

October 4th, 2020

# The New Temple of God

1 Corinthians 3:10-17

## What's God's method

As we have been working our way through 1 Corinthians, I'm struck again and again with how heavenly God's words are. **1:18** "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Or **2:9** "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him." God's words are the most precious words in the universe. However, I think what continues to shock me week after week is God's method. Here you have the Corinthian Church. They are church that is so fleshly and so immature and so full of sin, that if this church were in our city, we—naturally speaking—would want nothing to do with them. They were arrogant, sexual immoral, they lacked church discipline, they engaged in lawsuits against each other, they engaged in idolatry, and had heresy in their ranks. How does God—through the apostle Paul—handle this Church? What's His method with this wayward people?

## The Odyssey vs. the Argonautica

In the ancient classic, *The Odyssey*, Odysseus has to sail past the deadly Sirens. The sirens in Homer's tale were those murderous mermaids who would use their intoxicating singing to lure sailors to their deaths. Odysseus knows the danger. So he instructs his men to tie him to the mast, that way no matter how much he wanted to succumb to their sweet song he wouldn't be able to free himself. Odysseus ordered his men not to untie him no matter how much he begged and he put had them put beeswax in their ears so they wouldn't hear their song. His plan worked. Now that is one way to deal with the problems of the flesh. You restrain it, you subdue it. Now Paul does operate on this level with the Corinthians from time to time—we'll see this in chapter five. However

there is a second way to deal with the dangers of the flesh. In another tale, *The Argonautica*, the Argonauts have also have to sail past the deadly Sirens, but they use a different method. They bring on board with them “the legendary musician and poet Orpheus.”<sup>1</sup> Orpheus takes his lyre and begins to play, and his song is more breath-taking, more beautiful than the Sirens. The Sirens became mere background noise, because Orpheus enchanted their hearts. Captivated by the sweeter song of Orpheus, the Argonauts passed safely by the Sirens.

### **God sings a sweeter song**

Now God’s method here, is not to tie up the Corinthians like Odysseus. Though, because of their fleshly lives, they were trying to steer the Church to disaster. We saw that in v.3 last week “...for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?” Instead, God sings to them a sweeter song. Last week He sang of His sovereignty, and how ministers are nothing but busboys and farm laborers—it is God who gives the growth. This week He continues to sing of the foundation that He has laid for all of us in the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He sings of the revolutionary change that has taken place in the NT Church—that we are now the new temple of God—that God’s own Spirit dwells with us. Loved ones, can you hear this song? That’s why God invites us and commands us to come back to His house on the Lord’s Day week by week. He knows the struggles you have with your flesh. He knows that Sirens of the world that are calling you. He knows, He knows. This is how He is going to help you this morning: He’s going to sing a sweeter song. He’s going to sing about what Christ has accomplished for you through His death, burial and resurrection. He’s going to sing about how the Church is the new temple of God, how you are that temple. And His song is better than anything the Sirens of this world have to offer.

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<sup>1</sup> Drew Dyck, *Your Future Self With Thank You: Secrets to Self-Control from the Bible and Brain Science*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Publishers, 2019), pg. 53

## *The Big Idea...*

The Church is the new temple of God—God’s own dwelling place—and this is better than anything the world can offer you

- ☆ The Foundation of the Temple of God (v.10-11)
- ☆ The Builders of the Temple of God (v.12-15)
- ☆ The People of the Temple of God (v.16-17)

### I. The Foundation of the Temple of God

#### **You are God’s garden *and* God’s temple**

Last time we were together Paul finished v.9 by saying “For we (that is Paul and his fellow co-laborers) are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.” In v.5-8 the metaphor Paul used was that of a garden—we are God’s own garden, or field as he puts it. Now in v.10-17 he switches the metaphor to a building. But not just any building—a temple—the very temple of God. In the garden metaphor, Paul’s point was that God is the one who causes the garden to grow. Here in the temple metaphor, Paul’s point is that since God owns the building, it is He who will inspect His builders and reward according to how He sees fit.

