

“Ministers Through Whom Ye Believed ...”

“What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed, and each as the Lord gave to him. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one, but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow-workers: ye are God’s husbandry, God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:5-9).

Paul had condemned the party spirit present in Corinth as carnality, childishness. Having asked, *“Who is Apollos or Paul?”* he had shown that they were ministers through whom Corinthians had believed but were, in essence, nothing. They had a different role to fill both of which were needful to brethren, but the success of their labors depended upon God for it is He who giveth the increase. Seed must be planted to germinate; just as it must also be watered. But one can put a dead stick into the ground and water it; all to no avail because there is no life in it. It is God who put life into the seed; He giveth the increase.

“He that planteth and he that watereth are one.” There are two functions brought to bear upon the seed to the designed end to bring one thing about: to cause the seed to sprout and bear fruit. And while one minister may do the initial planting and the second the “follow-up”; their labor is aimed for one thing: to produce a Christian who will attain a crown of life at life’s end. Each of the workers will be rewarded for the part each played in the new life of the Christian.

Now the apostle change pronouns to speak of the ministers (“we”) and the seed which was planted (“ye”). The “we” are Paul and Apollos for while some at Corinth were saying, *“I am of Cephas;”* no New Testament passages ever indicates Peter personally did any teaching in Corinth. No. It was Paul and Apollos who taught Corinthians. Paul had begun the church; Apollos came later and *“helped them much that had believed through grace; for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 18:27b-28).*

Now Paul shifts for the first personal plural pronoun “we” who were God’s fellow-workers; laborers with God to bring about life and fruit in the Corinthians, to the second person pronoun “ye.” Notice how he describes the “ye” (this is very important to one’s understanding of the text). *“Ye are God’s husbandry; God’s building.”* In these two figures Paul looks backward (husbandry) and forward (God’s building).

The word "*husbandry*" means "plowed ground" and applying the figure; Apollos and Paul as God's fellow-workers had planted and watered the seed in God's plowed ground -- the Corinthians.

However, Corinthians were not only God's husbandry; they were God's building. It is this figure of a building that Paul now carries further to amplify upon. Notice these terms in the verses which follow: "*Master-builder;*" "*foundations;*" "*buildeth;*" "*gold;*" "*silver;*" "*costly stone;*" "*wood, hay, stubble*". These words all are words identified with carpentry -- either the one who does the building; the material from which the building is framed, or the building itself, the finished product.

According to the grace of God given him, Paul was the masterbuilder (vs. 10). He did not design the building for the Lord himself did that before the world was (Eph. 3:8-11; Matt. 16:18f). But God's plans were revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit and his warning here to those who built on the foundation he had laid: "*Let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon*" was uttered in light of the fact that no foundation other than Christ could be laid (1 Cor. 3:11). These words are equal in meaning to his well-remembered words to Galatians: "*But though we, or an angel from heaven should preach unto you gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema*" (Gal. 1:6-9).

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