

Intro: Metaphor which is agricultural (field) to a metaphor which is architectural (building). This then moves to a particular building, the Temple of God's Spirit, which is the Church.

1. God Drafts His Own House on the Foundation of His Son
 - a. GOD is the Architect of His Church, which is His Temple
 - i. "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:15)
 1. Paul is not denying this truth, but using a different analogy pertaining to Christian teachers and preachers who, like Master Contractors, build up the Church
 2. The Church is built through the proclamation and teaching of the gospel, interpreted and applied appropriately, and brought to full conviction by the Holy Spirit
 - b. Jesus Christ is the foundation of His Church
 - i. Paul doesn't want the Corinthians to be deceived into thinking that a teacher can lay any foundation he chooses, particularly that which is based upon the wisdom of the world
 1. Apollos and Paul and Peter are not the foundations of the Church
 2. Ethical norms, human traditions, or even Christian morality or ideas are NOT the foundation of this Temple
 - a. Many Christian groups try to center themselves on something other than Christ Jesus – which is a functional foundation other than Christ Jesus
 - b. "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord..."
 - ii. The only foundation of the Church of God is the foundation which God laid and proclaimed to be the foundation: Christ crucified!
 1. There have been many people who have determined to lay down a church with another foundation than Jesus Christ
 2. Just because a person uses the name, Jesus Christ, does not mean that they have laid a foundation upon the same Jesus whom Paul and the other apostles preached
 - a. Mormonism – Jesus is not eternal, He was created as an angel, a brother of Lucifer, nor is His crucifixion sufficient
 - b. Liberal Theology – use the Christian phrases and Christian terms, but Jesus's atonement wasn't vicarious, wasn't effective, and wasn't operative, it was merely an *example* of either love or of justice.
 - c. Personality Cults – no human person can sustain the weight of the eternal true Church
2. The Church is the House of God Built Up by Proclamation of the Gospel
 - a. Graced by God to be a part of the building
 - i. This sections is bookended by two affirmations that the community of the Church is the building in the metaphor
 - ii. "You are God's building" (v9) and "You are God's Temple" (v16)
 1. The Spirit of God uses this analogy elsewhere
 - a. Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 2 Cor 6:14-18
 2. "Temple in which God dwells" – incredible intimate Truth!
 - iii. This is the interpretive key to understanding what the "works of each one" are in the analogy
 1. What is built upon the foundation, if not the building itself?
 2. Therefore, what is built by each gospel minister is the Church, i.e. the people who have professed faith in Christ and been baptized as united to Him.
 - b. Gospel Preachers and Teachers are Graced by God to Build Up the Church (Eph 4:11-12)
 - i. Those gifted to teach are to equip all believers to build up the Body of Christ by the exercising of the gifts given to them by His Spirit
 - ii. Particularly, it is the proclamation of the Word of God as the authority over all of life (1 Cor 14:4-5), as instruction in God's truth (14:19,26)

