

## Building up the body of Christ

There is nothing quite like new construction. There can be a unique excitement in a needed building project;

- it holds the promise of critical and practical provision, and also the hope of fulfilled expectations.

Constructing a new building isn't easy – it can be a massive undertaking, almost always requiring significantly more work than could have been foreseen by the builders. (at least that has been my own personal experience)

There have been – and continue to be – some very impressive building projects that men have applied themselves to.

(Egyptian pyramids --- modern skyscrapers, etc)

One of the N.T. metaphors used to describe the church is that of a building.

This is the building project that far overshadows the works of men – it is the household of God.

- God incarnate has committed Himself to this building project  
Mt. 16:18
- Not even the full force of satanic opposition will keep the church from its triumphant completion
- The church of the living God will out-last and out-live all the undertakings of men, no matter how important or impressive they may seem at the time
- We, as individual members share a unique opportunity and responsibility in the edification of the body of Christ      1 Thess. 5:11      Eph. 4:16

How can each of us have a unique and important part in the edification – the building up of the church of the living God?

**First – we need to share a common conviction.**

There are at least three things each of us need to be thoroughly convinced of.

I. We need to be convinced of the necessity of edification in the church.

- The N.T. church exists in a vulnerable position – in the world, but no longer of it (Jn. 17:14-15)
- The evil one (the god of this world) is far stronger than the strongest saint (Jude 1:17-20)
- On top of that, we do not come into the body of Christ as mature Christians – we begin as spiritual babes – we begin in a state of spiritual immaturity – and it requires a significant effort ... a unified corporate effort in bring us to maturity
- Apart from an on-going process of edification, the assembly will succumb to even the least sophisticated of the devil's schemes – it doesn't take much for a local church to become a mess
- Some of the most doctrinally sound assemblies have been completely undermined by a simple failure of most of the members to take edification seriously – even though there may be a number of godly saints in their number
- Notice Paul's understanding of the purpose for which God had given him authority in the church --- II Corinthians 10:8, 12:19, 13:10
- Notice the express purpose for which the Lord Himself has given specific spiritual gifts to godly leaders in the assembly - -- Ephesians 4:11-12

- Notice our God-given individual responsibility in edification (1 Thess. 5:11, Eph. 4:16)
- The statement in Acts 9:31 concerning the condition of the early churches is extremely important “...being built up;...”
- Could there be a greater joy than to be a fully functioning member of the household of God as it is “being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit”?

2. We need to be convinced that Christ is preeminent, in the edification of the New Testament assembly.

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| Matthew 16:18,<br>Colossians 2:7<br>(architect)<br>(stability) | Ephesians 2:20,<br>(foundation) | Ephesians 4:11-16,<br>(life) |
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- There are any number of lesser things – and some of them extremely impressive – that can very easily distract from the preeminence of the Lord Jesus
- There are any number of other ways to produce an appearance of up-building in the assembly, that by their very nature detract from the unique prominence that Jesus alone deserves.

It can be very difficult to keep Christ in His proper place – even in His church. In the flesh we have never experienced any one thing or person that is totally sufficient and satisfying in every circumstance, moment, and aspect of life. So we are very prone to wander in other slightly different directions – in the name of Christ mind you – failing to realize the fullness of our Savior.

- Like Peter, we don't need to take our eyes very far from Jesus, before we start sinking.
- When the church begins to look away from the Lord even a little bit, things will begin to deteriorate very quickly.
- The church transcends the divisions and barriers between peoples, nations, classes, back-grounds, and appearances. The church is the only entity in which you can find the broadest scope of genuine diversity – having no means or need of forcing the members to not only accept, but also genuinely care for one another.

This relationship is unique and superior to all other human relationships, and it is **because of Christ**.

(Galatians 3:26-28)

- We need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus – this requires an on-going intensity.

3. We need to be convinced that the Word of God is the priority in the building up of the church.

Acts 20:32

- The place we give the Word of God in the life of our assembly will be one of the most notable evidences of whether or not we are being built up
- Notice the way Paul puts it here; “the word of His grace”
- It is not enough to give the Bible a prominent place in worship – it is imperative that we are emphasizing and treasuring the fact that the only reason the word of an infinitely holy God is of any real value to us – is because it contains the gospel of the grace of God.
- There is no hope of being built up in the assembly apart

from the word of His grace

**Second** – we need to realize that real up-building is driven by a superior motive.

- It is the motive of love (1 Corinthians 8:1) --- real love! – a genuine desire for the spiritual well-being of our brethren that overrides the love of self.
- This is why when we began looking at our individual responsibilities in the N.T. assembly, we began with humility.
- Self love flaunts knowledge – flaunts personal freedom over the good of others (1 Cor. 10:23-24)
- When we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, we will never be driven by an overriding love for our brethren – and that love is a necessity in edification (Eph. 4:16)
- the superior motive is not the natural motive – the unregenerate are not capable of edifying the N.T. assembly
- but we have been granted a newness of life that allows us to transcend the base tendencies of the flesh – and it is now possible for us to be driven instinctively by a higher motivation
- But if we continue to make provision for the flesh (even though we have been given a new nature in Christ)- the love of self taints our motives and undermines our function as members of Christ's body.

**Third** – we need to practice self-control.

- Edification is primarily accomplished through

communication with one another.(it is not the only way)  
Certainly there is much potential for good with the tongue –  
but also for bad (James 3)

- there are so many things we can spend our precious time talking about that have no building potential
- there are also many things that should never come out of our mouths Ephesians 4:29
- there are also many things that we can do that have potential for building up, or for tearing down  
(Romans 14:19) – we need to be steadfastly focused on the things that edify

because of our close relationship in Christ, everything we do has an impact on the other members

- What is the ultimate cause of our failure to edify? → pride, and impurity!

#### **Fourth – we need to be zealous about edifying each other.**

- edification in the assembly will not just happen as time goes by
- it is not an automatic consequence of sound teaching
- it will require personal and diligent effort, even sacrificial dedication (Romans 15:1-2, Eph. 4:29b)
- it is to be a priority in the life of the body (1 Corinthians 14:12 & 26)
- it is to be focused on the head of the body Ephesians 4:15-16, Colossians 3:14-17