

PENTECOST:  
THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH  
1 Corinthians 3:1-20

INTRO: You will not remember this, but in 2004 I began on Pentecost Sunday to preach through the doctrine of the Church. The Church has been God's greatest work on earth for the last 2,000 years. The Church is an incredible living organism created by God. It began on Pentecost day in Acts 2. Over the years, as I have pondered the Church, I have marveled at how it keeps going. The Church is nothing less than a divine institution and safeguarded by a divine hand. Anyone with any discernment that keeps up just a little with the modern church and sees the enemies both within and without the Church must marvel at how it keeps going. But it does. You can't kill it. It is a divine organism. Many a worldly leader who was against God has sought to put the Church to death, but always the Church lives. The very first time the Church is mentioned, it is mentioned by the Lord Jesus just before He was crucified. Look at it in Matthew 16 (read 13-19). The gates of hell will not prevail against it.

I traveled with a man who had spent a number of years in Russian prisons for preaching the Gospel. And he said one KJB officer said, "We don't know what to do with you Christians. When we tighten the screws down on you, you grow. When we loosen them off, you grow. We don't know what to do with you." Let me just share another little story that comes to mind. The KJB had spotted a gathering in the woods through their binoculars. They apprehended the elderly pastor and said, "We are going to give you fifteen years for this!" And he said, "Praise the Lord, I thought I only had a year or two left." No, the Church is a divine institution.

I have heard this many times: If we, as Christians, can't get along here on earth, how are we going to get along in heaven? Let me tell you something very enlightening. The smallest number of those who claim to be Christians are truly Christians. We are Christians trying to get along with non-Christians who profess to be Christians in the church. Not all our difficulties of getting along are related to that, but surely many are. Billy Graham, who is not a conservative Christian by any stretch of the imagination has said, and I'm not sure he still believes this, but he said that he believed that at least 80% of professing Christians are not Christians.

Jesus gave the parable of the tares and the wheat and He said it was the devil that sowed the tares among the wheat. The tares

are 'false brethren'. They are look alike. They look and talk like believers, but they are lost. Jesus spoke of the ten virgins. All ten were professing Christians, but five were false Christians. Oh no, there is a very good reason why many of those who profess to be believers have trouble getting along in the church.

I want to tell you something else about the church. I heard it from Paul Washer, and I agree with him. If you look at the Church today, how would you describe it? Would you say it is beautiful? Would you say it is glorious? Would you say it is a jewel in the midst of mud? Would you say it is like a diadem? How would you describe it?

And maybe you say, "You know what? The Church looks so much like the world one can hardly tell which is which. The Church is filled with divorce. The Church is filled with sin. It looks very dark and very drab to me. It looks like a hopeless lost cause to me." And here is what I want to tell you, borrowing the thought and a few words from Paul Washer, and changing some of them. Let me draw a picture for you. The Church is a beautiful, virtuous, pristine, pearl. A gem in amongst gravel. She is the diamond in the Lord's universe. She is in preparation as the most glorious bride that will ever be seen. And on her wedding day, she will be the most glorious bride ever beheld. She will be like nothing you can imagine or that I can describe.

And you say, "How can you say that?" Let me quote now directly from Paul Washer. He said, "Now let me say this about the Church. I want you to listen well. There is not a remnant of believers in the Church." Let me explain what he is saying. He is saying that the Church is not this vast group believers, with a smaller group of pure believers inside that larger group. For example, Israel was a large nation, but only a remnant were true believers. And he is saying the Church is not like that.

So, he goes on like this, "We all know about the remnant theology, you know, that throughout all the course of Israel there was Israel the people of God and a remnant of true believers. That is not true about the Church. There is not a remnant of believers or a small group of believers inside a larger group called the Church. **The Church is the remnant.** And I want to say this. If pastors have ever come too close to blaspheming it is with regard to this. I hear theologians, itinerant teachers, pastors, saying these sorts of things. 'There is just as much sin in the Church as out of the Church. There is just as much divorce in the Church as out of the

Church. There is just as much immorality and pornography in the Church as out of the Church.' And then preachers say, 'Yes, the Church is acting like a whore.' I want you to know this. You ought to be very careful calling the bride of Jesus Christ a whore. I will tell you what the problem is. Pastors and preachers don't know what the Church is. I want you to know that the Church of Jesus Christ in America is beautiful. She is frail at times. She is weak. She is buffeted. She is not perfect, but I want you to know she is broken. She is humbly walking with her God. The problem with you is you don't know what the Church is. Today because of the lack of biblical preaching the so called Church is filled up with carnal, wicked people identified with Christianity. And then because of all the goats in the midst of the lambs, the lambs are blamed for all the things the goats are doing and then the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of us," end quote.

