

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

18 October 2026

The Ties That Bind

Text: "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it." *1 Cor. 3:10* from *1 Cor. 3: 1-23*.

What are the "ties that bind"?

Isn't love the greatest tie that binds person to person?

A bulletin misprint read, The church was untied," instead of "The church was united."

Is this a revealing misprint?

The church at Corinth was an untied rather than united church.

Paul wanted them to be tied up to one another again.

We find several "ties that bind" in Paul's writing.

"Ties that bind" diverse individuals and factions in the church into a cohesive, ministering body.

Spiritual maturity.

The first "tie that binds" a congregation is progressing in spiritual maturity.

For jealousy, strife, and group loyalties to infect a church, as happened in Corinth, is to give clear evidence of spiritual immaturity.

Paul addresses the Corinthians as "babes in Christ," not as spiritual Christians.

They are attempting to live in the world as practical atheists.

They are living a self-centered instead of Christ-centered existence, with the first proof of the fact being their partisan spirit.

The Corinthians had received the Spirit, but they were not living like it.

As a result, they remained in spiritual preschool.

Christians are 'born again' to grow.

The ancient church supplied a drink of milk to newly baptized converts on the basis of this text, in order to say to them by way of a powerful and dramatic symbol, "You are born into Christ to grow in Christ."

Babies are cute in the "cooing" stage, but something has gone dreadfully wrong if they are still "cooing" when they are five years old.

We are born to grow.

A ministry of servanthood and sharing.

A second "tie that binds" is the realization that we are all servants sharing different roles in our Christian calling.

Paul uses Apollos and himself as examples to remind the Corinthians that they are all teammates playing on the same team.

Paul calls Apollos and himself "deacons."

A diakonos in the first century was a household table waiter.

Paul is saying, "Look! We are not chairmen of the church board. We are household servants!"

A few verses later, in the first verse of *chapter 4*, Paul uses another lowly word devoid of all status, the word "ministers," to describe Apollos and himself.

The word comes from the galley ships of the time and denotes the "under-rowers", the slaves manning the oars on the lowest deck of the ship.

In essence Paul is saying, "This is who we are: not the pastor, not the chair of the deacons, and not a mover and shaker in the denomination.

We are only table waiters and under-rowers sharing in the ministry of Christ".

In these verses Paul used both agricultural and architectural metaphors to say that good harvests and successful building projects are team efforts.

Christians are only colleagues together in God's construction crew.

In *verse 10* Paul calls himself "skilled master," laterally the "architect" who laid the foundation as the original evangelist in Corinth.

But he does not seem concerned in the least that another has built on his foundation.

The foundation of Christ.

The third "tie that binds" is the foundation of Christ himself on which the church rests.

Verse 11 has served as the inspiration for the great hymn of faith "The Church's One Foundation."

Remembering "the Rock from which we are hewn" can serve as a powerful impulse for Christian unity, because factions usually grow up around some leader or theological program, which in subtle ways attempts to usurp the place rightfully occupied by Christ.

Evidently something like this was in danger of happening at Corinth.

Paul recognized that we can build poorly by attempting to alter the foundation (as perhaps some Judiazers were trying to do in Corinth).

Christ is our only choice for the foundation of the church; without him it will not be the church.

We can also build poorly by using inferior construction materials on the foundation.

God will test the durability of our work.

Someone has remarked that the test of a pastor's ministry in a church is not so much what the church does while he or she is there as much as what it does five years after he or she has gone.

Paul reminds us that on Judgment Day some "divine pyrotechnics" will test all combustible material that we may have contributed to the life of the church.

The temple-hood of the church.

Paul's thought in *verse 16* requires that we coin a word to describe what he says.

The fourth "tie that binds" the church together is the recognition by its membership of the church's "temple-hood."

Ordinarily we think of our individual bodies as "temple of the Holy Spirit," and so *1 Corinthians 6:19* teaches.

But in our text, as we find again at the conclusion of Ephesians 2, the bible speaks of the entire church as the temple of God, as "God's house."

The church as a corporate body enshrines God's Spirit.

Literally, Paul says, "You all (second person plural) are the temple of God (God's house), and the Spirit of God dwells in you."

Living along a fault line in the earth's crust reminds us that no building can stand if the cracks in its walls and foundation become too large.

Take a few pillars out of the ancient temples, and the structures will fall.

Similarly, Paul reasons, division is a tool used by the devil's demolition squad against God's temple, the church.

To destroy the unity of the church is to raze the temple of God in that locality.

Strife and gossip and their fiendish friends unforgiveness and impatience still can drive the Spirit out of the church and shatter its unity today, destroying strategic building stones in the temple of God.

We as a corporate body are God's temple.

The true wisdom is that we belong to Christ, not to our leaders.

In the concluding verses of our text, Paul speaks of true wisdom.

The Corinthians debated one another concerning true wisdom.

Rival factions each claimed to have "cornered" it.

The pith of what Paul says about true wisdom we find in *verse 23*: "You are Christ's."

Paul reminds them and us that we belong to Christ and not to anyone else.

True wisdom unites us in Christ.

In these early years of the twenty-first century, it may seem that the people of God are hopelessly fragmented.

Both local congregations and larger Christian bodies know of disunity and strive that bring reproach to the name of Christ.

But if we will look again to the spiritual resources that God has placed at our disposal so that we may meet the challenges of this hour, we will be assured again that some eternal "ties that bind" unite us.

We are His and He is Ours, His banner over us is Love!