

Preparation in Building

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of purpose, pattern, and preparation in building God's church, highlighting God's love and redemption in involving man in the building process.

Duration: 1:19:51

Scripture: Exodus 25:1, 1 Chronicles 29:2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:18, Romans 12:1-2, Romans 12:4

Topics: "Church Building", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the process of building and presenting vessels for God's purpose. The sermon begins by emphasizing that God had a purpose in mind even before the creation of the world, and that purpose was to satisfy the heart of His beloved Son, Jesus. The speaker then highlights the importance of offering ourselves and everything we have to God for the building of His church, but also acknowledges how the enemy often tempts us to waste what God has given us. The sermon concludes with a call to be transformed by renewing our minds and to recognize that we are all members of one body in Christ.

Transcript

Will you please turn to Exodus, the book of Exodus, chapter 25. We'll begin with the first verse. Exodus 25, verse 1. And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me a heave offering of everyone whose heart prompted him.

Ye shall take my heave offering, and this is the heave offering that ye shall take of them, gold, and silver, and copper, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and vices, and goats' hair, and rams' skins, thy red, and bagers' skins, and acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the incense of fragrant drugs, or next stones and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the vessel plate. And they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shall show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of the utensils thereof, even so shall ye make it.

1 Chronicles, 1 Chronicles, chapter 22. Chronicles, chapter 22, verse 24. No, verse 14.

Verse 14. And behold, in my affliction I have prepared for the house of Jehovah a hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousands talents of silver, and of brass and iron without weight, for it is in abundance. And timber and stone have I prepared, and thou shalt add to it.

And the same book, chapter 29. 1 Chronicles, chapter 29, verse 2. And I have prepared according to all my power for the house of my God, gold for things of gold, and silver for things of silver, and brass for things of brass, and iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood, or next stones and stones to be set, glycerine stones, and of diverse colors, and all manners of precious stones, and white marble in abundance. And moreover, in my affection for the house of my God, I have given of my own property of gold and silver for the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the house of the sanctuary, three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses.

Gold for things of gold, and silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work by the hands of artificers. And who is willing to offer to Jehovah this day? And then we go to the New Testament, Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16, verse 18.

And I also, I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will rebuild my church, and Hades gates shall not prevail against it. And finally, Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12, verse 1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligence service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Verse 4. For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office. Thus we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members one of the other.

Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we want to thank thee because thou art doing a great work. We praise and worship thee because thou dost say, I will build my church.

And we know that thou art building even today. Lord, we just pray that thou will show us thy work. Thou will reveal to us thy work in us and with us.

Draw us into thy great work. And enable us to be of use to thyself. Do deliver us from our own complacency, that we may really yield ourselves to thee and allow thee to finish the great work that thou has been doing through the centuries.

And we want to give thee all the glory. In thy precious name, we pray. Amen.

The one word that we consider together these days is taken from Matthew chapter 16, verse 18. Our Lord Jesus said, You are Peter. On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

So the word is built. We know that our Lord is building, and he is building his own church. And when you think of the word built, you will find at least a few principal ideas.

First of all, if you want to build anything of significance, then you need to have an idea, a purpose, something that you conceived in your thought. You want to build something for some particular purpose. It is not just something that just comes suddenly and disappears also quickly.

Build is something with definite purpose. And then of course, if you want to build anything of value, you just do not try to put things together at random. You need to have a pattern.

A blueprint by which you will build that building. And after you have the pattern, then you prepare for the materials. You gather the manpower, and you decide how long a time you will be willing to spend to finish that work.

And with all the materials and manpower, then you begin to build. So there will be a process, turning the raw materials into finished vessels or finished forms. And finally, after you finish the building, it just does not stand there, but you present it to someone who will occupy and who will use it.

So these are the five ideas that we are sharing together these days. Now in our first morning, we share all this matter of purpose. Here we find before the ages, before God created the heavens and the earth, God already conceived in his heart an idea.

The Bible tells us that he purposed according to the good pleasure of his will. It pleases him to have such an idea. And this idea is purposed in Christ Jesus.

In other words, it is purposed for his beloved son. God so loved his son, that he wanted to satisfy the longing, the heart of his beloved son. So he purposed that purpose.

He wanted to something that would really make his son glad and fully satisfied. And what is the thing that is purposed? The Bible tells us it is the church. So the church is conceived in the heart of God.

And he set that purpose for his son. And that which is purposed is the church, which is to be the bride, the wife of his beloved son. So brothers and sisters, the church is not something insignificant.