And so, this morning I want to continue in the doctrine of the Church. Let me just briefly tell you what I have covered of the doctrine of the Church in past years. I have preached about the identification of the Church. I told you what the Church is not. She is not a replacement of Israel. She is not a political entity. The true Church is made up of only truly born again Christians. There are no unsaved in the true Church.

I gave you the history of the Church throughout the NT, beginning in the Gospels and ending in the book of Revelation. Then I gave you a brief history of the Church after the writing of the NT. And last year we began looking at the illustrations of the Church and we began with the illustration of the Church as a body. Christ is the Head and we are the members of that body. This morning we want to look at the Church pictured as a building.

### III. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CHURCH

A. As A Body

B. As A Building

#### 1. 1 Corinthians 3:10-11

We have had 1 Corinthians 3:1-20 read for us earlier. Let us read 1-4 again (read). Note that the Corinthians were carnal, or fleshly, in that they bickered about who was the best leader, Paul or Apollos. Paul then zero's in on the leaders. Look at verses 5-9 (read). Now, the Church is likened to grain farming and church leaders are pictured as

doing different tasks to bring this crop to harvest. Paul said he had planted and Apollos had watered but it is God that gives the increase. So, neither Paul nor Apollos are anything special, it is God who is the ultimate cause of the harvest. Then in verse 8, he says that the laborers will each get his own reward according to how he worked.

Now look at verse 9 (read). All the workers in God's kingdom are workers together with God. It would be nice to spend more time here. This is an incredible thought. Then he says, "You are God's husbandry (KJV), or field (NKJV)." It speaks of a cultivated field or tillage. What is in view is grain farming.

But then Paul changes the metaphor, and says, "You are God's building." Here the Church is likened to a building. And what Paul will do in verses 10-17 is develop the thought of the Church as a building. I am talking now about the believers making up the building. Paul will paint a picture for us of the Church as a building. He will liken church leaders to the builders, and believers to the building. And so in verses 10-15 we have the builders in view and in and the believers as the building in verses 16-23 we have the building, picturing the believers.

#### **-The builders**

-We begin then, with the builders starting in verse 10 (read). Because they had argued who was the best, Paul or Apollos, Paul will show what leadership is all about. And Paul said that as a wise master builder, he laid the foundation. I see a lot of buildings going up in our area of town. Every good builder puts down a good foundation. Some years ago I built a log cabin. I dug down to hard ground and laid big bricks on that and that was the foundation. And every winter things shift around with the frost and it takes until about May before the door wants to work properly. Anybody who has had a house with no foundation or a poor foundation in our country knows that a wise builder puts down a good foundation.

Paul says that as a wise master builder, He has laid the foundation. And just what is this foundation in this picture? Well, we are told in verse 11 that it is Jesus Christ. Let me take a quote out of the next message I plan to do. It is an amazing quote that was sent to me some time ago. The quote is by William Booth who lived from 1829-1912, and was the founder

of the Salvation Army. Here is what he said over 100 years ago, "The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."

Now here is the part of that quote that is pertinent to our subject. He said that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there would be a huge danger of gendering a Christianity without Christ. We should spend a whole message on this topic of Christ as the foundation, in light of the modern Church. Many today profess to be Christians but the foundation is not Christ. Many missions claim they are promoting Christ, but they are promoting a prosperity Gospel or a social Gospel, or a sliced Gospel. And none of these Gospels save. What parades itself as Christianity many times today is a Christianity without Christ. When Paul laid the foundation, it was Christ who was that foundation.

I wonder sometimes how many in our very religious community are actually building on or being built on a good foundation. They were baptized and joined a church in order to get married or various other unbiblical reasons. But they did not truly understand the Gospel. And then, some years later, they began to disagree with various things in their church and they started to agree the Bible taught you could know you were saved and they switched churches and became members there. And I wonder how many of those are truly saved? Are they building on the true foundation?

