

Help Wanted: A Carpenter

by Warren Wiersbe

Jesus Christ is the carpenter who builds our lives, and he sees the potential in us, has a plan for us, patiently works with us, and uses the right tools to help us grow and improve.

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Scripture: Mark 6:3

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of understanding three basic facts in life. The first fact is that Jesus Christ is the carpenter, who has a plan for our lives. The second fact is that Satan is the destroyer, who tries to tear things down. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus didn't just send us to make converts, but to make disciples, and it is our responsibility to teach and build others up. The sermon concludes with a call to examine our own salvation and to become builders by embodying love, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 8.

Transcript

There are many different names of our Lord Jesus in the Bible, and one of the most interesting gives us our theme for tonight. We've been speaking on these Sunday evenings on help wanted, the various vocations of the Bible and their spiritual meaning. We turn to Mark chapter six, and tonight we talk about the carpenter.

Mark chapter six, and Jesus went out from there and came into his own country. And his disciples follow him. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue and many hearing him were astonished saying, from where hath this man these things and what wisdom is this, which is given unto him that such mighty works are wrought by his hands.

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, Joseph and of Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, a prophet is not without honor, but in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work except that he laid his hands upon a few sick folks and healed them.

And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching is not this the carpenter? When the Greek philosopher Socrates planned the perfect community, and it's much easier to plan the perfect community than it is to build one. Socrates said that there were four essential workers.

You simply had to have them. You had to have weavers. That makes a good sense because you have to wear clothes.

You have to have farmers and that's sensible because you have to eat. He also included shoemakers and I suppose that may be essential, although in many, many places people go without shoes. But number four builders.

Now in the Bible, the word carpenter covers more than somebody who saws wood. It means a builder, not only a builder of tables and chairs, but a builder of houses, a repairer. And so Socrates said, if you're going to have an ideal community, you simply have to have the carpenter.

Now each of us today is involved in either building or tearing down. Now before someone criticizes, let me hasten to say that sometimes you can't build until you tear down. Sometimes in the erecting of a building, and we see this in Chicago repeatedly, they come in, they tear down that they might build up.

This is true physically. Sometimes something has to be removed before you can build up. It's true in human relationships.

Sometimes a counselor has to tear some things down before he can build some things up. But basically, even though you're tearing down, you're tearing down to build. There are some people who tear down just to tear down.

I suppose you could go through this congregation and separate the builders from the destroyers, go through the city of Chicago and separate the builders from the destroyers. A man came up to me at Southern Keswick this past week and he handed me a stack of beautiful photographs. He said, look at these.

And so I looked at them, beautiful photographs of a beach house. He was an architect. He'd built this beautiful beach house.

And he said to me, Pastor Wiersbe, I hope that sometime you can come down and stay in our beach house. I said, well, maybe I can. You never can tell.

He said, I'll tell you why. Our family of five was falling apart and we began to listen to the ministry of the Moody Church Hour. And he said, our family's back together again.

And so the ministry of this church helps some people to build instead of to tear down. So you and I ought to be like the Lord Jesus Christ and be a builder. Let's look at that tonight.

If you and I are going to understand what it means to go through life building, then there are three basic facts that we have to understand. Fact number one, Jesus Christ is the carpenter. He's the builder.

Fact number two, Satan is the destroyer. That's one of his names. And fact number three, you and I are the materials for the building and we are the tools for the building.

And you and I have to make the decision whether or not Satan will use us to tear down or Jesus Christ will use us to build up. Now those three simple facts can keep you from wrecking your life. Oh, did you say I'm a born again Christian? There's no possibility of my wrecking my life.

Oh, let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. Samson never thought he would end up blind, bound, grinding for the enemy, but he did. Demas never thought that he would forsake Paul and go out and live for the world, but he did.

These three facts must grip your life that Jesus Christ is the builder, that Satan is the destroyer, and that you and I are both the material and the tool for Jesus Christ to build in this world. Let's begin with fact number one, Jesus Christ is the carpenter. It's interesting how many people think that when Jesus was here on earth, he was a shepherd.

