, right? I want you to think with me and pray with me this morning around the subject, is it solid or shabby? Amen. Is it solid or shabby? Now, anybody who's been around the Bible-believing church should know five things. First, that God is perfect in righteousness.

Second, that God does not tolerate anybody who falls short of his perfect righteousness. Third, that God will condemn anyone who falls short of his standard. Fourth, that we all fall short of God's perfection.

And fifth, that we are all in deep trouble. Okay. Now, anybody who understands the gospel should know five things. First, that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves from God's condemnation. Second, that unless God himself takes the initiative to solve this problem, there is no hope. Third, that God has indeed taken the initiative and accomplished salvation by taking the blame and condemnation. Fourth, God's salvation comes only through his grace. And fifth, that God applies salvation by our faith, which itself is a gift of God. All right. Is that good? We got a good foundation here now? Okay. All right. I thought I'd establish my orthodoxy before I get into all this.

[4 : 41] Now, these two groups of five things make up the salvific dimension of the Christian life. Salvific, this is a fancy word of saying all about salvation. Okay. So next time you go out and talk to somebody, you say, what did you, what did you talk about today in church? Oh, we talked about the salvific dimensions. Okay. All right. Ephesians chapter two, verses eight through nine, where it is by grace that you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It is a gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast. That's very clear. This morning though, I don't want to so much focus on the salvific dimension. I want to focus on the doxological dimension. Oh, whoa, whoa, whoa.

Doxological of course refers to bringing glory to God, right? You got me? We sing at the end of our service, the what? Doxology. Got it. Salvific and doxological. Oh, wow. That's lovely. I like that. Jesus himself shows us how to bring glory to God. He says in Matthew chapter five, verse 14 through 16, you are the light of the world and a town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand and it gives light to everyone in the house in the same way. Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.

That's a doxological commandment, isn't it? What is our purpose on earth after we say, after we are saved? You know, you know, sometimes I, I wonder, hey God, when you say, why don't you just take me to heaven right away? Right? No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. The job is not complete. What is our purpose after you are saved? The apostle Paul clearly answers this question.

Ephesians chapter two, verse 10, for we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.

[7 : 16] Now, in our passage here, Paul has given us a vivid and challenging picture of the quality of our works. Now understand now, we're not, we're not saved by works. You know that, right?

All right. The question then he asked us is, is it solid or is it shabby? Okay. The work of Jesus Christ is the foundation that all of God's people build upon. Ephesians 2, 19 through 20.

You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, which with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone, you got that? That's the foundation. And no other foundation is stable. Christ and his saving work is the rock that cannot be moved. And on this rock, all Christians build their hope. Second Corinthians 5, 18 through 19. All of this from God, who reconciled himself through Jesus Christ, us to himself through Jesus Christ and gave us a ministry of reconciliation.

That God was reconciling the world to him, to the world himself, to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he committed us to the message of reconciliation. That is putting people back to God with the good news. Now, those that build their hopes on any other foundation build upon the unstable sand of a riverbed. If we leave out the foundation of the foundation of Christ and his work, we are all left with nothing but futility. Remember the words of Solomon, emptiness, emptiness, all is emptiness in Ecclesiastes. He saw this. Then, if this is the case, then we will still be in our sins and still be under condemnation. And all of our hopes and aspirations will be laid waste. The quality of what we build on this unstable sand of a riverbed makes no difference. I don't care how good your building is, if it's built on the sand, it makes no difference.

If we build a shabby shack on the unstable sand, it will be destroyed by the flood as it is washed away. If we build a magnificent mansion on the unstable sand, it will be destroyed by the flood as its foundation collapses.

[10 : 35] In other words, works without faith is dead. All right. Are you with me so far? All right. Now, it is a blessing to have a solid foundation to build on.

But the kind of work we do. But the kind of work we do will show how true we are to the foundation on which we stand. No, we cannot please God by good works.

All of our works are tainted. Instead, though, we can only please God by what? Faith. Faith.

However, good works are the means by which we bring glory to God.

Good works are the means by which we demonstrate our faith and our gratitude to God for his saving grace. If we are passionate about God's glory, then we will be passionate about good works. And of course, the reverse is true. If I am not passionate about good works, then it shows that I am not passionate about God's glory.

[11 : 56] If we have a solid faith, we will have solid works. A solid saving faith will build on the foundation using solid building materials, namely gold, silver, and jewels.

The result will be a solid manifestation of the kingdom of God. It will be a community where people are not manipulated to gain advantage.

Oh, whoa. I was, I do this lecture on the history of Islam in America. And I show how all these groups kept branching off and branching off and they had problems and fighting.

And I says, you know, they're as bad as Christians, aren't they? All right. So it will be a community where this doesn't happen.

Its message will not be polluted by groupthink in the form of partisan politics, whether Democrat or Republican.

[13 : 07] Its outlook will be, will transcend groupthink in the form of social ideologies that are floating around us today, such as conservatism, liberalism, critical theory, critical race theory, intersectionality, Christian nationalism, white Christian nationalism, to name a few.

If we have shabby faith, we will have shabby works.

And hence, works without faith is dead. A shabby saving faith will build on the foundation using shabby building materials like wood, hay, and straw.

You know, it's interesting. I just got back from, where was it? These places. Bahamas. Yeah. It's better in the Bahamas.

Okay. Yeah. From Nassau. And I noticed there was some leftover hurricane damage from the last hurricane they had. But most of the houses there are built with concrete and all that.

[14:32] Wooden houses don't have a chance in a hurricane. It's interesting. If we have a shabby manifestation of the kingdom of God, then it will be a group of people that is driven by manipulation of others to gain advantage.