Now I want you to notice the last part of verse 10, "...but let each one take heed how he builds on it" that is on this foundation. Here is Paul's warning to pastors, and I believe it has application to all of us. He said, "Be careful how you build on this foundation, take heed." Now why is this so important? First, in this picture, the Lord's Church is pictured as a building, and church leaders are the builders. So here is a question for church leaders, using the illustration of building. If you were asked to build some government building in town here, how careful would you be? But, what if you were asked to add a wing to our parliament buildings in Ottawa? How

carefully would you build? Surely we would make very sure we did everything right. And why would we be so very careful? Well, the first reason is the importance of the one we are building for. And for Church leaders, we are builders for God. There is no more important building going on anywhere in the whole universe than this one.

Second, it is very important how we build because there will be no shoddy work in this building. Why not? Because the Lord Himself is the building inspector. And what would happen if the Lord caught the Christian leader taking short cuts? You see, we are talking about the Church that we are building for God! Nothing compares to this! Do you think that for this most important work in our age there is no building inspector? Of course there is. And no wool will not be pulled over the eyes of this inspector.

We had a builder in the town where I grew up. He was a pastor of a Church. And I heard that the building inspector tried to be there before he could close anything up, because the inspector did not trust him as a builder. But here on earth we have people who are inspectors. When our building of the Church is inspected, it will be a divine inspector. No matter how much we cover over, it will be as if it were wide open. Hebrews 4:13 says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." Here is the reason why Paul says, "Be careful how you build." He will inspect our building.

We come now to verse 11. Here is Menno Simons favorite Bible verse. It says, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Menno Simons had built on the foundation of the church that claims to be the only true church on earth, and he had learned that he was built on a false foundation. There are many so called Christians who are building on a so called Christ, but their Christ is another Christ. It is amazing what many of them are doing. Watch on Christian news. Read about what is going on, all in the name of Christ, but the real foundation many times is not there. Just because it is called Christian does not make it Christian. But listen to our text, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid." If one is not truly building on Christ, there

is no foundation for one's works. All the works one is doing are vain. I have been seeing pictures recently of K.P. Yohanon. He now looks like some Indian Guru. He seemed to be doing such a wonderful work in India. Now one wonders if he is moving to another foundation. No amount of good works built on a foundation that is not truly Christ, is any foundation at all.

And just what is it that is going to be inspected of our building on that foundation? We are now talking about building on the one true foundation. Look at verse 12. It says, "Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw..." Here we are given samples of the kind of works that are going to be inspected. You notice that there are six kinds of building material mentioned. You will notice that half are good and half are useless. And you will notice that whether they are good or useless is determined by whether they can be burned or not. We find this in verse 13. Paul says, "...each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is."

Now notice that it says, "Each one's work will become clear..." There is coming a day when every Christian is going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. When I grew up, here is how I pictured judgment from what I had been taught. All would go along like it is until one day the Lord Jesus would come. Then He would gather all people before Him and He would weigh all their works. If one's works were good, one entered heaven, and if they were not good enough, or there were too many bad ones, then one would go to hell.

But that is not how it will be. There is not one general judgment according to Scripture. And there is no future judgment to see if we will go to heaven or not. That judgment is now, in this lifetime. If we hear the Gospel, truly repent of our sins and receive Christ as our Savior and trust Him for our salvation, then we are saved. If we do not we are lost. There is no need for judgment for this. We determine that judgment ourselves by the choices we make. And in whichever of those two states we die, that determines our destiny.

Now, the judgment of the saved and the lost happens at different times. We don't have time this morning to look at the various judgments. The judgment of our

text is called 'the judgment seat of Christ' in other passages. Only the believer is judged in this judgment and in my understanding, it happens in heaven. Let us look at it briefly in Scripture (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

When the Church is raptured, or if a Christian dies and goes to heaven, it is after that, that this building inspector will inspect how, or what kind of materials he has built with. And notice when this judgment will take place according to our text. Verse 13 says, "for the day will declare it." What day is Paul talking about? The Scriptures talk about various days. There is the day of God, or the day of the Lord which is mentioned many times, and then there is the day of Christ. These are references to different time periods. And I believe the day of Christ refers to the seven year period of the Church in heaven after the rapture, and while the tribulation happens on earth.

