

# **God's Construction Work**

by Marc D. Gibson

There seems to be construction and repair going on everywhere around us. Old buildings are being torn down and replaced with new ones, roads are being constantly widened to handle more traffic, and constant maintenance and repair is required to keep present structures in decent shape. We learn to live with all this activity because it is necessary. God speaks of the church in construction terms. We should take a moment to observe this spiritual activity.

## **Building**

Jesus said that he would build "his church" (Matt. 16:18). The construction material would not be physical materials like stone and wood, but obedient believers in God. To Christians Peter wrote, "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). The church is God's spiritual house to uphold and teach the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is also described as a holy temple: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17). God laid the perfect foundation, Jesus Christ, and those in Christ are the material built upon it (1 Cor. 3:9, 11). The pattern for this building is found in the Scriptures, the word of Christ. A building built from any other pattern will not belong to Jesus. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Ps. 127:1a).

## **Maintenance**

Every structure must be maintained in order to keep it from developing problems that would threaten its existence. All the parts of the building must be kept in good working order. In the church, each Christian is to be functioning in spiritual work. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men .... And let our people learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful" (Tit. 3:8, 14). The church is compared to a physical body where each member does its share for the good of the entire body (1 Cor. 12:14-27; Eph. 4:16).

There may be a need to repair a problem that would threaten the structure of God's house. Those who are spiritual are to restore the one who is "overtaken in any trespass" (Gal. 6:1). When one member of the church at Corinth continued to live in sin, Paul told them to "deliver such a one to Satan .... Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may

be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened” (1 Cor. 5:5, 6-7). Tolerating or overlooking sin and error endangers all who make up the spiritual body of Christ.

### **Tearing Down**

There are certain circumstances when it is necessary to tear down a structure either because it is no longer useful or it is not what was supposed to be built. The church at Ephesus was told to “repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place” (Rev. 2:5). This would be a divine rejection of a structure (local church) that was no longer functioning as it should. Jesus also said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted” (Matt. 15:13). Any church not built after the pattern revealed in the New Testament will be destroyed on the last day, and those who did not obey the will of God will be rejected (Matt. 7:21-23).'

Our Lord has designed and revealed the construction of his spiritual house, the church. We must submit to the will of Jesus who was made “head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). Let the church be exactly what Christ built, and let us faithfully maintain our role as spiritual stones in that house.