

BUILDING UP THE BODY:

GO UP TO THE HILLS, BRING WOOD, AND BUILD MY HOUSE



In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of She-al'ti-el, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: This people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord." Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes.

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build my house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may appear in my glory, says the Lord. You have looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house.

Haggai 1:1-9



The thing those people didn't understand was that their personal destiny was tied to the destiny of the temple, whether they liked it or not

They could live in their paneled houses, but as long as they lived in their panel houses, while that temple still lay there in ruins, their lives and their paneled houses would be empty.

Build the temple.

Raise it up from its ruins.

Transform it into a real house of prayer.

Cause it to be a habitation of God through the Spirit in the midst of his people.

Then their lives too, their individual-personal lives, will begin to enjoy...

the blessing,
the peace,
the healing,
the quickening,
the life of God.

These people had the idea that they could have their own little private contract with God and so avoid the trouble in the work of having to get together and build that temple again. That temple, which had been destroyed some 70 years before and burned.

But as long as that temple lay there in ruins, their personal lives would be empty and barren.

And so Haggai the prophet comes and says as much. He says, "you're never going to have personal revival, any kind of real life, until you first take care of corporate revival, until you get together, become one, and raise that temple once again".

And to us the Prophet Haggai says basically the same thing.

"You want personal revival, you want personal vision, then raise up a true dwelling place for the Spirit of God in your midst, that temple built with living stones.

Contribute something of yourself for the building up, the true building up the Body of Christ and then you yourself will come to life.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22



If there's any message that the Spirit of God has been bringing to our fellowships, if there's any message that can be regarded as coming from the Lord as a way to begin this new year... it's this.... That for those of us who have been called by God to function in the Body of Christ, in our congregations is that our personal destiny is tied much more closely to the destiny of that flock than we have ever dreamed.

Most of us are rugged individualists. We go out there and take care of business on our jobs and in our ministries. And we look upon our assemblies as a check in point, a place where we touch base with each other, worship the Lord, break bread, and then get out there and get to it again.

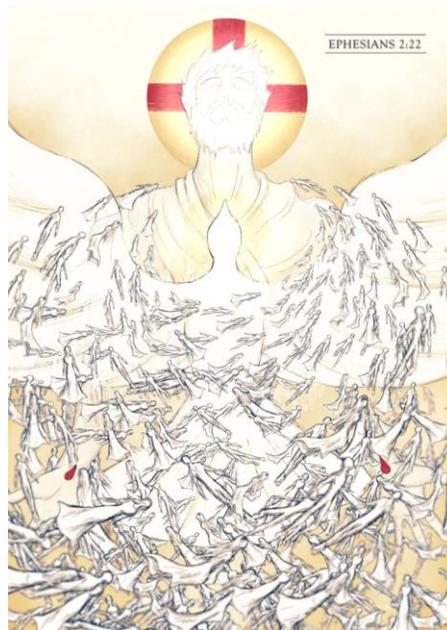
And it's good that we see that the major place for the exercising of our ministries, our serving God, as being outside the walls. But what we haven't understood as clearly as we are now being shown, is that our effectiveness outside the walls, our power to bring good news to the poor, deliverance to the captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed ... is dependent on what goes on among us, what happens in our fellowships, in our relationships with each other.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

Now the dwelling place of God in the Spirit ... *is the Body.*

It's this living temple made of living stones.



It's this organism of which each of us is meant to be a member, a part.

The true dwelling place of the Spirit of God in this world is not the individual believer, the true dwelling place of the Spirit of God on this earth is the body, the unified body.

Now our physical bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit only to the extent that we are in fact joined to the larger body.

Put it another way. If we are individually failing to contribute to the life of the Body, to edify it, to build it up, then we're dreaming if we think we're going to have any kind of healing for the sickness of the world out there.

If our relationships with each other are distant, indifferent, if these relationships are broken by resentments or attitudes, then the Spirit is hindered. Hindered not only when we're in here trying to worship God, but also hindered when we're out there, seeking to proclaim the Kingdom of God and manifest the Kingdom of God in our daily life.

And the truth is that our corporate life, our body life, our life together, this life into which we have all been called to function as members of each other in this body... is in many ways like that temple, that ruined temple, that greeted the people of Judah when they finally came back from captivity in Babylon.

The situation is similar. If we are as busy with our own houses as they were with theirs, while the temple lays in ruins.

And if we're busy with our own houses, taking care of our own lives, and our own affairs, while the body itself is incomplete... then our individual lives are also going to suffer. Maybe you don't think of it as in ruins, but we can agree it's incomplete.