Is there any support for the view that the day of Christ refers to this time? Well, no lesser of a writer than J. Dwight Pentecost says in his book *Things to Come*, "In each case in which the Day of Christ is used it is used specifically in reference to the expectation of the Church, her translation, glorification, and examination for reward. The word *day* as used in Scripture is not necessarily a time word, but may be used for the events which fall within any period. Paul so uses it in 2 Corinthians 6:2, when he speaks of the 'day of salvation'" (232).

There are a number of references to the day of Christ, which is the day I think our passage speaks of. 1 Corinthians 1:8 calls it the 'day of our Lord Jesus Christ'. 1 Corinthians 5:5 calls it the 'day of the Lord Jesus'. 2 Corinthians 1:14 refers to it as the 'day of the Lord Jesus'. Philippians 1:6 says the 'day of Jesus Christ'. Philippians 1:10 and 2 Thessalonians 2:2 call it 'the day of Christ'.

Now in this judgment that takes place in that day, it says every man's work will be revealed by fire. We are talking about Christians here at the judgment seat of Christ. To give us a picture of how our works will be tested, they are likened to gold, silver, precious stones or wood, hay and straw. And here is how easy it will be for God to judge our works. It will be like putting them all in the fire, and



whatever does not burn is a good work. Now imagine straw before a hot fire. How easily does a hot fire not discern what is straw? That is how easily God will judge our works.

Now let me clarify a common misconception here. It is viewed sometimes that here is the Christian, standing to be judged. And if he has sinned, those works will be burned up and he will suffer loss, but still he will be saved yet so as by fire. I want to recommend that that is an abominable view. I want to recommend that sin does not build on this foundation at all. It is not sins that are in view. Sins are to be repented of and dealt with by the blood of Christ. There are sins, which if persisted in, will bar one from this judgment and send one to hell. 1 Corinthians 6 and Galatians 5 list such sins for us.

No, what is in view here is works done as building on the foundation of Christ. All that is very clear. Now Scripture gives us three kinds of works. There are bad works. That is sin. Then there are good works, that is true righteousness. But there is one other kind of work. Turn to Hebrews 6 to see it (read 6:1; see also 9:14). This other kind of works are here called dead works. I propose to you that the wood, hay and straw are examples of dead works.

And just what are dead works? Well, there are all kinds of them. Let us say I am truly a Christian. But in my new zeal as a Christian, I want to appear to others as someone really on fire for God and I witness to the lost and then tell others about it for my own glory. Any works done for my own glory, are dead works. I can get baptized, and it can be nothing but a dead work. All I wanted was attention.

The other day I spoke to you about rewards. Let me show you these dead works there. Listen to Matthew 6:2 again, "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." There is a dead work. Listen to 6:5, "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you,

they have their reward." There is a dead work. Then listen to 6:16, "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." When I do good deeds for my own glory, that is a dead work. There are all kinds of these.

But look at our text in verse 14 now. It says, "If anyone's work which he has built on it (that is this foundation) endures, he will receive a reward." That is gold, silver or a precious stone. Now, I ask you, what kind of works will endure the fire? What kind of works are like gold, silver or precious stones. They are godly Christian works done from a pure heart with pure motivations.

We come now to verse 15 which says, "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." I have mentioned this verse already earlier. Now, having looked at what good works are and what dead works are, we can see why such a person suffers loss. These works had already received their reward on earth before those who noticed them.

Now all that speaks specifically to church leaders. But, no doubt, it could be applied to all Christians in a sense.

### **-The Building**

But Paul will now turn his attention to the building. This is a reference to those who become believers under the ministry of Paul, but applies to all lay persons. And in our passage they are those who were arguing over who was the best speaker. And what Paul is saying is, "You are arguing about who is the best Christian worker. These workers will all get their reward and it will be according to how they have built. But what I want you to realize is that you are the building they are building. And the question is not what are the speakers like. The question is, what are you like?"

And so we begin in verse 16 (read). What the Corinthians needed to be reminded of was that what was important was not how good the speakers were they had or which one was best. They needed to understand that they were the temple of God in process of building. And here is the real question. How holy are they? What are they like? So he says, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the

Spirit of God dwells in you?" Let me recommend that if you want to check out a speaker, don't check out how eloquent he is or how big his church is, or what kind of gifts he has. Check out how holy they people are he ministers to.