#### **Paul has ministers in view *primarily***

Remember that because the Corinthians were choosing sides, and were dividing up into parties, Paul, *at best*, was being treated as a party leader, but *at worse*, was being dismissed as someone of no consequence. In other words, the Corinthians were judging Paul and the other ministers of Corinth according to worldly standards. Paul insinuates this in 4:3 “But with me it is a very small

thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court.” His purpose in this section is to show *why this is wrong*, namely, because God is the one who judges all. None of us have the ability to rightly judge those God has truly called to minister to His Church. We used the example last week of Jeremiah vs. Jonah. If we were to judge those ministers according to the wisdom of this world, namely, by what we see with our eyes, then Jonah would be the minister we would make our party leader. But he was a reluctant prophet! He didn’t even want Nineveh to be saved. Jeremiah, on the other hand, labored long and suffered much and had zero success according to worldly standards. And yet He had God’s approval. Paul’s point *here* is that only God can rightly judge what each of His leader’s contribute to His Church.<sup>2</sup> Much of their “building”—as Paul calls it—will be practically invisible to us until the Day of judgment. Therefore to divide into factions is absurd, because it implies that you can judge, that you do know what only God can know. Now what this means for v.10-15 is that Paul *mainly* has ministers, that is Church leaders, in view. This doesn’t mean there is not application to every Christian—there is—but that’s not his *main* point.<sup>3</sup>

### Not a single particle of glory

So let’s begin with v.10 “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation...” In all of Paul’s Divinely inspired writings, he never steals “a single particle of glory that belongs to God.”<sup>4</sup> Though he says he is a “master builder” he attributes it all to God, and saves no credit for Himself. This is his constant method. **Colossians 1:28-29** “[Christ] we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, *struggling with all his energy*

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<sup>2</sup> This of course doesn’t nullify what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15-20** that we can know false teachers by their fruit, for good trees bear good fruit and bad trees bear bad fruit.

<sup>3</sup> See John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, (Chicago, IL.; Moody Publishers, 1984), pg. 82-85

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. XX*, (Grand Rapids, MI.; BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 135

*that he powerfully works within me.*” It was by God’s grace that Paul was called to be an apostle, and it was by God’s grace that Paul labored as an apostle.

### **The Apostles: the master architects**

The Greek word of *master builder* is where we get the word architect. As human agents, the apostles of the Church surpass all other ministers in terms of their calling. Because their doctrine serves as the entire blueprint for the Church. **Ephesians 2:19-20** says “...but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on *the foundation of the apostles* and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.” Through Paul’s apostolic teaching—that’s what he means by saying “I laid a foundation”—we have the whole doctrine which the Church rests on. Just as a house rests on its foundation, so the entire Church for the last 2,000 years rest on the apostolic doctrine.

### **Ministers: ‘be careful how you build’**

Continuing in v.10 “...and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.” Others come after Paul and build on the foundation he laid. This is one of the ways we know he has ministers in mind. Just like Paul laid the foundation—through his preaching and teaching—so others build on the foundation through their teaching and preaching. In Ephesus, Timothy built on Paul’s foundation (**1 Timothy 1:3**); in Corinth, Apollos built on it (**Acts 18:24-28**)

He then gives the only command in this passage: “Let each one take care how he builds...” What does that mean? **First** it means that pastors are never allowed to teach or preach however they want. We are never allowed to erect our own buildings separate from foundation that Paul or the other apostles have laid. That is treason. This is especially a temptation in America with its entrepreneurial spirit. Pastors are tempted to build their own empire—big or small—through the local church. The celebrity pastor phenomenon is the Siren song that lures away many pastors. **Secondly**, when Paul says “Let each one

take care how he builds...” he means that our building must correspond with his foundation—meaning our teaching must match his. All preachers and teachers—if they be called faithful—must conform their teaching to the apostles, to the NT.<sup>5</sup> Why?

### **The Church’s One Foundation: Jesus Christ our Lord**

v.11 “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” This is the fundamental truth of the entire Bible. It is at the very bottom, it is the foundation of everything else. No other foundation will lead to life. **Acts 4:12** “...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

### **Question: Is Christ *only* the foundation?**

Now many evangelical Christians can say *Amen* to all of that, because they acknowledge that Christ is the beginning of our salvation, just like a foundation is the beginning of a building. However once that foundation of Christ is laid, it is taught, at least implicitly, that we can build the rest of the structure without Him. In other words, Jesus Christ is what we need for initial salvation,<sup>6</sup> He is “...the minimum truth required to be saved, the admissions test, the entry point. [But] then it is understood that we make progress in the Christian life through the application of other (more advanced) biblical principles”<sup>7</sup> In other words,

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<sup>5</sup> This is why Paul defends his apostleship so vigorously in 2 Corinthians and in Galatians.

