

JUST ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL?



BY GORDON GREEN

My father loved to build. Apart from constructing three rooms under our house, he also created a wishing well and a cave in our back garden! I remember as a young boy watching him build a high stone wall.

Did you know that *our* Father is also a builder and is in the process of constructing a magnificent building?

The apostle Paul wrote that true Christians are “*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*” (Ephesians 2:20-22)

The apostle Peter described Christians as “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5).

What is this all about? Do you realize that when we become Christians it is as if each one of us is a stone and God takes us individually and begins to place us into the walls of His building? The analogies we can draw from this picture are inspiring.

We must correspond to the foundation.

“...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets...”

Nothing is more important than the foundation of a building. If it is not solid and stable the building will crumble. The foundation of God’s building consists of a special group of people whose teachings are foundational which must be the foundation stone of our lives. Just as an expert builder will build a superstructure to be consistent with the foundation, so we too must “look like” the foundation. If the apostles or prophets could visit us today they should see the same Christian beliefs as their own. Is what you believe biblical? Or are you believing false teachings such as the health, wealth and prosperity gospel? One of our personal values should be “show me where you see that in the Bible.” Let Scripture, not the theories and opinions of others, shape your beliefs and values (Titus 1:9).

The Church is not built on modern ideas (once a foundation has been laid and the walls are being built you can't add on or modify or take away from it), but on the spiritual heritage given to us by the early apostles and prophets. Charles Spurgeon said: "We don't look to the church fathers but to the church grandfathers."

We must be connected to the corner stone.

"...with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together.... And in him you too are being built together..."

A cornerstone is the most important part of the foundation. It helps to hold the building steady and together. Jesus is the cornerstone. The words "in him" mean having a very personal relationship with Jesus. Understanding doctrines is not enough. We are to get close to Jesus, draw near to Him in faith, and in worship. Is Jesus central and number one in our lives?

We must be connected to one another

"... in him you too are being built together"

The stones do not exist separately. They are connected to the corner stone, the foundation, the roof, to other walls – and to one another. They are all harmoniously cemented together and form a part of the magnificent wall. If a large number of stones are removed from a building it will collapse. The relationship of Christians should be as close as the stones in the building. One stone is not a building or even a wall. We were not made for *independence* but for *interdependence*. Are you working together with others to build a beautiful house for God? Mother Teresa said; "You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together, we can do great things."

"Close fellowship with each other is as sacred and vital as our fellowship with God. Our spiritual life depends on it, and the only way of showing men our love for God and the reality of God's love for us is through our love for one another." – Andrew Murray

All the stones in this building are not identical.

"...those parts, despite their multiplicity, constitute one single body" (1 Corinthians 12:12)

Today, bricks are mass-produced and all look the same. Stone walls are different. In a magnificent stone building, such as a beautiful cathedral or palace, the stones are usually not equal in size and shape. Each one is different. Some are big, some are small and some are of medium size.

Christians are not all meant to be the same. God does not want us all to look alike, think alike and act alike. This is a picture of diversity in unity. We are all in the same wall, but we are different. Some of us are quiet and some of us are outgoing. Some of us are task-oriented and others relationship-oriented. We must strive to be Christ-like and grow, but just as our DNA is unique, there is no one else exactly like you or me.

We are not all meant to preach. We are not all meant to be missionaries or pastors, worship leaders or youth leaders. But we have our purpose to fulfill. Some of us are

called to encourage. We can help people tremendously by just listening to them and allowing them to unburden their hearts. A large stone can carry a tremendous weight and yet a smaller one is equally important because it will fit in where nothing else would fit.

Do any of us feel unimportant? We should remember we are a vital stone in God's building

God has a place for each one of us

"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1Corinthians 12:18,27)

God is our master teacher. One of the primary life-changing methods He uses in His Word to teach us Truth is pictures. Pictures illuminate, clarify, leave a lasting imprint - and invite us to think deeply on the intent of the picture. Not only did God tell Noah that He would never flood the earth again but He also painted a beautiful rainbow in the sky. To convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, God used the first ever audio-visual presentation and sent the 10 plagues. Pictures help plant spiritual truth deep in our hearts. Jesus taught in many parables (earthly pictures with heavenly realities) to explain the Kingdom of God.

*"Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with
God."*

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning

As my father was building he would look carefully at the stones in the pile, find one that he felt would fit in next to and on top of another stone and place it into position. If the stone was not the correct fit, he would search for one more suitable. Sometimes it would be a large square stone, other times it would be a small round one. Sometimes he would chisel and hammer it a little until it fit perfectly into place -another analogy to think about! Then he would stand back and if he was satisfied with it, he would put the cement in and start again on another stone.

If you are building with bricks then one is as good as another. But this was different. The old temple in Jerusalem was not built with bricks as we know them! Each stone was individually and personally selected. Christians are not mass produced. God has taken hold of us and has placed us in His wall, one by one. The "smallest" Christian is just as valued by God as the "greatest" Christian, and He sees the exact place for us in the wall.

What a privilege! God has a building project and we are part of it!

But this is not just *any* building! This is a temple - a "holy temple." It "*rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.*" Why is it holy? Because God lives in it. The temple is "*to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*" This is its purpose!

In Old Testament times God "lived" in the tabernacle and later the temple. Today He lives in *us*. Each one of us is a temple, but when joined to others, we become a stone of a temple - which is God's Church. We are the new temple of God. We could say

that we are His home on earth (and we will also be His home in heaven because the building is not yet complete).

God is building. He is the great architect and the one responsible to build us up. Do others see something of this holiness that belongs to God in us? Are we cooperating with God and allowing Him to fit us into His place in His eternal building?