The Body life will never be what it was meant to be until we get our priorities right.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may appear in my glory", says the Lord.

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house. Now we all agree that the one who builds the church is Jesus.

On this rock I will build my church and the gates of death will not prevail against it.

But he builds his church through us. Each of us contributes to the life of the Body, edifies the Body, builds it up.

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build my house

Each of us is called, first of all, to contribute to the life of the Body.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...

Ephesians 4:11-12

And we will be alive and come to the knowledge of the Son of God, and be built up like this, only when each of us sees himself as a gift to the Body. We may not all be apostles, or evangelists, or prophets... but every member of the Body is a gift to the Body.

Each one is ordained by God to convey life to the Body.

We don't gather together primarily to take and receive, but primarily to give...

to give life

And we will give life to the Body when we go up to the hills and bring wood.

That is, when we go up to Calvary and join ourselves to the death of Jesus, allowing his death to work in our mortal flesh, so that the life of the Lord may flow out of us into the Body.

And this is what Paul described. So clearly all through second Corinthians, but particularly in this passage ...

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

2 Corinthians 4:8-12

What was Paul doing? He was going up to the hills and getting wood. He was joining himself to the death of Jesus, allowing the death of the Lord to work in his mortal flesh, to slay it. So that through him life could flow out into the Body.

And when we do the same. when we take the trouble, to die to ourselves enough to take the trouble to pray for our brothers and sisters. When we take the trouble to really go out of our way for them, to really care about them, weep with them, rejoice with them, decrease that they may increase. Take all of their burdens and then humble ourselves enough so that they can also take hold of our burdens. Then we're conveying life to the Body, we're bringing it to life.



Go up to the hills and bring wood and build my house.

Each of us is called by the Lord to minister, or to convey, or to sustain unity in the Body.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:1-3

Now there's only one church worldwide, only one Body. Every assembly of believers is a manifestation, or meant to be a manifestation, of that one Body.

But when walls come up between us, as they do, and have, and when we drift away from each other in indifference, then that unity is marred and destroyed.

On the other hand, when I join myself to the cross and allow the death of the Lord to work in me, I can then approach the Body with something that's going to preserve that unity.

And each of us is responsible to preserve the unity of the Body, to sustain it somehow. If I live under the power of the cross and by that power draw near to my brothers and sisters, with my prayers, with my physical presence, with my encouragement...then I preserve unity.

If, on the one hand, I busy myself with myself, and on the other hand become negative toward everybody else (often when we do the one, we do the other), not only do I suffer, the Body suffers.

Because whether I like it or not, the destiny of my life and the destiny of the Bodies life are tied together.

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build my house.

Each of us is called by God to contribute to the growth of the Body. This is not about numerical. It's not a matter of you know how bulky it is, but whether it has muscle, whether it's able to get the job done in the Body. And each of us is called to contribute to that kind of growth, to growing up, to grow up in the Spirit.

So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:14-16

And so the Body is built up...

when we speak the truth in love to each other,
when we fit in with each other,
when we allow ourselves to be knit together.

So each of us has to ask ourselves...

“Am I really contributing to that kind of growth?
Am I living under the power of the cross in my relationship with my brothers and sisters?
Am I speaking the truth in love?
Is the body in fact being built up through me?”

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build my house.

Each of us is called to contribute to the ministry of the Body

From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

So when every part is working properly, what is the Body doing?

It's doing precisely what Jesus did when he was here in flesh and blood.

Corporately, now, *we together* do what he did....

We bring good news to the poor.
Deliverance to the captives.
Sight to the blind.
Freedom to the oppressed.

And each of us contributes to the Body's ability to do this.

The more we serve each other, the more the Body together will be able to serve the purpose of God out there in the world.

The more we wash each other's feet, the more the body will have the cleansing power of the Lord for the world out there.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build my house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may appear in my glory", says the Lord. You have looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house.

The time has come for all of us, without exception, to repent of our preoccupation with our own house and our own life. And to get on with building a habitation of God in the Spirit.

If we will get serious about going up to the hill and bringing wood and building a house, we will see the glory of the Lord among us, in our fellowships and in our personal private lives as never before.



We ask Lord God that you show us what to do to enable us to bring wood and build your house. That you would help us to be delivered from our fear of becoming to bound up with other people, our fear that it is going to impinge on and limit our freedom. Show us the bondage we are always in, when we try to stay free. Help us to become bond slaves of Jesus and true servants of each other in practical ways.

In the coming year especially, we just look for this and we look for your guidance and help so that we can begin to do this far more effectively than we ever have in the past. Amen. (REB)

Message and Prayer: Richard E. Bieber New Years Day 1984

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