Its message will be polluted by groupthink in the form of partisan politics, Democrat or Republican. Its outlook will be subject to groupthink in the form of social ideologies, such as, are you ready? You want to hear this again? Conservatism, liberalism, critical theory, critical race theory, intersectionality, Christian nationalism, and white Christian nationalism, to name a few. Such a shabby group will be driven by bad motivations and deceptions, such as exaggerating spirituality.

You know how people do. They smell barbecue cooking. Oh, I have a vision. That barbecue is cooking. Well, here's one I see a lot.

[15:52] Overstating ministry results. I was out in California not too long ago. And there was this youth rally thing, this youth conference going on.

And this preacher came in. They flew him in. He was a high-powered guy. He gave this incredible message. And then they gave an altar call. All that want to get saved, come forward. Nobody came. All that want to rededicate their lives, come forward. You know how people do, right? And a few came. Third question was, all that want to have a better year next year than this year. And everybody came, right? Now, all this was recorded in the church that sponsored the rally that next day on Sunday.

They said, we want to show you a video of our youth rally. And guess what they showed? The altar call. The one about getting saved? No.

[16:52] The one about rededicating their lives? No. The one about wanting to have a better year next year than this year. And people said, oh, praise the Lord.

You know how we do. You know how we do, right? Okay. Have mercy. It's right. But our passage reminds us of three things.

First, we will be judged by our works. Second, the quality of our works will be tested by fire. And third, salvation will only come by grace.

If your toes are hurting this morning, mine are hurting double right now. So this is convicting to me. If our work is rooted in a wrong attitude, then we are building with wood.

We build with wood when we are more concerned about convenience than for the glory of God. When we are complacent about the plight of others.

[18:02] When we are insensitive to the pain of hurting people. When we see our church as the exclusive vessel of the kingdom of God.

If our work is rooted in a wrong outlook, then we are building with hay. We build with hay when we confine Christ to the realm of our personal private salvation.

Oh, don't get me wrong. Now don't go out here and quote me saying I don't believe in personal salvation. I do. But there's more to the Christian life than that. You got me? If we are building with hay, then we never examine our lifestyle in light of the scripture.

We go along with the norms of society without question. That's what happens in the church in America. We went along with the norms of society, which many of them were wrong. We build our churches on man-centered wisdom.

Man-made techniques. For example, go where you grow, not where God calls you. Go where the money is, not where the needs are.

[19:28] Oh, my, my, my, my. If our work is rooted in a wrong perspective, then we are building with straw. We build with straw when we fear displeasing people more than displeasing God.

We live for our idols. And I, in this case, I would define an idol as anything that is our integration point other than God.

We live for our idols when we live for more education, a fatter paycheck, more career advancement. Now, don't get me wrong. These things are not wrong in and of themselves. That's not the problem. That's not the issue. They become wrong when they are the focus of our lives.

I know that's hard. I struggle with this all the time. Sound or shabby is not the matter, not a matter of where we stand.

[20 : 34] Sound or shabby is a matter of what the fire burns. Uh-oh. The fire will magnify some and embarrass others.

It will reveal the quality of each person's work. It will open the eyes of those who have been misled. It will confirm the wisdom of those who have been faithful.

The builders whose work is solid will be rewarded. Because their work withstood the testing of fire. The builders whose work is shabby will suffer loss. For some, the shabby work was deliberate. For others, it was the result of being misled.

Thinking that their work was solid. But in both cases, the result is a shabby anti-kingdom mess.

[21 : 44] The fire will leave those builders naked. Yet, they will be saved. Oh, hallelujah.

I got so much shabbiness in my life, I can't even count it. You got me? You hear me? All right. All of us in Christ are builders, whether we know it or not.

The question is not if we will build, but how we will build. Is it solid? Or is it shabby?

We must be careful how we build, the Bible tells us. We live our lives before God, before angels, and guess what?

Before Satan, and before his demonic hosts. You know, when the children of Israel went wild with that golden calf orgy they had.

[22 : 45] Remember that? What does the Bible tell us? Their enemies looked on with glee. Hello? Oh, my, my, my. We live our lives before the world.

And the world has seen enough shabby Christianity. What should the world see in us? It should see beauty, love, fellowship, compassion.

In other words, the world should see a gold, silver, and jewel quality of life. That's what God is calling us to.

So if we forsake our wood, hay, and straw before the fire, we will gain.

If we wait for the fire to burn them up, we will lose. Yet, let us build the life of our church, the life of our individual lives out of gold, silver, and jewels.

[24 : 03] Why? Because it do make a difference. So, for the rest of the week, think about this.

Be careful how you build. In all you do, closely examine your work.

In all you do, always ask the all-important question. And what's that question? Come on, you ought to know.

Is it solid? Or is it shabby? Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, for the challenging word that you give us.

Thank you for the convicting word you give us. I know I am hurting for certain up here. Because you have hit me in all kinds of ways.

[25 : 04] I pray, Lord, that you will lead us, all of us, to a repentance. Because we all fall far short of your glory. There it is.

We all fall short of your glory. And you have commissioned us to bring you glory in this world. We ask that you will forgive us of our mess.

We ask that you will empower us to at least see the goal. Of a gold, silver, and jewels quality of life. And, Lord, we will be glad, extra glad to know that you were glorified in us. We ask for the grace to let our light so shine so that others may see.

The good works that you have empowered us to do. And glorify you in heaven. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[26 : 10] As of this world, God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And, again, I will hang out with you. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.