

The Mandate for God's Building

What is God's building?

When we speak of God's building, we are speaking of the church in a particular way. It is simply the church as we are related to one another, as we are fitting together with one another in our experience of Christ. *The building is being related to one another as we are related to Christ.* How we are each related to Christ — how we interact with Him, how we deal with Him, how we let Him deal with us — is how we are related to one another. God, in His desire, has one goal, and that is His building, which is Himself wrought into us corporately so that we are related to one another in Him. We are related to one another in God's building as we are growing up into Christ in all things. The result is that Christ Himself makes His home in us, settles down and lives in us, between us, in our relationships not only locally, but universally with so many saints. This is the building of God.

The building of God is being related to each other as we are related to Christ. The building is not mere natural relationships. It is not merely people of the same color gathered together. Neither is it people of the same background agreeing together. The building is made up of all of us diverse peoples as we are related to Christ. That is why when we were visiting saints in Africa, we were home. It was just like a church meeting here. It was no different. It was the same in Russia, the same in

England. This is because wherever there is the reality of Christ being lived out, then we are properly related to one another. This is the building of God.

The building and our experience of Christ

Our personal experience of Christ issues in our relationships with one another. Thus, to not take care of our relationships in the building is a symptom of a deficiency in our personal experience of Christ. The building is already existing in our spirit (Eph. 2:22). So

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when we touch the realm of the Spirit, we enter into a relationship with one another that is supernatural. The building of God is a supernatural relationship that we have with one another, and that we enjoy with one another. It is not natural. It is not in the old creation. It is not in Greek or Jew, circumcision, barbarian, Scythian. It has nothing to do with that. It has to do with Christ.

So in our experience everything of the world left untouched in our lives, and everything lived out in our flesh — our own thought, our own view, our own concept — anything undealt with, where Christ is not the content and we have not grown up into Him in that area, these are points that will affect our relationships with one another. The building is not just something cheaply thrown together or an assembly of Christians that decide, “We are going to be the church.” It is not that. The building consists only of those who live by another life — Christ. In the building He is all and in all. A fundamental adjustment in our relationships with one another takes place. We see that how we feel about one another and how we are related to one another is directly related to how much the Lord has possessed us in our actual experience.

When Paul speaks of Christ as the Head, it is in the context of the building of His Body, the church. He says that we should “grow up in all things into Him who is the Head — Christ — from whom the whole Body, being fitted and knit together by what every joint supplies . . . causes growth of the Body” (Eph. 4:15-16). By this we see that the building is directly related to our experience of Christ, and that our experience of Christ affects our relationships with one another. The building is Christ settling down to live *in us, with us, through us*, to express Himself *out from us*. The present, eternal heart’s desire of the Triune God is to be totally incorporated into all the members of Christ as a living house, a living habitation (Heb. 3:6). This house is in our relationships one with another. As the church we are being built up. To be built up is simply to be “Christed up.” To be built up is to experience Him. This is the building now. This is the habitation of God between us.

The building and growing up into Christ

In Ephesians 4:15-16 our growing up into Christ causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love. Then look at verse 17: “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord.” When Paul says

“therefore” he is connecting what he is going to say with what he just said. In other words, in the light of this building, in the light of God inhabiting us as His house, if this is to be a reality, you must “no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.” So if you and I as believers are living in a realm called the vanity of our mind — we have had certain thought patterns; we have had certain ways of thinking — if we live in that and walk in that, we are going to find some kind of discordant disturbance within us in our relationships with one another as members of the Body.

Division has taken place over the years. The Body has been divided again and again. Apparently it is due to doctrinal points. Apparently it is due to differences over methods. But actually there cannot be building apart from Christ growing up into all the saints in all things — from the vanity of our mind, to our talking, to our life in every dimension. Paul is saying, “You cannot have this (the building) unless you have that (growing up into Christ).” If we are living a fleshly, worldly life, a life in vanity, there will be no building where God inhabits our relationships and where we are rooted and grounded in love and able to apprehend with all the saints the vast dimensions of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ (Eph. 3:17-19). There will be no way to do that if we are living in the vanity of our mind.