Now, spiritually, he said, I am the good shepherd. No argument about that. Some people think that the Lord Jesus Christ was a sower spiritually.

He was the son of man is out sowing, but the actual vocation that Jesus practiced when he was here on earth was that of a carpenter. Now he could have been anything he wanted to be. He could have been a farmer, could have been a shepherd, but he was a carpenter and this is what they called him is not this the carpenter.

Now, why was Jesus Christ a carpenter? What was there in the plan of God that made Jesus Christ a carpenter? May I suggest to you at least four reasons why Jesus was a carpenter. I just think about them. When you're stalled in the traffic this week, meditate on this when you're lying in bed at night and you're just thinking, think about this, that Jesus was the carpenter.

Reason number one, obviously he was born in a carpenter's home. Back in the gospel of Matthew in chapter 13 in this parallel passage, we pick up a little bit of information. Matthew chapter 13 verse 55 is not this the carpenter's son.

So Joseph, the foster father of our Lord Jesus was a carpenter. Now you'll recall when I spoke to you about Paul, the tent maker, I said this, that every Jewish father taught his son a trade. That's a tragedy when children grow up and don't know how to work.

Here is the Lord Jesus Christ who at a very early age was taught by his foster father how to be a carpenter. He got slivers in his fingers. He knew what it was to go out and get a big piece of lumber and carry it in.

He knew what it was to work on the wood. The Jewish rabbi said he who does not teach his son a trade teaches him to be a thief. We have mothers and fathers today who don't expect their children to do any work and they wonder why they drift.

Now the Lord Jesus was born in a carpenter's home. The Jews didn't expect their Messiah to come as a carpenter. They were looking for a king.

They were looking for someone to come in great glory and splendor. And there he was in Nazareth, a poor little town in a poor little family working in a poor little shop, making yolks, making chairs, repairing things. The Jews thought that their Messiah was going to come as a great soldier.

And yet Jesus didn't come that way. He came as a servant. I have said this so many, many times, not only from this pulpit, but from other pulpits.

But I think it bears repeating. The Lord Jesus Christ gives the example to us of working. Nobody has a right to be a ruler who has not first of all been a servant.

And my Lord came and humbled himself and he became a servant. He became an everyday carpenter. He was born in a carpenter's home.

There's a second reason why Jesus was a carpenter. That's because he came to do a carpenter's work. What does a carpenter do? He builds and repairs.

Now this is one thing that our Lord had always been doing. One of the greatest preachers of this past generation, a man who now, because of infirmity and age, has his lips closed to preaching was Dr. Robert Ketchum. If you never had the privilege of hearing Dr. Robert Ketchum preach, you missed something.

I can recall sitting in a hot country church in downstate Indiana on a hot August night when there were as many mosquitoes in the congregation as there were people. And Dr. Ketchum in the pulpit preaching on Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. And he preached for an hour and 20 minutes and nobody moved.

And I recall him preaching on Jesus Christ, the carpenter. Now it's not the sermon I'm giving you. His message was far greater than anything I could say, but he made one point I have never forgotten.

He said this, do you know why God the Father made his son a carpenter? He said, I think the answer is this. When Jesus Christ came to this earth, he gave up everything, gave up his throne, gave up his glory, took upon himself the infirmities of human body. And God the Father said to his son, son, you're going to be down there on that earth for over 30 years.

It's going to be a different kind of a life for you. I want to give you one thing that will always remind you of who you are and what you've done. I'm going to make you a carpenter because from the very beginning, Jesus was a builder.

He built the universe. All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made. He is building the church.

Jesus said, I will build my church. I'm not building the church. He's building the church.

If I'm available to him as his material and his tools, he can build his church. He built the universe and it runs perfectly until we interfere with it. He's building the church.

He's building a home for us up in heaven. I go to prepare a place for you. He is building our lives.

Jesus Christ came to do a carpenter's work. He came to build. There's a third reason why the Lord Jesus is called the carpenter.