May I remind us of something this morning? If we are truly born again, the Spirit of God dwells in us. And may I ask you, what is the key evidence that we have the Spirit of God within us? I spoke to us recently on the filling and baptism of the Holy Spirit. What is the evidence that we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Holiness! He is the HOLY Spirit. You can watch many, many speakers with great charisma today, and one of the things missing in many of their lives is holiness. But who checks that out? Take Benny Hinn for example, with his mansions and what not. There are tons of these, and money or popularity is their main mission. Do not go by how they perform or what gifts they may display. Go by how holy they live. Check their lives. By the way, let us check our own.

Now here is an incredible thing, and we give it so little thought: If we are truly Christians, God lives in us by His Spirit. We are the residence of God. And if that truly is the case, surely that should show up in our lives.

Now I want you to notice that it says, 'You' are the temple of God. The 'you' is plural. That means that all Christians together make up the temple of God. But in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, it says, "19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Here we are talking about each Christian's body being the temple of the Holy Spirit. And when you study the OT tabernacle, which is what the word temple, naos, here refers to, there are many likenesses to our body. We don't have time to look at that further but it is a wonderful picture.

From such verses some have concluded that if we defile our bodies, say with smoking or alcohol or drugs, that is defiling the temple of God. The context of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 bears that out. So we may defile the temple of God, which we have become if we are truly believers, by spiritual or physical sins. And we will now see there are very serious warnings for this.

So look at the solemn warning of verse 17. Verse 16 has told us that we are the temple of God. God lives in us, that is in the truly born again believer. This does not include all who profess to be Christians. Now look at the warning in verse 17, "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

The word 'to defile' here is *phtheiro*. The Online Bible says it means to pine or waste away. Here is how the Online Bible explains this word. They say it means to corrupt or destroy and then they give these explanations of that: 1) in the opinion of the Jews, the temple was corrupted or "destroyed" when anyone defiled or in the slightest degree damaged anything in it, or if its guardians neglected their duties 2) to lead away a Christian church from that state of knowledge and holiness in which it ought to abide."

Now we might ask, does this mean if unbelievers cause this to happen to the Church, God will destroy them, or does it speak of believers doing this? Note that it says, 'if anyone'. Anyone who causes this to happen to the Church, believer or unbeliever, leader or layman, God will destroy him. This is a very serious warning.

Anyone that dares to touch the Church, takes his very own eternal destiny in his own hands. This is a very sobering warning. One of the most common ways of destroying the Church is with false teaching, and there has never been a greater day of corruption than our day. I watched a lady speaker the other day teaching some kingdom now theology from the Lord's prayer, and people sit captivated and spell bound, by such preachers, and it is such teaching that destroys. Oh, what a day of sin we live in!

Now we do not have time to go further. But let me remind you how this chapter starts by reading verses 1-4 (read). Now look at how Paul closes this section in verses 18-23 (read).

CONCL: Well, happy birthday Church! The birth of Christ, as to the year cannot be conclusively given. It is generally viewed as happening between 4 and 2 BC. That means in 2026-2028 AD the Church will be 2,000 years old. We are within a decade or so of that. Will the Church continue that long? Well, the Church will continue until the rapture takes place. We read earlier that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

And this morning we have looked at the Church pictured as a building. Church leaders are pictured as the builders and church laymen as the building. And the leaders are warned to be extremely careful how they build on that foundation. The church members are then warned by way of reminder that they are the dwelling place of God. A.W. Tozer wrote a book called, "Man, the Dwelling Place of God." What a thought! That is you and me. How important then how we live our lives. Oh Lord, teach us Your way! Teach us to live right! Teach us to care for our bodies and for Your temple!

And in closing, may I remind us that if we are truly born again, God the Holy Spirit dwells within us. And if you were to assess your own life, from 1-10, how holy do you think you would be? How holy do you think God sees you as being? And if you profess to be a Christian, and you are living in sin, first check out if you ever truly got saved. And second, if you did, repent. Today is the birthday of the Church, and the Church is the holy dwelling of God, and all true believers make up that Church.