In the church life situations arise, offenses occur, things take place. This is normal. This is as it should be. We meet situations that we are frustrated with, we are unhappy with. This exposes the shortness of our natural life in being able to live the building life. And that is okay too. This is no cause for fear. Nothing can intimidate me, because I can cry, “Abba, Father!” The Builder is within me. And when I say, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” I immediately release the One who says, “I will build.” That means you let Him build and relate you. You let Him do it in you. You cannot do it. I cannot do it. Only He can do it.

If my frustration and my offense does not get touched by the Lord, and I do not grow up into Him in my offense, I do not take the Lord, there is no possibility for Christ to build us together. Maybe, in our thought, to take the Lord means to change the situation — to rectify it so that it will be okay for me. We may think, “If so-and-so would only straighten up, I would be a good Christian.” O Lord Jesus. It is not the other person. It is us. The point is, if you and I do not get touched when things transpire, and we do not experi-

ence Christ in those areas, then there is no possibility for relationships in the Triune God together. This is because the building is not a natural thing. It is a Christ thing. It is Christ in us. It is growing up into Him in all things.

*The building as the extension of
Christ's Person and work*

In Ephesians 4:17 when Paul says, "This I say, therefore," it is immediately following the vision of the building in Ephesians 2—3. In Ephesians 2:13 there is the work of Christ on the cross. We are made near in the blood of Christ. And in verse 14 He Himself is our peace. He has broken down the middle wall of partition. Then verse 15 says, "That He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace." These verses are related to Christ's Person and His work, what He did on the cross. In verse 16 Paul goes on to say, "And that He might reconcile them both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it." We are talking about relationships that have been recreated in the Person and work of Christ. We have all been made parts of Him, and we have been reconciled to God in one Body together, not individually, but as one Body. This vision of the work of Christ on the cross shows that we were integrally involved. Not only were our sins laid upon Him, but everything that divided us was terminated there, and we were created in Himself as one new man, where He is all in all. This is the vision in these few verses.

Then verses 18-19 say, ¹⁸ "For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." And verse 20 says, "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." Now listen to the first part of verse 21: "In whom all the building, being fitted together." Christ Himself is the cornerstone. Matthew 16:16 says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Upon this rock, this cornerstone, Christ will build. Here in Ephesians Paul uses the term "being fitted together." We are fitted together in direct proportion to our interaction with Christ. The more we interact, the more we drink, the more we call deeply, the more we give up ourself, our frustrations, our hurts, our offenses, the more we give it

up and call "Jesus," the more we are fitted together. I guarantee that you will be fitted as you touch the Lord.

How to fit in the building

Sometimes in the church life we have heard the comment, "I don't fit here." That is right. We do not fit here. It is not a matter of fitting, in the sense that somehow we click together. For example, we all play tennis together. We click with a certain group, like in high school. That is not the church. The church is not a social club. It is not a political party. The church is where we enjoy Christ together. And when you experience Christ, you fit. You do not feel like a stranger or a foreigner. But when you are deficient of Christ, you feel like you do not fit. And what happens is that instead of experiencing Christ, you blame the church, or you blame another person, or you blame a situation. Do you see it? It is so simple.

I have been living this life for many years now. And most of these years have been a Christian life. And I have experienced many times the feeling of being on the outside, the feeling of being neglected, the feeling of being left out. All of this through the years was always my deficiency in my experience of Christ. All I needed to do was come back to Him and find that He was my all-sufficiency. Then I fit with anybody. I can fit with all the saints. I can forgive you. I can forget. It does not make any difference. All that matters is Christ between us. This is a precious relationship together in God. Brothers and sisters, we are carrying God around with us. He is between us.