He follows a carpenter's methods. Now I must confess to you that I almost failed woodshop. The dear instructor was so patient with me.

They should have given him a medal because my two brothers who preceded me were master craftsmen. They can take a piece of wood, a piece of metal, and without even thinking about it, turn it into a beautiful piece of whatever you want to make. I can't do that.

I'm sure if my sister had taken woodshop, she would have done better than I did. First, we learned how to plane a board and all I had were shavings. And then he said, now we're going to learn how to use the drill press.

And you should have seen where those holes were in my piece of wood. And so I admire anybody who can work with wood. I really do.

I have watched men in various building projects that I've been involved in as they have been handling the tools of the trade and I admire them. I've watched my brother in his woodshop with his lathe and his other equipment making beautiful things. Jesus follows a carpenter's methods.

Now what is a carpenter's method? Well he gets a piece of material and he can see potential in it. Now you and I can pick up a piece of wood and not see anything. A carpenter picks up a piece of wood.

He can see some potential there. He looks at a tree and he sees a table. He looks at a piece of wood or some lumber and he sees a beautiful chest.

Now I'm not made this way. I can't look at something material and see tremendous potential in it. A sculptor is the same way.

A sculptor looks at a slab of granite or marble and says, ah, there's an angel in there or there's a statue in there. I can't do that. Now maybe you can.

Jesus Christ looks at us. He doesn't see a great deal, but he sees the potential. Suppose you had been standing by with all of the guidelines we have today from the Harvard Business School on how to choose leaders.

The books are written now, big, thick books on how to choose leaders. And you'd seen the Lord Jesus selecting his disciples. Peter, I want you, not Peter.

You'll never make a thing out of Peter. But he did. Matthew, Matthew, the traitor, the publican.

Matthew, he made something out of Matthew. Saul of Tarsus storming down the highway like a raging bull. And the grace of God prodding him and trying to bring him to his senses.

You can't do anything with Saul of Tarsus. But he made something out of him. That's the grace of God.

As you go through your Bible, find the failures. And God made something out of them. He made something out of Moses, the failure who hid for 40 years after murdering a man.

He took David, a little shepherd boy, and turned him into a great king. He calls people. John Mark, one of the greatest stories in the Bible, is a story of John Mark, the nephew or cousin of Barnabas.

And John Mark flunked out of the mission field. He took off for the mission field, raised his support, was great to write his first prayer letter, and got homesick and turned around and went home. And when Paul and Barnabas start out for their second journey, you'll remember, Uncle Barnabas said, let's take Mark along.

Paul said, if Mark goes, I stay home. I'm not going with you. And so they split up.

But later on, Paul had to admit that Jesus Christ had taken that unlikely material and made something out of it. You look at yourself in the mirror and the devil says to you, you're pretty poor material, pretty poor protoplasm. There's not much there.

Not much there. Jesus says, wait a minute, I'm the carpenter and I can see a tremendous potential in you. When D.L. Moody went to join the church after he'd been converted, he couldn't even answer the simple questions they asked him.

He just didn't have the answers and they postponed his membership until he could get some answers. But God took D.L. Moody, who didn't have much beyond a fifth grade education. And he made something out of him.

A carpenter sees the potential in the material. Secondly, a carpenter has a plan. I suppose the big problem when I was in woodshop was this.

I never followed the blueprint. There was a reason for this. I don't know how to read blueprints.

I think I missed that lecture when the fellow told us how to read blueprints and the building programs I've been through in every church I've been in. We had building programs. I go to these meetings, they spread out the blueprints and I look very omniscient and I shake my head and I let the experts take over.

You see, a carpenter, if he's going to make something, he draws a plan. He said he looks at his material and he says, now, I think I can make two beautiful bookends out of that. And so he sits down and he gets his his triangle and his T-square and all of this equipment.

And he draws a plan. And if you follow the plan, you'll end up with something. Now, Jesus does this.

I suppose young people get tired of hearing us elderly people saying, look, God's got a plan for your life. I counsel with kids and they say, oh, I'm just so anxious. Wait a minute.

