

up their own portion of the professing church, and some of them by doctrines and methods of acting of which we cannot approve. But anxious as we must feel to see this building—our portion of the visible church—progressing, let us ever remember that the doctrine of our text holds true with regard to the building of any branch of the visible, equally as with regard to the building of the invisible church. In our endeavours to build the visible church, we must regard as of primary importance its bearing on the interests of the invisible; for the value of any branch of the visible church is in proportion to its fitness for promoting the building of the invisible:—and in proportion to the number and quality of the living stones within it will be, not only the real value, but the strength and permanence also, of the outward professing church. And, therefore, with regard to every part of our work, whether it regards primarily the visible or the invisible church—let us bear in mind that “except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.”

II. From the joint consideration of our work being compared to the building of a house, and of the doctrine of our text, we may learn much in reference to our own duty as builders in and of the house of God.

But this is too wide a field to enter on here. I will not occupy your time by dwelling on the absolute necessity of holding by the true, the *only* foundation—Christ Jesus,—the necessity of holding Him forth as the only foundation stone laid in Zion, in whom whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed; of holding forth the whole word of life,—the truth as it is in Jesus,—the instrument which the Holy Spirit renders effectual for convincing and converting sinners, and for building up believers;—the necessity of ever remembering that success depends on God, and, therefore, the necessity of prayerful waiting upon Him for the blessing which maketh rich.

Two particulars of our duty may be considered more fully, and 1. Diligence is necessary in attending to every part of our duty, and in using all appointed means.

It is true that Paul may plant and Apollos water in vain if God give not the increase;—but if there is to be increase—if fruit is to be reaped, Paul *must* plant, and Apollos *must* water. It is true that, “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it;” but if the

house is to be built, the labourers must work, and that diligently. It is true, God *can* work, not only by *any* means, but *without* means—even against means; but what God *can* do, or *may be put* to do, is not what points out our duty, but what in His revealed will He hath commanded to be done: “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” We must therefore work, and work diligently, in the use of all appointed means, following the example of our Lord and Master himself, who said, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”

While careful to be diligent at some part or other of our work, we should be careful also that no part be neglected; for it is possible for one to be very diligent in attending to one part, while he neglects another, perhaps equally necessary. We know that in a material building, it will not answer to continue raising one part of the wall to the full height, while other parts are left not higher than the foundation, or perhaps without the foundation itself being laid. So in building the church of Christ, no real progress will be made, and no permanent advantage will be obtained by diligence, however great, in one department of the work, if other departments, which we may deem less important, but which the Word of God shews to be necessary parts of the work, be neglected.

Again, if, after a building has been commenced, whatever progress may have been made, the work is intermitted before it is finished, the unfinished fabric is incomparably more liable to decay than a building which is finished; and when the work is recommenced, probably some of what was before *done* must be *undone*. It is so in the case of our work. The spiritual building is as liable to fall into decay as the material, and much more so, if the builders intermit their work, or proceed by fits and starts. The natural corruption of the human heart, (some of which cleaves still even to the most advanced believers),—the world that lieth in wickedness, with its various sources of temptation and trial,—and the craft and power of Satan, will prove far