The church is something that is of extreme importance to God himself and to his beloved son. And it should be to every one of us. Now on the second day, we share together on this matter of pattern.

Does the church have a pattern? If the church is of such significance and so glorious, can it be that God will build the church without any pattern? Even if we are building something. Now we will not do things just at the moment. We will start to build.

We don't know what we are building, how we are going to build it, but just we do it at the moment. And then maybe the next moment we think of something else and we try to add something to it. Now we'll never do.

What we will do, we will have a blueprint. Everything will be laid down. All the thoughts, all the ideas, all that you desire to have will be put into blueprints.

A pattern is there. And then afterwards you will build according to that pattern. So the question is, does the church have a pattern? Now we mentioned that to many people the church doesn't seem to have a pattern.

We say it is just the product of history. As we go along, as God's people go along, they begin to change according to time and according to need. So in other words, there is no pattern whatsoever.

But actually you will find you are patterned after the world. In other words, the world influences us. So whatever the world is, gradually you'll find the church is conforming to the world.

And that's why you'll find the church becomes an organization. And that organization began to develop into a great corporation. And even you'll find it's developed into a nation above nations.

That is after the pattern of the world. Instead of allowing the world to imitate the church, the church is imitating and following the trend of the world. But we know that the church of God is not built according to the elements of the world.

And some people think that the church just changes according to the ingenuities of man. Man creates the church. So man can form the church according to their own clever ideas.

And that's what you'll find again in Christianity. And some people think that the church should find its pattern from the Old Testament. As in Judaism, you have a definite place of worship.

So today we too have a definite place of worship. We call it the place of worship. Now if you want to worship, you need to go to that place.

But our Lord Jesus in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, the Lord said, the Samaritan woman said, you Jews go to Jerusalem to worship. And we worship at Mount Gerizim. Now where should we worship? And our Lord Jesus said, the time has come.

And now is. Today, people who worship God does not worship in special locations, or at special times. But people, true worshipers, worship him in spirit and in truth.

Now according to the Old Testament, you'll find there's not only a definite place for worship, but there will be a set of rules. The Ten Commandments, and all the statutes, and the ordinances. And by these you worship and you serve God.

So today we find that in any Christian organization, you need to have a creed. And everything will be ruled by that creed. And thirdly, you'll find in the Old Testament, when they worship, they have a certain form of worship.

They have a ritual, a ceremony, that is fixed and elaborate. And by these, you worship. And today, we find the same thing in Christianity.

And finally, you'll find in Judaism, you have the priesthood. A special tribe, a special family, trained to do spiritual works. And all the others are just laity, lay people.

And brothers and sisters, you'll find this is carried on into Christianity. Where can we find a pattern for the Church? Some people say, well, we can find it in the New Testament. And people begin to read the Book of Acts, and find that the Book of Acts, you know, when the Church is formed, you begin to have elders.

And of course, you need deacons, and you need a congregation. So, they approach the building of the Church from a technical viewpoint. But after you have all these things done, do you find the Church of God? No.

So, where can we find a pattern for the Church? Thank God, He does give us a perfect pattern. And that perfect pattern is not technical, is not mechanical, is not organizational. That pattern is a living person.

In other words, it is Christ Himself. It is the living Christ. He becomes the pattern of the living Church.

So, brothers and sisters, the Church is spiritual, is heavenly. It is of life. The more we know Christ, the more the Church grows.

The Church is built. And He alone is the pattern. Now, this morning, we would like to share on the third point, which is preparation.

Whenever you want to build something of greatness, you need to prepare for it. You need to gather the materials that will be needed for the building of that house. And, of course, you also need a manpower.

People will be called together to do the task. And, of course, you need to assign a certain amount of time to complete that work. Now, if this is the way that man will do a good job, how much more will be our God when He is working on something that is so glorious and so eternal? Now, when God built the heavens and the earth, how did He build it? He spoke the Word, and it was done.

Out of nothing, God brought in the heavens and the earth, and all the things in heaven and on earth. He called not building into being. He is God.

That's the way He built the heavens and the earth. But, strangely, you find in the matter of building His house, He used a different strategy. Instead of doing all things by Himself, He involved man in that building.

Instead of calling nothing into something, God began His work with something already there, but unfit for His work. And yet, He picked up these unfit materials and turned it into materials suitable for His building. In other words, in the building of the house, He involved man.