<sup>6</sup> This is what the Judaizers in Galatian Church were guilty of. They readily acknowledged that you must put your faith in Christ, and Christ *alone* to be a Christian. But then, in order to grow up in the Christian life, you had to place yourself under the yoke of circumcision and follow Jewish laws. But Paul said that this nullified the grace of God. **Galatians 2:21** “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.” This is what Rome is guilty of down to this day: ‘yes, you need Christ,’ they say, ‘He is the foundation, but you also need the works of penance, and the purifying of purgatory in order to complete what Christ started.’ But Paul said this so-called gospel is a curse **Galatians 3:10** “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” And much of what we call Evangelicalism does the same thing today.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, (New York, NY.,: Viking, 2015), pg. 119

‘Jesus is the answer for your salvation [the foundation] but He’s not the answer for all the other problems you have, you must keep building.’

**Answer: Christ is what we build with as well**

Now is that what Paul means here? No, not at all. He has already laid down the principle that our Lord Jesus Christ is what we need at the beginning, middle, and end of our Christian life. He said in **2:2** “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Meaning Christ is the foundation of the Christian life and Christ is what we build our Christian life with. Consider how the Person of Jesus is the answer for all the diverse problems that this congregation is currently facing.<sup>8</sup>

**To those of you** are in the worse physical suffering of your life and are close to death. Don’t you know that God has already given you the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord? (**1 Corinthians 15:57**). You have already conquered death. Death is the Father’s last gift of love to you on this planet, because you will be finally delivered from the sting and curse of sin, and you will be brought into perfect communion with Christ.

**To those of you** with marriages falling apart or families falling apart. Don’t you realize that your true love and true family is in Heaven, and that will never be torn apart from you? Even though Jesus was God’s family—God’s own Son—

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<sup>8</sup> **To those of you** who have crippling doubts about your salvation. You trust in Jesus, but you don’t *feel* saved. Oh tender hearts, don’t you know that Jesus said “...whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (**John 6:37**). Jesus shut the door behind you when you came to Him. He locked it with His faithfulness, and your weak feelings will never be strong enough to push past Him. He has sworn “I should lose nothing of all that [the Father] has given me.”

**To those of you** who see the world as it is today and are afraid of what the future holds. Here’s what the future holds: Jesus will destroy all of His and our enemies with the breath of His mouth. He will pour out His righteous vengeance on all who have molested His Church. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

**To those of you** who live in constant fear of being found out for who you really are. Loved ones, grace means that the Father already knows all your deepest darkest sins and He hasn’t rejected you. In fact, because He already washed you in the blood of Christ, and clothed you in His righteousness, you cannot be more loved and accepted than you are. He’s the only Person whose approval matters. Therefore you are free to admit who you *really* are.

He was cast out and lost, so that so that you could be brought God's family. You have the approval and love of a Father that will never put you out of His family.

**To those of you** caught in some sin. You feel like you've out sinned God's grace and there's no way back. Don't you know the Good Shepherd leaves the ninety sheep and seeks after the one who has lost and gone astray? Don't you know that just as a father has pity on a sick child and seeks to heal his disease, that Jesus has pity on you *especially* when you are caught in sin. Yes he hates the sin, just as a good father hates the disease that afflicts his child, but He doesn't hate you. No, when sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. Your Savior is especially glorified in taking wandering and lost sheep and bringing them back to the fold. He is the hound of Heaven and He will hunt you down with steadfast love and faithfulness.

Loved ones, don't you see? Christ is the solution for everything we face. We don't merely preach Christ as our foundation and then build with other things. That's our **first point**: the foundation of the temple of God, and everything that follows is Christ Himself.

## II. The Builders of the Temple of God

### The Jewishness of Paul

Please look with me at v.12 "Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done." Now Paul is very Jewish here, because in using this imagery of constructing a temple he is alluding to the building of Solomon's temple. Before David died, he started gathering materials for Solomon and said this in **1 Chronicles 29:2** "So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver

for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones and marble.”<sup>9</sup>