- iii. Thus, the “let each one” who “builds upon the foundation” is speaking to what kind of doctrine and instruction we are giving in the *building up the Body of Christ*
 - 1. What is the power of transformation which we are relying upon when we give instruction?
 - a. Wisdom of the world? Word of God?
 - b. Is it centered upon the gospel of Christ crucified, risen, and reigning? His Spirit?
 - 2. This is the “how” question, “take care *how* he builds”
 - c. This building must be done by the Spirit of God, according to the teaching of the Spirit of God, upon the revelation of the Truth from the Spirit of God
 - i. The “how” the builders build must be “spiritual” and not “natural” – that is by the wisdom of God, Christ crucified as God revealed, and not by the wisdom of the world or for the praise of the world
 - 1. This is the context of Paul’s argument
 - ii. The “how” is the means of weakness in the eyes of the world, but dependence upon God’s revelation and God’s Spirit preaching God’s gospel – Christ crucified
 - 1. Thus, the servant of God does not do things because it moves people, but rather because God has said it in His Word – eternal means entrusted to Him
 - a. Leadership emails and conferences
 - 2. For example, we don’t believe that God is triune because we arrived at this conclusion philosophically, but because God has revealed Himself to be so in His Word: If God says it to be true, then we believe it to be true.
 - a. This is why Satan’s first words in the Old Testament were, “Has God really said...?” He wants us to base our assessment of what is Real and True upon something else...our own conclusions of partial knowledge and finite reason.
 - b. Satan’s first words in the New Testament are, “If you are the Son of God...” – again, conditional sentence meant to induce doubt that would lead Jesus to not trust the Father’s words and plan, but rather take things into His own hands to do His own way, apart from His Father. Jesus’ response, “It is written...”
 - iii. John 15:5 – “Apart from Me you can do nothing”
 - 1. Are we relying upon the Word of God, the whole counsel of the gospel, applied by the Spirit of God to the hearts and minds of men?
 - a. These produce spiritual men.
 - 2. Or, are we relying upon our methodology, our rhetoric, our advertising campaign, our multi-media presentations, or whatever else is fashionable at the moment?
 - a. These only produce natural men
3. Build God’s Way on God’s Foundation to See One’s Work Endure
- a. What quality of material are you building upon the foundation?
 - i. Value of the materials is related to its ability to last the flames of eternity
 - ii. Thus, the quality of the material must be that which is eternal, and not temporal
 - 1. Our inward motivations (the approval and glory of Man or the approval and glory of God) will be revealed on that Day
 - a. ILLUSTRATION: Radio
 - b. The glory and applause of Man will be burned up, it will not last, but the glory and applause of God lasts
 - 2. Are we laboring to see eternal churches built: those who glory in Christ Jesus, who honor God’s name, who humbly rely upon His grace, boast in it, and humbly submit to His reign?
 - 3. Or, are we attempting to appease men, to increase our fame, to make much of Man who respect us, to rely upon our strength, and twist His Word to flex our “wisdom”?

- b. It is possible to labor to build upon the foundation of Christ Jesus in such a way that the people being added to the community are not of eternal quality, for they are natural men
 - i. This is the threat that Paul felt when he speaks of “laboring in vain” in Galatians 4:11 and 1 Thess 3:5
 - ii. John writes in The Revelation of Jesus Christ that it is the “one who overcomes” by continuing to trust in Christ Jesus even when the afflictions and suffering and attacks against the Church are weighty who will be saved
 - 1. Persecution leads many to “fall away”, which is evidence that they were never “gold, silver, or precious stones” in their nature
 - 2. Therefore, there are warnings in the Scripture not to “fall away” under persecution, but to “be certain of your calling and election” (2 Peter 1:10), which is the confidence that you belong to God because you trust Him *to obey Him*
 - a. Obedience gives us confidence that His Spirit is in us, that our election is certain.
 - b. Persistent disobedience robs us of this *confidence*
 - i. *Persist* – to walk in, to pursue, to excuse oneself
 - c. It is the perseverance of faith (dependence) upon Jesus *which submits to His Word as the authority* over me which reveals an eternal life, rather than a mere profession of faith
 - i. “By this *we know* that we are in Him: if anyone says they abide in Him, they ought to walk as He walked.” (1 John 2:5-6)
 - iii. The contextual comparisons are all the same:
 - 1. Gold vs. Straw
 - 2. Spiritual vs. Natural
 - 3. Christ Crucified vs. Wisdom of the World
 - 4. “Weakness” of Faith vs. “Power” of the world
 - 5. What are we building with, and what *kind* of disciples are we making?
- c. The DAY will reveal the *quality* and *nature* of each one in this Temple
 - i. “what sort” of material will be revealed
 - 1. This is a word of *quality or kind*
 - 2. What kind of teaching, doctrine, and instruction did we use to build up the Church?
 - a. That which brought the applause of men here and now, and “puffed you up”?
 - b. That which brought the applause of God on that Day, which humbled you here?
 - ii. The blazing glory of God will “make clear” all that which is not, by the nature of the Holy Spirit, made for eternity
 - 1. The labors and the work poured into the Church in this life will be either eternal quality (according to the gospel), or natural (wisdom of men)
 - a. Our gospel labors will be judged for what they are *by God*, and the approval and applause of men on that day will mean NOTHING.
 - 2. Secondly, and more severely, there will also be on the Day, the revelation that there were weeds among the wheat of God’s field, goats among the sheep, unbelievers in the midst of the covenant community of faith
 - a. Have our words encouraged this duality? Have we comforted the natural men in their unregenerate state? Are they *comfortable* in the Church, though they lack repentance and faith?
 - i. “Hypocrites must either soon be converted or enraged at his preaching. He is a ‘son of thunder,’ and does not regard the face of man. He is deeply sensible of the deadness and formality of the Christian church in these parts, and has given noble testimonies against it.” (George Whitefield, regarding Gilbert Tennant)

