

The Tabernacle and the Priesthood

The primary burden of this message is to impress us that the priesthood is a matter of building. The priesthood and the building are inseparable...The building and the priesthood are two aspects of one thing. The building as typified by the tabernacle is **God's dwelling**, and the priesthood refers to the assembly, the body, of priests as a corporate, collective entity to **serve God**. The stress in this message is on the building up of the priesthood. To have the genuine priesthood, there must be the building.

The **basic** condition of our service is that we are built up. When, as God's children, we begin to love the Lord, we are stirred up and constrained to serve Him. To be stirred up to serve the Lord is absolutely right and necessary, **but we cannot neglect the matter of being built up**...It is not the exercise of gifts, although that is important. It is not knowledge, edification, perfecting, or being trained to be a proper priest. We need all these things, but none of them is the basic condition of our service. The basic condition is that we be built up. We cannot serve if we are not built up. Do we have this thought? Do we realize that we cannot serve if we are not built up? In fact, if we serve without being part of the built-up spiritual house, there is an inherent danger in our service. There is a danger that our service may become something individualistic and independent in nature.

In Exodus with the tabernacle and later with the temple and throughout the Old Testament, the priesthood and God's house were inseparable. It was not enough for the Levites in the Old Testament to have the correct lineage or to be zealous; they also had to be coordinated and built up with others. When David set up the priesthood in 1 Chron 24, he assigned the priests to divisions.

This shows us that we must serve in a coordinated way. We cannot simply pick up a burden to serve and then begin to serve by ourselves. Someone who serves by himself is a "maverick priest", and a maverick priest can soon become a "renegade priest". There is, however, no such thing in the Old or New Testament. The Bible reveals the opposite. Whenever the Bible mentions the priesthood, it is referring to a coordinated body of serving ones. Today God wants such a corporate body of priests. These priests serve together as one entity in a built-up way. They do not serve in a wild, independent way. Although the Bible reveals that God's children may have different gifts or ministries, there is no individual service in the Old or New Testament. We may be led to something personally, but in the end, we have to realize that we are still part of a corporate entity and must serve as part of that corporate entity.

Life and Building

Life and building are the basic and central revelation of the bible. We must never forget these two important words – life and building. Life and building pervade the entire divine revelation from **Genesis** to **Revelation**. **Genesis** introduces life; immediately after God created man with a spirit, He placed man in front of the tree of life. The Scriptures then present a river that flows out from the center of the garden into four heads to reach the four corners of the earth. The flow of this river issued in three precious materials: gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. Soon after this, God took a rib out of Adam's side and built it into a woman. God *formed* man but He *built* woman. This is a very clear view of life and building. The view at the beginning of the Bible sets the principle for the entire divine revelation in the Bible. Throughout **the Pentateuch** we also see life and building. In the **books of history**, we see more life and building. God is life to His people to be their provision and supply, and the result is a corporate expression. God's people enjoy Him as their life and life supply, and this produces a corporate expression of the Triune God Himself. This corporate expression of God is the building. In the **books of poetry** and in **the Prophets**, life and building abound. This is also true when we come to the **New Testament**. The writings of the apostle **John**, especially his Gospel, reveal life and building. **Paul's epistles** also are filled with the

concept of life and building. He writes about the salvation of life, the growth in life, the transformation by life, and the maturity of life. He also writes a great deal about the building up of the church, the Body of Christ, the house of God and the bride. When Paul wrote about Christ and the church, he was writing about life and building. Finally, the Bible ends with life and building. In **Revelation 22** there is a built-up city. This city has a throne, and out from the throne flows a river of water of life, in which is growing the tree of life. the consummation of the Bible is life and building. Although we may have heard about life and building before, we should never be bored by these two words. Life and building are the basic and central revelation of the Bible.

Apart from the building it is impossible to have the priesthood. Please remember this. You should not run off, saying, "I am going to serve. I have a lot of ideas. I can do it." No. The first thing you need is to be built up. Apart from the building it is impossible to have the priesthood. It is possible to have many priest running around but with no *"-hood,"* no coordination. In such a situation, there is no way for God's service to be practiced. Regardless of how spiritual, gifted, and capable you may be, or how big a member in the Body you may be, you first must be **part** of the building.

We must be built in with the other priests to become one with them. We may be a living stone, but we should not be a separate and individual stone. We have all been regenerated to be living stones. We have a new nature within us. Like Peter, we all have had our names changed to become a stone. However, we need to ask ourselves, "Are we just a pile of stones?" It is possible that our church life is one that is full of stones that are just piled together, that is, with many priests dashing this way and that but all doing their own thing. It is possible that we may have such a church life. the stones are there. The priests are there. However, we may not have the kind of service that God desires. Neither do we have the kind of worship that God needs. The reason for this is that there is no building up. This is very important. It is something very heavy on our heart.

[W]hen we come to Leviticus, we will see that **the priests all ate together**. They had corporate meals. They lived, functioned, coordinated, and served together. They never served individualistically but always in a builded manner. True spirituality is a matter of the building; without the building, the **spiritual house**, there is no sanctification, spirituality, or spiritual power. It is not a spiritual life in an individualistic way but in a corporate way that can fulfill God's heart's desire. God wants a spiritual house for His dwelling, not just spiritual saints. He does not want a singular priest but a holy priesthood, a body of priests, for His service.

Let us consider genuine spirituality. The psalmists in the Old Testament were very spiritual; however, if we read the psalms again, we will see that whenever their experiences were victorious, the source of their power and vitality was **the temple**. Their victory had to do with their relationship to God's house. We need a basic change in our concept. Whenever we consider holiness, spirituality, victory, or power, we need to realize that these are all related to the building.

The only way to be holy, spiritual, or powerful is to be built into God's building. We all need to pray, *"Lord, make me willing to be built into Your building."* The greatest enemy is not sin or the flesh. The greatest enemy is the self. The self is the archenemy of God's building. Building is our rescue and deliverance form our disposition and all our deep, inner problems. Building is our salvation. Let us die to ourselves. Let us stand against and even reject ourselves and allow the Lord to do a work within us to build us with the other saints in to His building. *(Excerpt from The Ministry of the Word, vol. 20, no. 7, July 2016. Ministry Magazine, pp. 125-146)*