### **What do these building materials represent?**

It’s clear from our passage that the gold, silver and precious stones are the *right* building materials, while the wood, hay and straw are the *wrong* building materials. So what do these building materials represent? Well first, remember our context. Paul is *not* speaking about believers in general here, but only Church leaders, they are the one who are doing the building. They are the ones who the Corinthians are lining up behind and creating factions. So how do Church leaders build? Through their teaching and preaching. That is how the Church is *primarily* built up. Paul told the Ephesians elders in **Acts 20:32** “And now I commend you to God and to *the word* of his grace, *which is able to build you up* and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” Elders, pastors, church leaders build the Church *through* the teaching and preaching of the Word.<sup>10</sup> Therefore these building materials represent their teaching. The gold, and silver, and precious stones are those doctrines taught that are worthy of Christ, that answer to the foundation. While the wood, hay and straw are those doctrines that don’t answer to Christ at all.<sup>11</sup> Those are the materials you use to build hut not a temple.

### **The wisdom of God vs. the wisdom of man**

To borrow from what Paul has already said in chapters 1-2, the gold, silver, and precious stones are those doctrines that are based on the wisdom of God; while the wood, hay and straw are those based on the wisdom of man. However

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<sup>9</sup> David wasn’t free to choose whatever materials he desired, he was bound to the specifications that God had appointed (**1 Kings 6:38**).

<sup>10</sup> Which is why the Devil’s primary attack is *always* against the pulpit.

<sup>11</sup> Calvin, pg. 136

it's important to point out that these doctrines made from wood, hay, and straw are not "radically false and soul-destroying errors, but frivolous and worthless ones."<sup>12</sup> The great Scottish pastor Robert Leighton who ministered in the 17th century in Glasgow was once publicly rebuked in an official gathering of Church leaders, called a synod, because his preaching wasn't, in their view, relevant to culture. They said he was not "preaching up the times." Leighton asked "Who does preach up the times?" They responded, 'well all the brethren do.' So, said he, "If all of you preach up the times, you may surely allow one poor brother to preach up Christ Jesus and eternity."<sup>13</sup> Leighton was right. Obviously it is right to preach Christ and Him crucified in a way where it speaks to culture. But often what we see, is that in the name of relevance, the pulpit becomes untethered from the gospel. It begins to adopt the world's categories. It's tragic to see many who are associated with Gospel Coalition today adopt the categories of Black Lives Matter and this idea of being woke. Those things are the worldly wisdom of our day, just like Greek philosophical categories was the worldly wisdom in the Corinthian Church. It's not an accident that the more these things are preached and promoted, the more the Church becomes divided. Whenever Christ is buried under a mass of strange doctrines,<sup>14</sup> the Church begins to divide into factions. Just like in Corinth.

### **The Day of the Lord**

However, Paul's point here, is that this worldly wisdom found in teaching—this wood, hay and straw is not always apparent to us. It's not always clear that this is what is going on. Notice what he says in **v.13** "each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done." The Day—capital D—will disclose or make know whether a minister's teaching is gold or straw.

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Charles Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Published by Forgotten Books 2012, Originally Published 1885), pg. 80

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> Calvin, pg. 136

What is this Day? It is the Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment. “That day shall...manifest the truth or falsehood of the doctrines taught.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Principle #1: Every doctrine awaits God’s final judgment**

This brings us to our first principle: Every doctrine that our Church leaders teach us are awaiting God’s final judgment on that great Day. Consider that loved ones! Oh the weight of what we do. God is the one that will inspect our work. No wonder why Paul asked “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 **Corinthians 2:16**). Our Lord Jesus Christ will examine the way that His ministers have taught to see if it was worthy of Him or no. How serious must He be about His gospel? Are we that serious about it? Do we listen with care and diligence, and with a willingness to conform our lives to it? Do open our hearts to it? Or has the preaching become a dead formalism, where we come here and listen, well because that’s what Christians are supposed to do? Beloved God is the most careful listener to His preached Word. Are we carefully listening along side of Him?

### **The gain or loss of rewards**

Please look with me at **v.14-15** “If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” Now it’s clear that this judgment Paul is talking about is not the judgment in Matthew 25 where Jesus separates the sheep from the goats, and welcomes the first group into Heaven, and casts the last group into hell. No this is a judgment strictly for believers. Therefore “the issue is *not* reward or punishment, Heaven or Hell, *but reward or no reward*.”<sup>16</sup> This is clear from **v.15**, if anyone’s work is burned up, he’s going to suffer loss, but not the loss of His salvation. The imagery is vivid. Image a man who builds his house with wood, hay, and straw and a great fire