God's got a plan for your life. I recall a young lady talking to me some, oh, it's been quite a while ago now. She had a serious problem.

And to her, it was serious. She felt she was in love with two different boys. I said, no, you're probably not in love with either one of them.

Because when the real one comes along, there can be no competition. Oh, she said, I'm so concerned. I said, God's got a plan for you.

There are many of us here tonight who could stand and praise God unashamedly. That we did not follow our plan for our lives, that God stopped us. He's got a plan for you.

He sees the potential in you. And there's something else about a carpenter. He has the patience to work with it.

He has to work on this wood. He has to measure it and he has to mark it and he has to cut it. He has to plane it and he has to polish it.

He has to sandpaper it. And if the wood could speak. You'd hear nothing but groans and grunts.

That's what the Lord hears from us as he works in our lives. He marks on our lives and said, now, here's what I want. Here's what you can do.

But Lord, I don't want to do that. I know you don't. We're going to do it anyway.

And then he has to cut off and he has to sandpaper. Sometimes he uses other people to sandpaper us. If somebody is abrasive in your life.

The carpenter may have his hands on that person using him to polish you. I can recall in some of my educational experiences. Administrators and some instructors who were rather difficult.

But I look back now and say, thank you, Lord. And it was a great experience for me. They did for me what I couldn't have done for myself.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the carpenter has patience and he takes pains with us individually. Aren't you glad that the Lord doesn't put us on an assembly line? Did you ever really watch an assembly line? It's frightening. Everything goes through at the same pace.

Everything goes through the same way. And they're stamping this and cutting that and fixing this. And they're all alike.

Now, some churches are this way. Some churches have what I call cookie cutter Christians. They all come out the same way.

God doesn't want it that way. God wants variety. And God doesn't put you on an assembly line and say, OK, put him through plan C. No.

No, he has his own hands upon you. Sometimes it's a mother's hands, a father's hand, a dean, an instructor, a pastor, a friend. But it's always the hand of the carpenter patiently taking pains with us, and he always uses the proper tools.

The Lord, when he works in your life, will never use the wrong tool. I've used the wrong tools. I've learned you can't drill holes with screwdrivers.

You can use a pipe wrench to pound a nail, but it's not the best thing to use. The Lord Jesus never uses the wrong tools. I recall when I worked for Rockwell Manufacturing Company, occasionally I had to go over to the tool bin, not because I was using the tool, but I had to deliver certain things from the office.

And they had a big sign up there, use the right tool for the right job. And the Lord always does this. He knows how to use suffering and when to use suffering.

He knows how to use that fine little knife that cuts away some of the dead things that shouldn't be there. He knows how to use the sandpaper. He knows how to use the Word of God, how to use prayer.

He uses the right tools in our lives. I say this once again, and I preach to myself, sometimes a person comes into your life and seems to make life miserable for you. Before you complain, before you run away and before you fight, ask the carpenter if maybe this person might not be a tool that he's using in your life.

Something else about Jesus Christ as he follows the carpenter's methods, he sees the potential, he has a plan, he patiently works, he uses the right tools, and when it's all over, he has great pleasure in the

finished product. Do you know what carpenters used to say in Greece when they finished something was all done? They would put it up and they would say the same thing Jesus said on the cross when he died to tell us it is finished. Our Lord Jesus is working in our lives, and as you know, he's not finished with us yet, and because he isn't, don't get impatient with yourself.

You say, Lord, I've been praying about this thing for months. Don't get impatient with yourself and don't get impatient with other people because there's no such thing as instant maturity. We have everything else instant today, but there's no instant maturity.

Nobody gets saved on Sunday and Monday. He's full grown and mature. He may think he is, but by Tuesday he'll find out that he's not.

There's no such thing as instant maturity, but one of these days when the carpenter comes back and we get to glory, the product is going to be finished. And not only is he going to look at it and say it is finished, I have pleasure in this. He's going to get glory from it throughout all eternity.