So far as God is concerned, this involvement gave Him lots of troubles. It would be much easier if He would call nothing and call it into something. But we do not know why.

Why pleased God that in the making, in the building of His house, He decided that He would involve man in the work. He will work with man. He will work in man.

Brothers and sisters, why? It seems to be beyond our understanding. The only thing that we can think of is because of His love. Out of His love, He wants to do something very special.

And in spite of the fact that He knows the end from the beginning, He knows what will be involved. He knows what hardship will be involved. He knows what cost He has to pay because He involved man.

And yet, for love's sake, He was willing. So, dear brothers and sisters, when you think of the building of the house of God, it really humbles us. In the Old Testament time, after God had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, He brought them to Mount Sinai.

And then He declared, why did He deliver them? He wanted to make them His own people, a people of His possession. Out of all the nations, He made this people, redeemed, delivered, to be His own possession. He gave them His law.

And by keeping the law, He will make them, as it were, to be His real people. And on that basis, He declared to them that He wanted to dwell among them. He wanted to be with them.

Build me a sanctuary that I may dwell among you. Now, this is the purpose of God in delivering this people to Himself. God wants to dwell among His people.

God can easily send down from heaven a dwelling place, a sanctuary. But instead of that, God said, you, my redeemed people, build me a sanctuary. So, He said, tell the children of Israel, offer me a chief

offering.

Chief offering simply means love offering. Everyone whose heart is prompted by God, by the Spirit of God, voluntarily, willingly, give me a love offering of all kinds of materials for the building of the sanctuary. Brothers and sisters, we know that the children of Israel, they were slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years.

As slaves, they owned nothing. They do not even own their own body. They had no right of any kind.

Nothing. But you know, when God appeared to Moses and said, you go and deliver my people out of Egypt, and when you come out, let everyone ask their neighbors, their Egyptian neighbors, for gold, silver, and clothing. So, you find that when God delivered the children of Israel, He not only delivered the people.

You know, in the beginning, Pharaoh was not willing. And then He said, let the men go, but the women and children remain in Egypt. But Moses said, no, all must go.

All right, you go, but all your cattle and all the animals remain here. Moses said, no, we have to bring them out, because we do not know what will God require of us for sacrifice. So, brothers and sisters, when the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, not only the entire population, every family, every member of the family, the old and the young, the man and the woman, all the people were delivered.

But more than that, God permitted the children of Israel to ask of their neighbors. You know, even the Egyptians, some Egyptians living in the Hebrew houses, homes. Ask your neighbors for gold and silver and clothing.

And the Bible said, when they did it, they spoiled the Egyptians. Now, Egypt at that time was the greatest nation in the world. It was rich.

But think of that, when the children of Israel came out, they spoiled the Egyptians. All the riches of Egypt became theirs. Now, in one sense, our God is righteous.

You know, they made the Hebrews work without wages for hundreds of years. So, God said, these will be their wages. But more than that, all these are given to them abundantly by God himself.

They own nothing. Even their bodies do not belong to them. Everything was redeemed by God.

Everything was given by God. So, when they came out of Egypt, they were the richest people in the world. Now, think of that.

Now, that's only a type. When you come to the reality, when you come to us, this is the very way that God has redeemed us. Not only we are redeemed, but all connected with us are redeemed.

As our brother has been speaking, into the fullness of Christ. That's how we came out. And then, God said, give me a love offering.

Out of what I have given you, give your willing. Now, in case you are not willing, you can keep them. But that will be your disaster.

Whoever's heart is prompted by love, by God, by the love of God, by the Spirit, offer a heave offering to the Lord. This will be the material for the building of the tabernacle. But brothers and sisters, the enemy of God, Satan, knew it too.

So, you'll find when Moses went to the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, the two tablets, the children of Israel on the plain said, we do not know what happened to Moses. Make us a God to lead us. And Aaron said, give me all the gold rings on your ears.

So, he melt the gold and he molded it into a golden calf. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said, this is God. This is our God.

And Aaron immediately, well, let us proclaim a feast unto Jehovah. Brothers and sisters, when Moses came down from the mountain, he saw what was going on. He smashed the two tablets of law.

In other words, before the law reached them, they already had broken it. And then he melted the golden calf, make it into fine bits, poured on the river, and asked the children of Israel to drink it. In other words, they drank their own sin.

But, before God could get to the gold, the enemy got it first. Now, isn't it true with us today? We who are redeemed of the Lord, everything belongs to God. We do not belong to ourselves.