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 57

<sup>16</sup> Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), pg. 156

sweeps through the neighborhood. He loses his house and everything in his house, but he escapes through the flames with his life.<sup>17</sup> So to apply this to those who preach and teach:

“One either builds the church through the preaching of the cross and through instruction in sound doctrine [which leads to reward], or else one attempt to build the church through the wisdom of men which inevitably creates factions and division.”<sup>18</sup>

Now how was Paul was applying this to the rest of the Church?<sup>19</sup> Well sometimes divisions can begin by preachers who preach worldly wisdom. But that was not the case in Corinth. It was the congregation that was creating divisions, by judging their pastors like Simon Cowell on American Idol. Their

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<sup>17</sup> This is what happened to Lot. The angel of the Lord told him to leave Sodom—his home—and when he was out of the city, the Lord reigned down fire and brimstone down. Lot lost all his possessions, but he gained his life. See Genesis 19

<sup>18</sup> Kim Riddlebarger, *The Lectio Continua: Expository Commentary on the New Testament: First Corinthians*, (Powder Springs, GA.,: Tolle Lege Press, 2013), pg. 87

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“It is not enough, therefore, that a minister hold fast to fundamental truth; he must take heed what he teaches in connection with that truth.”

<sup>19</sup> Generally speaking, I believe that this method of God meting out rewards or withholding applies to every believer, though we can never ever lose our salvation “for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

party spirit towards their leaders was based purely on personality, and style, not on substance.<sup>20</sup>

### **Principle #2: We are not to pronounce judgment before the time**

This brings us to our second principle: we ought never to judge the work of our leaders in this life. Yes, we will know false teachers by their fruit (**Matthew 7:20**) and we should avoid them. Yes, we should be good Bereans and always test what we are being taught against the Scriptures (**Acts 17:11**). But we simply do not have the ability to judge the *value* of our leader's work to God. Paul has made that clear, it is only on that Day, when the fire will reveal whether their work was gold or straw. Therefore "it is as wrong to highly elevate a person as it is to degrade him."<sup>21</sup> Paul is going to say it so clearly in the next chapter, **4:5** "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." Any deviation from this rule just will create factions in the Church. God didn't give us leaders so that we could play sit back and criticize them, or idolize them. He gave us leaders so that we could be built up in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>20</sup> The Church in Corinth never got over this. Clement wrote to the Corinthians in 96 or 97 A.D. saying this: "(47) Pick up the letter of the blessed apostle Paul. What was the primary thing he wrote to you, "when he started preaching the gospel?" To be sure, under the Spirit's guidance, he wrote to you about himself and Cephas and Apollos, because even then you had formed cliques. Factiousness, however at that time was a less serious sin, since you were partisans of notable apostles and of a man they endorsed. But think now who they are who have led you astray and degraded your honorable and celebrated love of the brethren. It is disgraceful, exceedingly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian upbringing, to have it reported that because of one or two individuals the solid and ancient Corinthian Church is in revolt against it's presbyters. This report, moreover, has reached not only us, but those who dissent from us as well. The result is that the Lord's name is being blasphemed because of your stupidity, and you are exposing yourselves to danger." *The Apostolic Fathers*, (Chicago, IL.,: Moody Publishers, 2009 Edition), pg. 48-49

<sup>21</sup> MacArthur, pg. 78

**Objection: How will boasting be eliminated if some have more reward?**

Before we move on to the last section, I want to answer one critical objection. If Christ's aim is to stop all boasting, so that He receives all the glory, then what will prevent us from boasting on that final Day since some will have more rewards than others? If some have less and some have more, won't that create envy from those who have less, and arrogance from those who have more? The easy answer no, because we will be glorified and all sin will be put away so there will be no envy or arrogance. But I believe there is a more glorious answer. What is this reward that Paul speaks about?