That's why he saved you. That's why he's working in your life. Oh, you say, Lord, here's an area that needs work.

He'll get there. Don't worry about it. He knows what he's doing.

And one of these days, the finished product will bring glory to his name. He was born in a carpenter's home. He came to do a carpenter's work.

He follows a carpenter's methods. And there's a fourth reason why our Lord is a carpenter. He died a carpenter's death.

They got hammers and nails and a tree. And they nailed the carpenter to a tree. There is a wonderful preacher over in Wales whose name is Ian McPherson.

And I enjoy reading his books because Ian McPherson is a good preacher. And he has a masterful sermon called What the Carpenter Made Out of His Cross. It's one of the sermons I wish I had thought up, but I didn't.

So I'll just pass along what Ian McPherson said. He said the greatest thing that Jesus ever made, he made out of the cross. He took a symbol of shame and turned it into a symbol of glory.

He took a means of punishment and through it brought about a means of redemption. He took an instrument of torture and through it released grace. He took a piece of wood, says Mr. McPherson, and built a bridge to take us to heaven.

That's beautiful and it's true. He died a carpenter's death. Now today, Jesus Christ is alive and he bears on his body the marks of the nails.

And he's still building. He's still building. He sent the Holy Spirit down and he's building.

He's building. But the problem is there's someone in this universe who is destroying. And this leads us to our second fact quickly.

Satan is the destroyer. Over in Revelation chapter 9 and verse 11, the Apostle John gives two names to Satan. They had a king over them who is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue has his name Apollyon.

And both of these words mean destroyer. Remember the last time you read Pilgrim's Progress, you say, well, I've never read it. Then go read it.

Pilgrim is going down the road and he meets Apollyon and he has to pull out his sword and fight and he almost loses. There is a destroyer loose in this world today and it's Satan. Now, I know people say Satan is a myth.

Satan is only the figment of our imagination. Satan is the principle of evil in the world. I have news for you.

Satan is a destroying fallen angel. And if you don't have a proper respect for him in your heart, you're going to get in trouble. I don't worship the devil, obviously, but I respect him.

Every name that is given to Satan in the Bible ought to put the proper kind of fear in our heart and we ought to turn to the Lord for help. He's called the thief. John chapter 10, verse 10.

Jesus said, I'm the good shepherd. The thief, Satan, cometh not but for to steal, that's destroying, and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

You say it'll never happen to me. It can happen to you. It can happen to me.

He wants to steal your reputation. He wants to steal your purity. He wants to steal your honesty, your integrity.

He wants to destroy your body. He'd do it if he could. Peter tells us, and he ought to know.

Peter tells us, be sober. Be vigilant. That means you don't go to sleep.

For your adversary, not your friend, your adversary, the devil, goes about as a roaring lion. And when a lion roars, he's pretty confident of himself. Otherwise, he'd scare away the game.

Somebody asked us if we saw any lions when we were in Africa. No, we didn't. We could have gone, if we'd had time, we could have gone down to that area where they are.

But I don't want to get too close to them. I love cats. I really do.

I have a very lovely cat at home. But I don't want to have a lion at home. Have I told you about the time when a lady came in to see me about a family problem? This was in a previous church that I pastored.

And she came in and sat down. And she said, Pastor, we've got an awful problem at home with my mother. She was still living at home with her mother.

And I said, what is the problem? She said, my mother doesn't like my lion. And I thought she meant a stuffed lion that was taking up too much space in front of the TV set. It was a live lion cub.

I said, well, you know, I sort of sympathize and agree with your mother. Satan is a lion, a roaring lion who is going about seeking whom he may, what's the next word, class, devour. He wants to devour.

He wants to devour your budget, waste your money on a lot of sin. He wants to devour your time. He wants to devour your energy.

He would devour your body if he could. One thing you never want to do is to take Satan lightly. He's the destroyer.

And I have lived long enough and ministered long enough to know that even in the best run Christian homes, Satan can get in and destroy if we aren't sober and vigilant. He's called the serpent. He's called the dragon.