In Ephesians 2:21 we see the vision of this building: "In whom all the building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." Thank God it is growing. How much has He grown in you this week? In your living, how much have you grown up into Him? What about your thought life? Did you grow up into Him? What about your practical living, your time, your money? What about the decisions you made? Did you grow up into Him? As we are growing up into Him, the church is growing, the temple is growing. It is a habitation of God. Verse 22 says, "In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." How utterly awesome it is to look at the Person and work of Christ on the cross, to see the new man being produced, culminating at the end of Ephesians

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The Importance of a Worthy Walk

The following message was given at a high school retreat. Much of the original spoken format has been retained.

God's calling for us is so high and heavenly. It is an upward call. He's called us to His own kingdom and glory, into fellowship with His Son, into His marvelous light. He's called us to sit with Him in heavenly places. We've been called into these wonderful and glorious things. But then we have our practical walk down here on earth. So we have these two things: a call from the heavens and a walk on the earth. And what we want to see is the connection between our call and our walk. And the word that the Bible uses to characterize this connection is "worthy." Paul tells us to have a walk that is worthy of the calling with which we have been called. In other words, our walk is not divorced from our call. There is a definite connection between the two, even to the extent that our walk should be compatible with and worthy of our call.

The Importance of Our Walk

Just think for a moment how the apostle Paul talks about our walk in all of his epistles. If you have ever wondered or been unsure whether or not our Christian walk is important, consider the following verses (italics added).

- "so we too might *walk* in newness of life."
- "in us, who do not *walk* according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."
- "for we *walk* by faith, not by sight."
- "But I say, *walk* by the Spirit."
- "good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should *walk* in them."
- "*walk* in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."
- "that you *walk* no longer just as the Gentiles also *walk*, in the futility of their mind."
- "*Walk* in love."
- "*Walk* as children of light."
- "Therefore be careful how you *walk*."
- "observe those who *walk* according to the pattern you have in us."
- "For many *walk*, of whom I often told you . . . that they are enemies of the cross of Christ."
- "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk* in Him."
- "and in them you also once *walked*, when you were living in them."
- "*Walk* in wisdom toward outsiders."
- "so that you may *walk* in a manner worthy of the God who calls you."
- "how you ought to *walk* and please God, just as you actually do, *walk* that you may excel still more."

Walk! Walk! Walk! Obviously, our walk is not a minor matter to Paul. He placed much emphasis on our walk in his epistles, indicating how very important this was to him. Now, what about the apostle John? Was our walk important to him as well? Consider these verses from his writings:

- "If we *walk* in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins."

- "The one who says he abides in Him ought himself also to *walk* in the same manner as He walked."
- "But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and *walks* in the darkness."
- "I was very glad to find some of your children *walking* in truth."
- "And this is love, that we *walk* according to His commandments . . . just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should *walk*."
- "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children *walking* in the truth."

What can we conclude? Only one conclusion can be drawn, which is that our walk was just as important to John as it was to Paul. He also placed much emphasis on this matter. Finally, we must ask about the apostle Peter. Did he, like Paul and John, consider our walk a matter of great importance? The answer is, of course! However, Peter used a different word in his epistles to talk about our walk. Paul and John usually used the Greek word *περιπατέω* when referring to our walk. But Peter most often used the Greek word *ἀναστροφή*, which is close in meaning to *περιπατέω*, and is often translated "manner of life" or "conduct." Consider these verses from Peter's writings:

- "but like as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all *manner of living*."
- "knowing that you were redeemed . . . from your vain *manner of life*."
- "Keep your *conduct* excellent among the Gentiles."
- "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that . . . they . . . may be won by the *conduct* of their wives, when they observe your chaste *conduct*."
- "they may be put to shame who revile your good *manner of life* in Christ."
- "what sort of people ought you to be in holy *conduct* and godliness!"

The point is this: when God calls us, He's serious. He means business. He's called us to something so high. And His call must be connected to our walk. We must walk worthily of His call. Sometimes the world uses this phrase, "He just doesn't get it." It is used in a derogatory sense to indicate that somebody is rather dull. This person is unable to make the connections. The connection between two things is obvious, but this person cannot see the obvious — "he just doesn't get it." Often in spiritual matters, we are like this. We are spiritually dull and we have difficulty making the connections between our call and our walk. Sometimes we'll hear a wonderful message in the meeting and we sit and nod our head and say "Amen" to the word spoken. We might even give a testimony to support the word. But soon after leaving the meeting, we fail to apply what we heard.