The *reward* is simply this: a greater conformity to Christ, a greater capacity of holiness, a greater capacity of love, a greater likeness to Jesus Himself.<sup>22</sup>

The reason why those with lesser reward in Heaven will not envy those with greater reward is because they will look at them and see more of Jesus. They see more of His perfections and more of His excellencies, and more of His glory in them, and so this will cause them who have less to love those who have more to a greater degree. Beloved, this is why our hearts melt in love when we see with spiritual eyes the personality of Apostle Paul in the pages of Scripture—his very person helps us to see Christ better. His greater conformity to Christ doesn't make us envy him in a sinful way, it draws out our heartstrings of love to

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<sup>22</sup> Proved. In the parable of the talents when the master rewarded the two that were faithful, what did he tell them? "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of *your master*." (Matthew 25:21, 23). Do you see? The reward is the joy of the Master. So then what is the Master's joy? What does God find most pleasure in? His Son Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 3:17; Isaiah 42:1; John 3:34-35; 5:20" Jonathan Edwards once said "The infinite happiness of the Father consists in the enjoyment of His Son." [John Piper, *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God*, (Colorado Springs, CO.; Multnomah Books, 2012), pg. 34]. Therefore the joy of the Master, the joy of God is Christ Himself. Which means this, the reward is a greater portion of Christ. What does that look like? It is a greater conformity to Him. And it is precisely this which will eliminate all boasting in Heaven. Objection: In Luke's gospel we read the same parable yet Jesus tells the first would have authority over ten cities, and the second over five cities. So it seems the reward is not spiritual but physical. I would respond that the primary reward is spiritual (since the spiritual part of us is superior to our flesh) and the secondary reward is physical.

him. The more of Christ we see in Paul, the more we are compelled to love him. And this love towards Paul will only increase all the more in Heaven when we no longer have sin to deal with.

On the other hand, those with greater reward in Heaven will not be arrogant to those with lesser reward precisely because they are more humble and more holy. Jesus is infinitely meek and infinitely holy, and that doesn't make Him love us less, that makes Him love us all the more. Likewise, the saints who have greater reward will look on those with lesser, and they will see us with a more perfect love, a more perfect warmth, a more perfect fellowship. In this way Jesus is most glorified, because He is reason those who have lesser reward love those with a greater reward more and vice versa.

But you may say to me, **1 John 3:2** says "...we know that when he appears *we shall be like him*, because we shall see him as he is." And **Romans 8:29** says that all whom God predestinates will be conformed to His Son. So how can you say that some will have a greater conformity to Christ?" Because, loved ones, Christ is infinite, and we are finite, which means we can have different capacities of conformity. Think of it this way, imagine you have two cups, both of them are completely full of liquid. In that sense, all of God's people will be completely full of Christ in Heaven and love Him and be loved by Him perfectly. Yet one cup can be larger than the other and thus have more liquid. One has a greater capacity. Jonathan Edwards says it like this:

"It will not be a grief to any of the saints to see those that are higher than themselves in holiness and likeness to God...for all shall have as much love as they desire, and as great manifestations of love as they can bear; and so all shall be fully satisfied; and where there is perfect satisfaction, there can be no envy."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits: Christian Love as Manifested in the Heart and Life*, (USA.: Great Plains Press, 2012), pg. 203

Beloved do you see how Christ is all? He's the foundation of the temple, the building materials for the temple, and the reward for building the temple.<sup>24</sup> Let's look at our **last point**.

### III. The People of the Temple of God

#### **The sweeter song of God**

Here's where we see God's stunning method. Like the Corinthians, we are often so worldly, so fleshly, so divisive. We are turning our ship and heading right towards the Sirens and towards destruction. But instead of tying us to the mast like we deserve, God sings a sweeter song. Please look at v.16 "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" The "you" here is plural in the Greek. Paul is no longer just speaking about the Church's leaders—he's speaking to and about *the whole Church*.

#### **Paul's shocking conclusion: You are the new temple of God**

And now it's clear, that he has been talking about a temple all along—though this is the first time he uses the word. This building that ministers have been building up is you loved ones. You are God's great construction project throughout the ages. In terms of the history of redemption, this is the most shocking thing that Paul has said in this letter thus far. What do we know about the temple/tabernacle in the OT? When the first tabernacle was completed, we read in **Exodus 40:34-35** "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and *the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, *and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.*" This tabernacle was *the most* significant place on earth, because it is where the

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<sup>24</sup> Christ is all Christ is all  
And my song will ever be  
Christ is all, All in all  
And my song will ever be  
Christ is all