He came into Eden. He attacked Eve's mind and deceived her and they lost paradise. He came to Job and attacked his body.

And apart from the restraint of God would have taken his life. He destroyed Job's wealth. He destroyed Job's family, except for his wife.

And Job had been better off without her. Satan even spoke to Job through his wife when she said, why don't you curse God and commit suicide? He's the destroyer. Wherever you find demonic activity in the Gospels or the Book of Acts, it's bent on destruction.

This father brought his only son to Jesus and the boy is throwing fits. And it's the demons throw him in the water, trying to drown him, throw him in the fire, trying to cremate him. And Jesus said, how long has he been like this? He said, since a child.

Do you mean Satan attacks children? Yes, he does. And we had better have a holy hush. Without joking, when you contemplate Satan, the destroyer, and so these two forces, these two persons are at work in the world today.

Jesus is the builder and Satan is the destroyer. Now, who determines what is done? You and I do. The third fact that we have to get a hold of is the fact that the believer is both the material and the tools to do the building.

Now, we're the material. Over in First Peter, chapter two, Peter talks about the building of the church and he says, you and I are living stones being built up a holy temple for the Lord. Paul says the same thing in Ephesians.

The God is building his church. That church is a temple and we are the living stones. Once we were dead stones down in the quarry of sin, but he lifted us up out of the miry clay, out of the pit and he put life into us.

And now we're living stones in his temple. We're living members of his body. He's building a body.

We're the materials. Remember that parable Jesus told? He said, wait a minute, what man of you, if he's a king and he has an army of 10,000 soldiers, he's facing an army of 20,000 soldiers, doesn't first of all, count to see whether or not he can have his soldiers win the battle. Jesus is the captain.

We're the soldiers. We're a minority. He said, what man of you building a tower does not first of all, sit down and count the cost to see whether he can finish it less when he doesn't get it finished.

They say, oh, this man couldn't finish. And I've heard people say that we're the builders. Oh, no, Jesus is building.

We're the materials. And he looks at us and says, can I build anything out of these people? Are they going to be faithful? Are they going to be living stones cemented into my tower, my temple? You and I are the materials and you and I are the tools. When the Lord Jesus wants to build something in this world, he'll get ahold of your hands, your brain, your eyes, your tongue.

God has no hands, but our hands to do his work each day. He has no feet, but our feet to guide men in his way. And God uses us.

This is what Paul talks about in Romans six. Paul says, look, as you have yielded the members of your body, instruments, and that word means tools, instruments of sin and unrighteousness. Now that you've been saved, yield the members of your body as the tools of righteousness to do the will of God.

He says it again in Romans 12, present your body a living sacrifice. Is there a book to be written? God will take your brain and your fingers. Is there a sick patient to be healed? God will take your training, your skill.

Is there a building to be built on a mission station? Is there a room to be renovated in a church building? God gets ahold of people who say, Lord, here are my hands, here are my feet, here's my brain. We are the tools. And why is it some of us are not building? Why is it when we walk into a room, we tear things down? Why is it there are some people you get them on a committee and things fall apart? Other people, you get them on a committee and things are built.

Why is it there are some people who just seem to be a part of construction? There are other people who are a part of destruction. Well, Paul tells us in his various letters how you and I can build. Now, I'm going to quickly name these verses and point them out to you and leave you to preach the sermon to your own heart.

How can we become builders? How can we be the kind of materials and the kind of tools that God can use to build? You know what the first essential is? Love. Look at First Corinthians, chapter eight. First Corinthians, chapter eight, verse one.

Now, as touching things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. The Corinthian saints were so proud of their knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love builds up.

Do you think the most important thing in the Christian life is getting real smart? Knowledge without love becomes a weapon for tearing down. Now, love without knowledge can be fanaticism. God wants both.

God says you take the knowledge and you mix it with love because love builds up. When you love, you don't want to tear down. This may be one reason why some people tear down.