For instance, let's suppose the subject of the message we hear is on our relationships and on keeping the peace of Christ with one another. We enjoy the word and say "Amen." We stand up and give a testimony saying, "Praise the Lord, we can keep the peace between ourselves!" But then after the meeting, we go outside the doors and there's our little sister asking us questions and being a pest. We react and tell her, "Get out of my way!" or "Get lost!" Or we get in an argument over who gets to sit in the front seat of the car on the way home. We don't keep the peace of Christ between us. We haven't made the connections. We are rather dull.

An Example of Not Making the Connection

However, we should not feel too bad. Even the twelve disciples were dull. In fact, at times, they were *really* dull. More often than not, it seems that the twelve failed to make the connection between the Son of God who was with them and their practical daily life. For example, in Mark 8 the Lord fed 4,000 men with seven loaves. On a prior occasion, He had fed 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish. Now, after feeding the 4,000 the Lord got into an encounter with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were trying to test Him saying, “Show us a sign from heaven.” But the Lord was so grieved inside. He sighed deeply in His spirit. Why? Because of the hardness of the Pharisees’ hearts, and because He knew what a problem these Pharisees would be to His Body, the church, after His resurrection. This is what was occupying the Lord.

So with this on His heart, the Lord, with the twelve, got into a boat and started heading across the sea. After departing, the disciples realized that they had forgotten to bring bread and that they were down to one loaf. They had only one loaf in the boat for at least thirteen men. And this is what they became occupied with. They were considering, “What shall we do? We only have one loaf!” They got anxious. They got disquieted. They got worried and bothered. They were occupied with the anxiety of having only one loaf. But the Lord was impervious to all their fretting. He was occupied with something so much higher. He was concerned about the church and the potential effect that the Pharisees could have on the disciples. And so He warned the twelve saying, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod.”

Of course, when the twelve heard this they began to discuss among themselves, “He must be referring to the fact that we have only one loaf.” Why did they think this? Because of what their hearts were occupied with. But the Lord looked at them and said, “No. No. No. You are completely missing My point. You are not making the connection.” Then He put a number of questions to them. He asked them, “When I fed the 5,000, how many loaves did we start out with?” They said, “Five.” “And how many did we end up with when we were done?” They said, “Twelve.” “I just fed 4,000. How many did we start out with?” “Seven.” “How many did you end up with?” “Seven.” “What then are you talking about? Why do you reason and discuss that you have no bread? There are only twelve of you. Do you think that I am unable to feed you? Why is your heart so hard, so dull? Why can’t you see, perceive, or understand? Why can’t you hear Me? I am occupied with much higher things than loaves of bread. I am occupied with My Body, the church! But you are occupied with small, petty things that I can easily take care of. That is why you are so dull and cannot understand Me.”

Making the Connection by Touching Jesus

So even the twelve had trouble making the connection! Isn’t that encouraging? They didn’t know how to apply this Christ to their daily life for their practical needs. And brothers and sisters, like the

twelve disciples, we too need help in this area. So this is the “connection weekend.” We want to connect our walk with our high calling. Now we must see that our spirit is crucial in making this spiritual connection. If you don’t know your spirit, if you haven’t located and discovered your human spirit, that deepest part of your being where Christ lives, then you will have a tough time making consistent connections between your daily life and your high calling. The most important thing for us to know is that we have a spirit. There is a spirit in man and Jesus lives in my spirit. I can contact Him by opening my mouth and calling on His name. I can touch Him. And that’s the whole point of my spirit — to touch Jesus.