Living God met His people. It is where God met man. Fast forward to the time when Solomon finished the temple proper in Jerusalem—a 7 year project. At its dedication we read in **2 Chronicles 7:1-2** “As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, *and the glory of the Lord filled the temple*. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because *the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house*.” In both the tabernacle and the temple, the glory of the Lord was so overwhelming that no man could enter. Fast forward to the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We read in **John 1:14** says that He “...became flesh and *dwelt* among us,” that is, He *tabernacled* among us. He became the new temple of God.<sup>25</sup> Instead of God's Spirit filling a temple made of stone, God's Spirit now filled the Son of God. **John 3:34** says the Father gave Him the Spirit without measure. And the glory of the Lord was seen by all His people: “...and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” But then on the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus said something perplexing, He said “...I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away” (**John 16:7**). Why would Jesus say that? How can His departure be our advantage—at least for a time? Because we are the new temple of God on earth. The Church, and every individual believer now have the unbelievable privilege of being that place where God dwells on earth. Do you realize how shocking this would have been for the Jews in Corinth to hear. Why? Because historically, this letter was written in the mid first century before Titus destroyed the temple in 70 AD. The temple that Herod built was still standing. But Paul is saying here, that is not where God dwells on earth any longer. The final act in redemptive history is not in the rebirth of the temple in Jerusalem. It's not the building up of a physical temple where God can dwell. The final act is God taking sinners like these Corinthians—like us and making His home in us! Will God dwell with man on earth? Yes. That's what the Church is. “Yet she on earth hath union with the God the Three in One.”

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<sup>25</sup> In fact He claimed this in Matthew 12:6 and in John 2:18-22

### The destruction of defilers

And we can see how jealous God is of His temple in our final verse. Please look at v.17 “If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.” Clearly God is speaking about unbelievers here. The teachers in v.15 who teach worthless doctrine but still hold to the foundation are not destroyed—they lose their reward, but are saved through the fire. Here in v.17, Paul is talking similarly to Peter in **2 Peter 2:1** “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” God did not allow His temple in the OT to be defiled with impunity. “Penalties for violating access to the tabernacle and its contents were so severe as to result in leprosy or death.”<sup>26</sup> But now, since we are God’s own temple—His dwelling place—He will not allow us to be defiled ultimately by the world or by worldly wisdom of false teachers. Why? End of v. 17 “For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.” What a frightful warning to the world today. Nations of the world be warned—God will destroy you *if* you attempt to destroy His Church.

### “Become who you are”

But there is application for the Corinthians and for us. The divisions and party spirit that existed in Corinth were an attempt to destroy the temple. Paul is essentially saying: if that is the end of unbelievers who cause division because of worldly wisdom, how should we then live? The end of v.17 could be put into a spiritual syllogism.

The temple of God is holy  
 You are the temple of God  
 Therefore *you are* holy<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Source: [http://walkwiththeword.org/Studies/01\\_OT/03\\_Lev/03\\_Leviticus\\_16-02.34.html](http://walkwiththeword.org/Studies/01_OT/03_Lev/03_Leviticus_16-02.34.html)  
 Accessed October 4th, 2020

<sup>27</sup> Edwards, pg. 85

This is the logic of Paul's ethics: "Loved ones, *become what you already are.*"<sup>28</sup> That's what the the Lord Jesus Christ is saying to us this morning: "You don't need to return to the world—the Sirens have nothing to offer you. I'm already singing you a sweeter song. You don't have to earn my love. You are already holy. I made you that way when I shed my blood for your sins, when I fulfilled God's law through my perfect obedience, when I rose from the dead so that you would rise also. And nothing can ever change that. You don't need to prove anything. I already know all your failures—I see all of your sins—and you are still mine. You don't need the approval of others. You already have mine. You are already holy. You are already loved and accepted. Be who you are.

### **Is Jesus your foundation?**

Perhaps you are here this morning and you know this is not true about you. The Spirit of God does not dwell in you. Jesus Christ is not the foundation of your life. The greatest commandment is that you would love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. But you have never put God first. You have the spirit of the world in you—the spirit of selfishness because you live for no one but yourself. Oh dear friend, the Scripture says you are like the fool who builds his house on the sand, and when the storm came and beat against the house, it fell and great was the fall of it. That storm is the wrath of God for your sin of not honoring and loving Him. There is no escape on your own. No amount of good deeds can wipe away your guilt. You need innocent blood. That's what Jesus offers sinners like you because of what He did on the cross. He can wash you in His own blood and make you as white as snow. How? By trusting Him to be your Savior. If you come to Him by faith—by holding out your empty hand, as it were and receiving Him and all His promises—you will be saved. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then the Spirit of God will take up residence in you, you will be the new temple of God.

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<sup>28</sup> Ciampa & Rosner, pg. 158