And yet, brothers and sisters, what God has given us, whatever it may be, instead of offering to God as a love offering for the building of his house, of his church, how the enemy came in, tempted us, and took away that which belonged to God. As we look back, I believe every one of us will realize how we wasted what God has so graciously given to us into something that is against God, instead of for his purpose. I believe everyone, when he or she is enlightened by the Spirit of God, we will look back and realize how much that belongs to God in us has been wasted into something against him.

But thank God he is gracious. With the pleading of Moses, God forgave them. And thank God he did not change his mind.

Thank God he has given them so much that they are still gold and silver and plenty, abundant things for the building of the tabernacle. So finally you'll find, after Moses pleaded with God and came down, God said, let the people whose heart are touched and prompted offer he for free. God gave them a second chance.

And when you read from chapter 35 on, you will find how they came and offer and offer and offer until they had to be stopped. That is the grace of God. And brothers and sisters, that ought to be our condition, our situation.

Are we like that? We have wasted so much of God that has entrusted to us for his purpose, but we have wasted them in many other things. And when God by his mercy gives us another chance, what will be our response? Could we withhold from him? Then you'll find the same thing happened in the building of the temple. We mentioned yesterday that David had the heart, because he knows the heart of God, to build God a permanent temple.

He was now not allowed to do it because he was a man of war. He shed too much blood. The house of God represents peace.

It would be a misrepresentation if he built it. But still, you'll find God not only gave him the pattern of the temple, but hear what David said. In 1 Chronicles chapter 22, he said, in my affliction I gathered, prepared materials for the building of God's house.

Now I wonder, what does he mean by in my affliction? Probably he refers to the many wars that he had to fight. And the Bible said, whenever he fought a war and he overcame, he separated the spoil for God. In his affliction, he prepared thousands of gold, of silver, of iron, of copper, of materials for the building of God's house.

And then again you'll find in 1 Chronicles chapter 29, he said, I prepare for the house of God with all my power. Whatever is within my power, I will prepare the material for it. And then in the third verse, he said, in my affliction for the house of God.

He loved the house of God. And for my affliction, over and above all that he had prepared, out of his own, he offered the best gold, the most refined silver, everything of the best. And then he called the people and said, offer as God moves you.

And how the leaders, how the people, they came and offered willingly. And because they can offer willingly, they were glad. And David praised God.

For she said, everything's yours, but you make us a willing people to willingly give for the building of the temple. Now that is what you'll find in the building of the temple, the materials. Now brothers and sisters, in the building of the temple and the building of the tabernacle, these are just types.

They are temporary. They are shadows. They came and they went.

What is the reality? The real thing that our Lord is building is his church. It's permanent. It's forever, eternal.

Now where comes the material? Now for this we have to go back to the very beginning. We remember when God said to Adam, it is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helpmate, his like.

And with that idea in God for Adam, he began to work. Where could he find a material for the woman? He couldn't find it in a gorilla. He couldn't find it in any animal.

The only material he could get must come from Adam. So the Bible tells us that God put Adam to sleep and God opened his sight. That is the first surgery for man.

But it is a painless surgery. Why painless? Because there was no sin in the world. God opened his sight and took out something.

In the original it is not a rib. It is something of Adam. Being taken out of Adam.

And God used that something out of Adam and build it into the woman. Now this is a type. When we come to the reality, brothers and sisters, where could our Lord find the material for the building of the church? We mentioned already two thousand years ago he came to this world.

Why did he come? He came as a bridegroom seeking for his bride. But out of the countless number of people, even among the chosen people, he couldn't find his bride. And because of this, God had to do some surgery.

We remember that our Lord Jesus, he came to die. He came to go to the cross. Why? Why must he go to the cross? You know when he is here with his disciples that he must go and he will be killed.

Immediately you find Peter took hold of him, shook him up and said, Lord, never. You don't need that. You can have the world without the cross.

And our Lord turned around and said, Satan, get behind me. Because you're a mindful man, not of God. If anyone want to follow me, take up his cross and follow me.

Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus came to die. Why? Why? And on the cross he died. Then you find the soldiers came.

They wanted to make sure. And they found they broke the legs of the two robbers, because these two robbers were still alive. So by breaking their legs, speeded them to death.

But when they came to the Lord, he was already dead. A man of sorrow acquainted with griefs. He was not like a man when he was on the cross.