Let me ask you, when was the last time you touched the Lord? I do not mean a superficial touch, but a deep touch. It’s possible to just be around Him, even “jostle” Him, but never really touch Him. Let’s turn to two passages: Luke 8:43-48 and Mark 5:24-34. Both of these passages in the Word give the account of the woman who was afflicted with a flow of blood for twelve years. She could not be healed by anyone. She went to physician after physician, spending everything she had. But none could cure her. So what did she do? She said to herself, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.” Thus, she came up behind Him, and touched the fringe of His cloak; and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. And Jesus said, “Who is the one who touched Me?” And while they were all denying it, Peter said, “Master, the multitudes are crowding and pressing upon You.” But Jesus said, “Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.”

This indicates that as the Lord was walking, a large crowd surrounded Him. In fact, He could hardly make it through. They were pressing Him, jostling Him. No doubt, many in the crowd had come out of curiosity. They had heard that Jesus had done many miracles and they wanted to see Him. But this woman was different. As weak as she was, she managed to make her way through the crowd and touch Him by faith. Immediately, the Lord stopped. Not only so — He made the whole crowd stop. Then He turned around, and searching the crowd with His eyes, He said, “Who touched Me?” This is why Peter said, “Touched You? What are You talking about, Lord. There’s an entire crowd here touching You.” The Lord said, “No, no. I don’t mean jostle Me. I mean really touch Me by faith. Who is it that really touched Me? Somebody here did it, because I felt power go out of Me. I could feel grace transmit out of Me. Supply went out of Me. Who touched Me?” This tells us that there is a difference between just being around the Lord, near the Lord, even jostling the Lord, and really touching the Lord. What a danger this is for young people in the church life. We can have godly parents, come to meetings, read our Bible, help in church service, but not really touch Jesus. The whole point of all that we do is to touch Jesus.

The Lord took note of who touched Him. Often, out of a crowd, there are not many who touch Him, really touch Him. There are often not many who by faith just go up and touch the hem of His garment. But when you do, you get His attention. And He’ll say,

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chapter 2 in the building of God. So the building of God is the new man and is the direct extension of Christ's Person and work, of what He has done. The building is where God lives. He lives in us and between us so that our relationships with one another are the expression of God.

The church is not a mere doctrine. It is not just something we saw ten years ago. It is a living reality today. So if we are not in touch with the Lord today in our mind, and we are living by the vanity of our mind, then we just will not fit into the church life. If the church is real on this earth, this is the way it is supposed to be. But if we go to Babylon, if we go to a counterfeit, if we go to the place where we can go on Sunday morning and still live a sinful life, live an independent life, live for our own purpose, and just attend service, we will fit. We will get some hi's and some handshakes. But where is God in the building? Where are there churches on this earth where the very existence of that church life pressures you to Christ? This is the way it should be.

Paul's prayer concerning the building

This is the vision of the apostle Paul. This is why when he ends Ephesians chapter 2 and goes to chapter 3 he says, "For this cause," the cause of the building. "For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles —" Notice the dash here. Paul goes into another matter not directly related to the building. There is a little interval between verses 2 and 14. In verse 14 he continues with the same phrase "For this cause." The cause is related to the building, although Paul has enriched it by the intervening verses which speak about the church as the eternal purpose of God. Then Paul says, "I bow my knees to the Father." "For this cause" — for the cause of relationships together in the Spirit, for the cause of the building, for the cause of God having a place on the earth where His building is actually realized — "For this cause I bow my knees."

When Paul prayed this prayer it was specifically for this vision that goes back to the Lord's Person and work, to God's heart's desire for His building. How can this building happen? It is by this kind of prayer. Verses 15-16 say, ¹⁵ "From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make home in your hearts through faith." Paul is praying for our inner man to be so strengthened that Christ could settle down and make home in our hearts through faith. He has to make home. That means He has

to take over. You have to surrender your weaknesses, surrender your unwillingness, surrender your offenses, surrender your hurts, surrender your misunderstandings, surrender it all. Let Him make home. Let Him settle down, because He is the only One that can live this life.

This is why Paul prayed such a desperate prayer for us to be strengthened into our inner man. You cannot make it in your outer man. You cannot keep it together. You can only keep it together for six months, or a year, or two years. After that, you just can't. You will blow up somewhere. If you are coping, do not cope. Do not hold it in. Process it through Jesus. Tell Him you can't do it. Tell Him there is hate in your heart. Tell Him there is bitterness. Tell Him all. But tell *Him*. Interact with Him. Let Him be everything to you.