Their lives are filled with selfishness, malice, criticism, judgment, love. How about Ephesians, chapter four? Paul has a good deal to say in Ephesians four about building. He talks about the gifts that God has given to us.

Verse 11, he's given apostles and prophets and evangelists, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ using our spiritual gifts. Now, just as you have chaos if you use a screwdriver for a hammer or a pipe wrench for a screwdriver, so in the

church you have problems if somebody without the gifts is trying to do the work. Every church member has the obligation of saying to his pastor or to whoever speaks to him about a responsibility, I'm sorry, that's not my gift because you get the wrong gift in the wrong place and you get trouble.

So in love, using our spiritual gifts, how about Ephesians, chapter four and verse twenty nine, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. But that which is good to the use of building up our speech. Oh, so often our speech tears down instead of building up and we should so be filled with the spirit that in our daily conversation, we leave people with something to grow on speech.

Colossians, chapter four, verse twelve, gives us another essential if you and I are going to be used of God to be tools for building up. He talks in Colossians four, twelve about Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greeteth you always laboring fervently for you in prayers that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. A prayer.

You say, oh, there's somebody in my life who is just not being built up, pray for that person. When you and I are yielded to the Lord in love, when we use our gifts in the power of the spirit, when we speak as God wants us to and when we pray as we should, then God uses us to build people up. I've had the experience in my life of being built up by the saints of God with just two or three sentences.

I can recall occasions when I've had lunch with a man of God and I've shared a problem and all he has said is just two or three sentences. That's what I needed and it built me up. He'd been praying.

In Acts, chapter 20, verse 32, Paul says, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up. God's word. When God's word comes into our lives, it builds us up.

When the devil's lies come into our lives, they tear us down. Over in Romans, chapter 14, Paul talks about the importance of a good example. Some of the Gentile saints in the Roman churches were criticizing the Jewish saints because they were observing special days.

They wouldn't eat certain things. Some of the Christians said, oh, you can't eat this. Others said, look, we can eat anything.

There was a split. Paul said, look, build each other up by your example. You do have the privilege of eating anything you want to eat, but he says, don't do it to tear somebody else down.

Now, we shouldn't let people stay babies. I realize that. But first of all, we must create the kind of an example that helps them to grow so they won't stumble and fall over little things.

Our example. When we want to be the right kind of example before the Lord, then God can use us to build. Jesus Christ is the builder.

He's the carpenter. Now, he wants to build your life. And as he builds your life and my life, we reach out and build other people.

Are you having that joy of seeing other people built up because God's building you? That's one of the greatest joys in the world. Did you know that Jesus didn't send us out just to make converts? Our Lord sent us out to make disciples. What's a disciple? A learner.

Who's going to teach them? We are. There's more to evangelism than just passing out a tract and praying a prayer. We've got to take people and by our example and our love and our ministry and our prayers and

the word of God, build them up.

Oh, what a thrilling experience this is. For as we're building others, God is building us. And so we come to that place we come to at the end of each sermon.

We ask ourselves the question, where do I fit in? Has Jesus Christ saved me from the destroyer? Are you tonight truly saved? Has the carpenter gotten a hold of you? Are you a brand plucked out of the burning? Has Jesus Christ, because you've trusted him, rescued you? You say no, then you ought to come and be saved. Let him save you. You say, but I am a Christian.

All right, then we always have to ask this question. Which of these two is using my life? Is Satan using my tongue? The members of my body to tear down, tear down a home, tear down the work of God? Or is Jesus Christ using my life to build up? Heaven is a place for builders. Hell is a place for destroyers.

Jesus said, I will build my church. Are you having a part in that? Gracious Father, we do want to yield our bodies, the members of our bodies, not as weapons for Satan to use to tear down, but as tools for you to use to build up. Our hands, our feet, our minds, our tongues, every part of our being, Father.

May we be a part of the great construction that's going on to the glory of God. To that end, apply this word to our hearts. And may someone here tonight who is bent on destruction be rescued.

For Jesus' sake, amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/13/SID13519.mp3>

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