So the soldier to make sure that he died thrust a spear into his side. Brothers and sisters, the death of our Lord Jesus on the cross is the most painful death. Not only physically, mentally, spiritually.

Even our Lord cried out, My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me? In other words, our Lord Jesus tasted the very taste of the eternal death. Separated from the Father. Painful, most painful death.

Why? Because there was blood, sin in the world. And out of the spear, the Bible says, came out blood and water. That is the last drop of the blood from his heart.

We are told that when the heart is broken, the blood began to disintegrate. So he came out as blood and water. And John was there.

He saw it. In John chapter 19, 34 and further by, he said, I saw it. I witnessed.

Blood and water came out. And my witness is true. Now, why? Why did he emphasize so strongly on this? Because here God put Christ to death.

The Father crushed him. And out of his side, taking something out of him, blood for the remission of our sins. Water, his life, pour out for us.

Brothers and sisters, this is the material for the building of the church. No man in the world is fit to be material for the house of God. When God created man in his image, according to his likeness, he had that thought in view.

He wanted man to be that material. If only a man will eat the tree of life instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But unfortunately, man rejected God's life and would rather have knowledge in himself.

Man declared independence against God. Wanted to be God themselves. Totally unfit for the building of the house.

Nicodemus, the best of men, came to the Lord, thinking that he was not far from the kingdom of God. He needed some more teaching, some more instruction, get us some more knowledge. But our Lord said, truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

The Samaritan woman, sinful, having five husbands and a sixth one, she was not fit for the building of the house. No one in the world, naturally, is fit to be material for God. You remember, when our Lord was rejected by his people, he retreated to the border of Caesarea Philippi.

There he asked his disciples, whom do men say that I am? He was not satisfied with the answer. So he said, whom do you say I, the Son of Man, am? And Simon Peter said, you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And our Lord Jesus said, Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed, because this is the something that flesh and blood can tell you.

It is my Father in heaven reveals the Son to you. And the Lord said, I also say to you, you are Peter. On this rock I will build my church.

Brothers and sisters, Simon, the natural man, the man of the earth, the man of sin, of the flesh, totally unfit to be material for the building of the church. Something God has to do in this man, to change him. So when he, by the revelation of the Father, of the Son, recognized that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in that confession, something happened to that person.

Simon, you are blessed. Now you are Peter, a stone. A living stone.

Heavenly, spiritual, eternal life. Brothers and sisters, here you find the Lord said, you are Peter. Now you are to be the material for the building of the church.

As Simon, you are totally unfit. But now God has done something in you. It is a new creation now.

A new life is given to you. You become a stone now. A living stone.

And now I can take you and build into my church. Brothers and sisters, do you really see this? God does something more than calling you. Something out of nothing.

God does something even more. Something that is completely ruined. Something that is totally unfit.

Something that is opposite to everything that God wants. And yet, God does something in that person. Putting in him something new.

A new life. Anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. A new life is put into him.

Become Peter, a stone. And that is the material for the house of God. Our Lord himself is the rock.

The massive rock. And we who believe in him, we are all Peters, small stones. But having the same life.

So Peter understood it very well. You remember in 1 Peter chapter 2, he said, Our Lord Jesus is a living stone. But as we come to him, we all become living stones.

Built up together into a spiritual house. A holy priesthood of our spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Now that is the material for the building of the house.

Our Lord creates his own material for the building of the house. Anything that is of the old creation is unfit. Everything must come from that new creation.

And brothers and sisters throughout the centuries, he is calling a people out of every nation, every tribe, every tongue, every people. And he gathers them together and builds them together into the living church

of God. Now when you have the material, but you do not have the workmen, the material just lies there and cannot become a building.

So you find that not only in the preparation work of the building of the church, you find not only that our Lord, he prepared the materials, you and me. Thank God for that. You know we should be cast away.

You know like a porter, when he was putting the clay on that machine, rolling, and it's broken in his hand, and he just cast it off. No, he took it and made it a new vessel out of it. Now that's what happened to us.

We are cast away, but now God in his mercy take us up, remake us, give us a new life, and that new life in us become the material for the building of the church. But where are the workers? Now in one sense, no one can build a church except God. In Matthew chapter 16, the Lord said, I will build my church.

In Hebrews chapter 11 verse 10, God is the builder of New Jerusalem, the city with foundation. In Psalm 127 verse 1, unless Jehovah build the house, in vain the builders labor. So in one sense, the building of the church is exclusively the work of God himself.