Even let Him be the one saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," if you think they do not know what they do. Pray in that way. Let that be your portion of Christ. Then, do you know what? You will fit. You will fit with the saints because you have touched another life. Christ has made home in your heart.

The building in knowledge-surpassing love

And what is the evidence of Christ making home in your heart? It is being "rooted and grounded in love," that you "may be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height" (Eph. 3:17-18). And we have to realize that these are not just the dimensions of Christ in a general way. These are the vast dimensions of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, as we see in the next phrase: "to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (v. 19). So to know that width, that length, that depth, and that height means we are getting stretched and stretched and stretched to know a knowledge-surpassing love of Christ.

This is God's love to us. He did not impute our trespasses to us on the cross. It was knowledge-surpassing love. Thank God it was knowledge-surpassing. He forgave all our sins. We are washed in the blood. In one day He removed all our iniquity, and He did not count it against us anymore. That is knowledge-surpassing. God is not calculating our sins, our history, and our failure and leaving us to contend with that whole scenario that ends in despair. On the cross, everything was laid on Christ. There the love of God was demonstrated, and we were made the righteousness

of God in Him. He removed our filthy garments, as Zechariah 3:4 says, and He clothed us with “rich robes.” This is knowledge-surpassing love.

In the same way that the love of God is knowledge-surpassing in His relationship with us personally, our relationships with one another are to be knowledge-surpassing. We must know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. We are here together in the church life in our imperfect states, in our experiences of finding the Lord after going down ten dead-end streets, and living with someone who goes down ten dead-end streets before they find the Lord. But there is a knowledge-surpassing love. We will never forget dear Sister Nee, Watchman Nee’s sister-in-law. She visited us several years ago. Apparently some felt Sister Nee’s husband was peculiar. He was just peculiar in his deportment, in the way he did things. Yet, in her experience she just said, “That’s okay. I don’t care. Just let him be the way he is. That’s okay.” You could feel the fragrance of Christ from that sister in her relationship with her husband. It was a knowledge-surpassing relationship. This is the building, and this is what Paul is praying for in Ephesians.

After he prays this, he says in verse 20, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” And what Paul has in his heart when he prays this is not outward miracles. That is not in his thought here. What he is praying is this: God is going to go beyond what you can ask or think in your relationships with the saints. For example, when saints offend you or hurt you, because of the power working in you, you are going to climb up the ladder, so to speak, and surmount that offense, that hurt, so that it will not make any difference to you. This is our Christ. He is not a short Christ, a little Christ. He is a big Christ. This is the church.

With this revelation, Paul culminates his prayer in verse 21: “to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.” Then Paul immediately follows with, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” (Eph. 4:1). Then he says, “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (vv. 2-3). Paul brings us into the harmony in the church and keeping what is between us. It is God between us. It is the oneness of the Spirit. It is the oneness of the Triune God that has become our relationships. This is what we keep.

The practical side of the building

Paul continues in chapter 4 to talk more about our oneness, ending in verse 16 with the building. And then he begins to touch the practical side of the building in verse 17. He says, “This I say, therefore.” You have seen this vision. You have seen the building. You have heard the prayer. Now I say this, “that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened.” This refers to the way they perceive things. They are “alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them.” Then Paul talks about how the nations have given themselves over to uncleanness and have no conscious feeling of God’s life. This indicates that if I am in hardness and I do not soften and open to the Softener of my heart, it is not just affecting me personally. When I deny the Lord in my experience, I am directly affecting my capacity to be related to you in the divine love.