- d. The WAGES which each gospel minister will receive on that day IS THE ENDURANCE OF THE PEOPLE WHOM HE LABORED TO PRESENT TO CHRIST
- i. John 4:35-36– the reaper “receives wages” – which is “gathering fruit for eternal life”
 1. The fruit of the harvest are the souls of the redeemed, and the reaper gathers them in as his wages, the fruit fit for eternal life by the seed of the Word of God
 - ii. 2 John 1:7-9 – John warns those in the Church not to lose “what we have worked for” and continues to warn them about following an antichrist and deceiver who teaches that Jesus didn’t come in the flesh – He who does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God
 - iii. 1 Cor 9:16-23 – My wages are to preach the gospel without charge, so I became all things to all men so that I might save some and share in the gospel blessings with them
 - iv. Phil 4:1 – “my brothers, whom I long for, my joy and my crown”
 1. Crown is the victory wreath – the prize for winning the race
 2. Paul views the Church as his prize, his wages for completing the work
 - v. 1 Thess 2:19-20 – “What, then, is our hope or joy or crown of boasting in the presence of the Lord at His coming? Is it not even you all?! You are our glory and joy!”
 1. What Paul views as his reward, his wages, on that great and glorious day of the Lord’s return is not jewels in his crown or a larger room in the Father’s house, or a closer seat at the Wedding Feast, but the people whom he labored to present to Christ Jesus!
 2. The PEOPLE OF GOD are the reward of God’s laborers.
 3. The harvest is the reward!
 - vi. The word used here is “wages”, the same word used in v8 concerning himself and Apollos and their respective work to build up the body of Christ Jesus
 1. Therefore, I believe that this reference to “If a man builds” as referring to the teaching ministries of the Church – the ministry of the Word
 2. Paul is warning that teachers who build by the Spirit, according to the gospel of Christ crucified, and do not depend upon the wisdom of the world or the strength of the world or the motivations of the world, produce eternal people by the power and grace of God

Conclusion:

“The true servants of God are not always precisely distinguished from false workers, because good and bad points are covered by the cloak of night. Ambition is blind. The favor of men is blind. The applause of men is blind. But God will dispel the darkness. Those who depend upon men’s estimation, so that they are satisfied if men pass them as acceptable are foolish, because the work will receive praise and reward only after it has withstood the Day of the Lord. Let no one flatter himself because in man’s opinion he is rated among the eminent master builders, for as soon as the day dawns all his work must be completely ruined if it is not approved by the Lord.” (John Calvin)

This passage is a hard passage, a severe passage, a warning passage, that when we instruct others and proclaim God’s Word to others, we must be reliant upon the gospel itself to produce spiritual men. We must not rely upon the wisdom or approval of the world, or try to make the gospel “prettier” by appealing to the world’s desires. Our persons are secured by God’s grace, but our activities will be scrutinized by the Lord.

Therefore, let us each build with the spiritual tools granted to each and do the work assigned to each: Christ crucified proclaimed in every corner, in reliance upon the Spirit of God to remake hardened hearts of stone into golden hearts of transformed affections which will endure for they have eternal life, the life of Christ, born in them by God. Let us announce the gospel, see the beauties of Christ, humble our souls into the dust, look upon the glories of God in the face of Jesus and build upon the foundation of Jesus with the tools which God has given and the stones that He provides. Let us learn to discern and reject the world’s wisdom as the means of church growth. No amount of leadership conferences, or website traffic increases, or tenured doctors, if they be built upon the wisdom and strength of the world, will ever build the church which endures. Let us be faithful, and we will see our reward: the faces of the redeemed sitting next you, purified and permanent on that great and glorious Day, shining as the children of light, for God is faithful and our wages will be received.