

## Building Up The Church

The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22,23). Each person is added by God to the church, the body when that person is saved (Acts 2:47; I Cor. 12:18). Therefore, each and every child of God is a member of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27). To build up the church is to build up the members, for the members make up the church. From the chart on the front of this bulletin, note five areas in which we need to be busily building up the church.

The first is the most obvious, each individual child of God must continue to be taught and strengthened in his/her knowledge of the inspired word of God. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The word of God will build us up. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, *which is able to build you up*, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). It would seem obvious that where there are weak members, there is a weak faith, and where there is a weak faith, there is a weak knowledge of God's word. We will never be able to build up the church in any given geographical location, until the individual members take serious their need to study to show themselves approved unto God (II Tim. 2:15) and have their senses exercised (Heb. 5:12-14).

Secondly, we must do all that is in our power to restore the erring. By the erring, we mean those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift (Heb. 6:4), those who "have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ", and "are again entangled therein, and overcome" (II Peter 2:20-22). By restoring that individual, we will be "saving a soul from death" (Ja. 5:19,20). It is our obligation to do so (Gal. 6:1). Some will refuse to come back to the fold, some can be restored. Our job is to warn the erring brother of his sin and of the consequences and it is his responsibility to repent. However, the word of God clearly shows that if we fail to fulfill our responsibility to warn them, their blood will be on our hands (Ezek. 3:17-21; Acts 20:26,27; Acts 18:6).

Thirdly, we are to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24). Those that would be caustic and divisive are a threat to unity (Rom. 16:17,18; Prov. 6:16,19) and a lack of unity breeds disbelief (John 17:20,21). The analogy of the members

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of the church each being as members of a physical body that is presented in I Corinthians chapter twelve, well serves to illustrate how each of us should view our brothers. We are each just a part of the whole, it takes us all working together as a single unity to be successful in our endeavors.

Fourthly, we are to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). The fifth verse of this same chapter says that "every man shall bear his own burden", and certainly this is so. However, no one child of God should ever have to bear his/her burdens alone. We are to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom. 12:15). In answer to Cain's question (Gen. 4:9), Yes, we are our brother's keeper! Their burdens should be considered our burdens (Phil. 2:4; Rom. 15:2). Let our spiritual family be those closest to our hearts (I Pet. 1:22; Rom. 12:10).

Fifthly, the strong "ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 15:1). Occasionally we may need to give up our "rights" for the sake of peace and unity. The apostle Paul serves as a good example of this very point. He said, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (I Cor. 8:9). This does not mean that we are to compromise the truth for the sake of peace and unity, but those things which are neither right or wrong within themselves. The eating of meats was allowed. Sustaining from eating meats was also allowed. Paul would forfeit his freedom to eat meat if it was detrimental to the spiritual welfare of others.

Brethren, the number of members a congregation has is no measuring stick for the strength of that congregation. Many large in number are weak and really need to be built up. Our small numbers certainly do not mean that we can't be strong. However, being small does not guarantee that we are strong either. It would do us well to ever stay on guard and ever work toward the building up of the church. Let us strive to maintain a "family" atmosphere among us. Let us diligently seek to build up each other. Let us labor to learn more and more of God's inspired revelation to man. Let us reach out to those in need, both spiritually and physically and both in the body and those who are not. If we will "always abound in the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58) in these things, we can rest assured we will have a strong church and our labours will not be in vain.

Robert