This shows us that our experience of Christ is directly related to our relationships with one another. When we open to Him, there is another set of feelings that comes to us. There is another life. It is a longsuffering life. It is a forgiving life. It is a life imparted to our inward parts. This is the building. It is keeping the oneness of the Spirit. Paul is trying to help the saints see how this building happens. You cannot just set up this kind of church. You have to be dealt with in the vanity of your mind. Then he continues in verse 25, “Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.” Paul quoted this verse from Zechariah, a book on God’s building (8:16). If we lie, if we are not a truthful person, if we color things, if we live one life in front of others and another life privately, if we have a double life, if we live a lie, if we are not dealt with by God to be single, to have one life — what we are in public is what we are in private — if we do not deal with God in these areas, it will directly affect our ability to be in the building and to fit.

But if a person has been a liar, a habitual liar, yet God has gotten in, which has happened over the years with various saints, and the Spirit has purified, has caused them to feel, “That’s not accurate, that’s not right, that was a lie” — when God got in and they grew up into Christ in those areas, experiencing Christ in their transparency, in their accuracy, this automatically caused them to fit into the building. But woe to the person who is deceived enough to be living a double life

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and then blames the church or blames another person when something negative happens in the church. What a displacement of the real source of the problem. These are the facts, saints. The building is simple. Just grow up into Christ in all things. I do not mean that in one day we grow up into Him. But as things keep surfacing, as they keep coming up, we have one point of reference — Christ. Christ is everything. We handle Him.

Then Paul says in verses 26-27: ²⁶ “Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath ²⁷ nor give place to the devil.” This indicates that living in anger surely will affect the building. And Paul continues in verse 28, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” In business dealings, do we steal? Do we rob others financially? How are we with money? We must grow up into Christ in all things. Otherwise, we cannot expect to be for the Lord’s purpose and for the building. This building only works with Christ. He is not a slogan, and He is not a term. He is our life. It is through experiencing Christ as our life with one another that the church is built. Paul is trying to connect these two things in the minds of the saints. Look at this big building in Ephesians 1—4:16. Then he adds, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord,” and mentions all the things that apparently are so mean and low, but that are directly related to our relationships with each other.

Then look at verse 29: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary building up, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” Some things that we say may be true, but they do not give grace. Someone said recently, “I am just stating facts.” Yes, you can state facts, but you may be offending love. What if God stated facts about us? What if all the facts about us were on display? There are facts, yes. But do not be a “factious” man, if I may use that term a little differently. After speaking in this way, Paul adds in verses 30-32, ³⁰ “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.” So we can see that all these verses are directly related to the building — to relationships where God is all in all between us. The building is our relationships with one another as we are related to Christ. Ultimately the building of God is a network of relationships in Christ. That is the building. It is Christ’s Person and work embodied and actualized in the relationships of the saints.

— Bill Freeman

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“Who touched Me? Power went out.” So, young people, our spirit is given to us by God in order that we could touch Jesus. That’s why it’s not necessarily a matter of volume, of how loud we are. It’s a matter of depth, of going deeper, because our spirit is our deepest part. Our mind is not our deepest part. Our mind is a shallow part. But our spirit is our deepest part. And our spirit is what God has given to us to touch Him. But to touch Him we need our mouth, and with our mouth we can dig and go deeper until we really touch Him.

Not Stopping Until We Touch Him

An example of this in the New Testament is blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). Bartimaeus didn’t stop until he touched the Lord and let the Lord touch him. That’s how we need to be. Don’t settle for a shallow life. Don’t settle for a superficial life of just being around Christ. Don’t settle for a convenient Christ or a Christ that fits your lifestyle. We all know that we should not settle for the world. But don’t settle for a shallow Christian life either. Be like Bartimaeus, who was desperate to touch Jesus. He was a blind man who was sitting on the road begging. But when he heard that the Lord was coming by, he just began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Those nearby tried to shut him up. “Be quiet. Be reverent. Be reserved. Don’t be so desperate.” But Bartimaeus would not stop. Until he had real contact with the Lord, he would not shut up. Young people, be like Bartimaeus. Don’t stop until you’ve contacted Jesus. Don’t live a shallow life. You’ll never be satisfied. We need to tell the Lord, “I don’t want a shallow life. I don’t want a superficial life. I don’t want to just be around You. I want to be a person that goes deep and will not stop until I touch You in my spirit.”

— Kirk Eland

the **Christian**

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