We are not fit, because this is a creative work, and God is the creator. So it is beyond us, but brothers and sisters, in another sense, when he is building the house, he build in us, and with us, and out of us. So here you'll find in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, the apostle Paul said, I am a wise master builder, but strictly speaking, he was a wise foreman, and he laid the foundations.

And we, all of us, the Corinthian believers, and all who believe in the Lord Jesus, we are all working in this building. Now, how do we work? The building of the church is not given to a few of God's people. In Ephesians chapter 4, it is true that for the building of the church, the ascended Lord gave to the church, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, perfecting the saints.

So the saints will all begin to function and work in this building up of the body of Christ, in love. So everyone is involved. The universal priesthood of believers, all believers are servants of the Lord.

All believers are working in this work. Now, how do we work? If we work with gold, silver, and precious stones, or we work with wood, straw, and stubble. Now, what does it mean? It simply means this.

You build with gold, silver, and precious stones, what is gold? Gold represents the nature of God. God's nature is like gold, indestructible, incorruptible, glorious. So that's why in the Bible, when the glory of the Lord appears, you know, for instance, like Ezekiel, he saw the vision of the glory of the Lord, and he saw someone like gold, radiant gold, the nature of God.

Silver, used for redemption, the redemption of our Lord Jesus. Precious stones, the work of the Holy Spirit, with patience, with pressure, with darkness, with heat, precious stones are formed. When we work with the gold, silver, and precious stone, what does it mean? It simply means that we allow God to work the gold, and silver, and precious stone in us.

So outwardly, we are building with gold, silver, and precious stone. Actually, it is God himself who is working in us, turning us into gold, and silver, and precious stones. So it is God working.

All we do is allow him to work, cooperating with him, yielding to him, so that his nature, his divine nature, character, may be built up in us. All the goodness of his redemption will be formed in us, and the work of

the Holy Spirit in our lives, with pressure, with darkness, with heat, with long period of time, transforming us, changing us from glory to glory, as by the Lord, the Spirit. Brothers and sisters, working is actually allowed him to work in us with these things.

And these fit for the house of God, because they came from God. Now if we work with wood, grass, stone, straw, what will happen? Wood represents man, our natural man, like wood, corruptible. Straw represents the work of man, because you remember the Egyptians made the Israelites to make bricks with mud and straw.

The work of man, stubble, the glory of man. Brothers and sisters, if we refuse to cooperate with God, to let the Spirit of God work in our lives, taking away from us all that is woody, and straw, and grass, and rebuild in us what is of God, what is of Christ, what is of the Holy Spirit, then they will exist at the judgment seat of Christ, when fire will test them. But if today, after we believe in the Lord Jesus, and we are still living our natural life, doing work according to our natural strength, and seeking man's glory instead of God's glory, brothers and sisters, outwardly, you may make a big building with wood, straw, and grass, grass, and very cheap.

Everybody will see it as, oh, what a big building it is. But when fire appears, they are fit for fire. But thank God the foundation can never be burned.

Gold, silver, and precious stones are costly. It costs you something. It costs you everything.

Are you willing? Because He calls us to work with Him, as if we are working, but actually, it is He who works in us. Thank God for that. And then finally, what is the time that He has apportioned for the building of the church? When the tabernacle was built, it was built less than a year.

When the temple was built, it was built seven years. But in the building of the church, how long does it take? When our Lord was on earth, He said, I will build my church. At Pentecost, the building begins, and He is still building.

He is still building His church. What a magnificent building that is. How glorious that must be.

And brothers and sisters, He involves even us. You are deeply involved in the building of the church, whether you know it or not, because He has called you. Now, how much are you really involved in that building? How much that you build will be burned? A waste of your lifetime.

And how much, by the grace of God, that is built in, fit for the dwelling of God Himself. Oh, brothers and sisters, it is so glorious, but it is very serious. You cannot play the church.

May God build His church. Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee, because Thou dost say, on this rock, I will build my church. We praise and worship Thee, because Thou hast changed us, given us a new life.

And with that life You gave to us, You build Your church. We pray that we may not be so negligent as to think that we can hold on to what Thou hast given to us for our own sake. But Lord, Thou hast every right to claim all of us, but Thou wilt not.

Thou wilt rather beseech us, by the mercy of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God. This is our reasonable service. Oh, Lord, we pray that Thou wilt take us in Thy own

hand, mold and fashion us, work in us, until we are built into that wonderful building, the house of God.

We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

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