



Spiritual Building

A sermon preached at Philip Street Baptist Chapel, Bedminster, Bristol on Sunday morning 12 November 1893 by Mr George Müller

'But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith' – Epistle of Jude v 20.

In reading this short epistle of Jude, we learn that while yet one or other of the apostles was living, a great departure from the truth, and conformity to the mind of Christ, has already begun in the Church of God, and thus ever since, more or less, it has been; yea, and at certain times an awful darkness and great departure from the truth and godliness have been found in the Church of God, but, on the other hand, there have been also in the darkest days some truly godly ones, holding fast the truth as it is in Jesus, and seeking to tread in the footsteps of their divine Master. Now, beloved in Christ, our holy, godly aim and purpose should be this, and our earnest prayer to God that we may be strengthened for this; that we belong to the little company holding fast the truths as to a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour, and seeking more and more to be minded like Christ, dead to all that which is sinful and hateful to God in the world, and alive to all that pleases Him and is agreeable to his mind.

Our text shows us how it should be with us 'But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.' It is on these words that I desire particularly to speak this morning. The figure used here we are all familiar with. It is taken from the erection of a building. According to the size of the building, whether it is high and large, so the foundation is laid – the foundation deep and broad, according to the size and height of the building.

Now we all know what this signifies. The Apostle Paul tells us plainly no other foundation can be laid but Jesus Christ. What does this mean? That we cannot save ourselves, that our fellow-men cannot save us – that none but the Lord Jesus saves us, and can save us. Then how is this brought about? We have to own before God that we are sinners, and that we deserve nothing but punishment. We have to confess this openly before God, and then put our whole trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls – that is, trusting alone in the righteousness which He wrought out for poor sinners in fulfilling in their room and stead the law of God, which we had broken times without number, by our deeds, our words, and by our thoughts, and put our whole trust in His perfect obedience unto death, the death of the cross, because when that Blessed One hung on the cross, when He shed His blood, it was for the remission of our sins. While He hung on the cross He made atonement for every one of our sinful deeds, unholy words, ungodly thoughts, desires, purposes and inclinations and thus the wrath of God, the holiness of God, and the justice of God were satisfied. When He fulfilled the law, and stood in our room, He satisfied the holiness of God. When he bore the punishment while hanging on the cross in our room, He satisfied the justice of God, and every poor sinner trusting in Him alone for the salvation of the soul shall be forgiven. Before going to our second part of the subject, I ask everyone of my beloved friends here present, "Have you ever been convinced that you are sinners needing a saviour?" If not, ask God to have mercy on you, and to show you this. When you are convinced that you are sinners, have you confessed it before God? Have you humbled yourselves before God? Have you condemned yourselves, and passed sentence on yourselves before God? If not, ask God to help you do so. But all this, while it is beginning in the right way is not all.

The great point is to put our sole trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, for we can do nothing whatever in the matter of our salvation – the blessed Lord Jesus did it all. He finished the work for poor, guilty,

hell-deserving sinners, as I am, and every one of you are. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the law of God, and bore the punishment which that law demands should be inflicted on account of transgression. Either we must bear the punishment ourselves, or we must obtain a substitute. The blessed Lord Jesus voluntarily gave Himself to be our substitute, and if you put your trust in Him alone for salvation, God looks upon you as having fulfilled the law. This is the righteousness wrought out by the Lord Jesus, in our room and stead, for the greatest, the oldest, and the vilest of sinners, for if you put your trust in Him you have the substitute, Who, in your room, bore the punishment for you. How blessed to have a friend in Jesus! Do you enjoy the knowledge of the sweetness of this happiness? Without it, there is no lasting peace. The knowledge of forgiveness of sins is to be had while we are in the body. We are not to wait for it until the body is at an end. We can have it while we are alive. We should earnestly seek for it while we live. I have enjoyed for sixty-eight years the knowledge of the forgiveness of my sins, and, by the grace of God, I have not had a single minute's doubt whether my sins are forgiven or not; although a wretched, helpless sinner, all my sins are forgiven, and what God has done for me, a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, He is willing to do to everyone who seeks it in God's appointed way. Thus, owning we are sinners, and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, everyone who has done so is on the right foundation.

You all know that if a house is built, he who builds it does not simply lay the foundation, but there follows the superstructure, and adding stone to stone, and one piece of timber to another afterwards. Thus it is in the divine life. It is right to lay the proper foundation, but this is not all. Almost all persons, after they are converted, are left here for a season. Comparatively few only are in the position of the dying thief – there was nothing in him but trust in the Lord Jesus. That was the foundation laid, and the Lord Jesus said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." But almost all persons, when they are brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, are left in the world for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with Him, and that they may see more of the vanity of this world, and the reality of heavenly things; and especially that they may bear fruit to the honour and glory of God, that they manifest the mind of Christ, that they seek to win souls to Christ, and do their part in helping the people of God both in spiritual and temporal things. For these reasons, being left here in the world, we have to seek to make progress in the divine life, and, as the text expresses it "to build yourselves up on your most holy faith."

Before coming to this second part of our subject, I make one remark. You note it is "building up yourselves". Naturally, we should expect it to be said, "Let your pastors build you up; let your elders, let the deacons, let the aged, experienced Christians build you up on your most holy faith."

"Building up yourselves." The responsibility is laid upon every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he do his part to make progress in the divine life.

Now, the great question before us is, "How is this to be done? How can we build up ourselves on our most holy faith?" Of all the Scriptures, the most blessed, precious answer to this question we find in 2 Peter 1, to which we will now turn. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." Notice here, the apostles and every believer had the same kind of faith. The apostles had not one kind of faith, and other believers another kind of faith.

In the fifth verse we read, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your FAITH, VIRTUE; and to VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE," etc. Now, here we get the catalogue of what we have to do in these

following verses – to build up ourselves in our most holy faith. If we have trust in Jesus Christ, faith in Him, the foundation is laid. Now, the next point at which we have to aim – and regarding which we have to “give all diligence,” not in a slothful way, but in “all diligence” – is to add to FAITH, VIRTUE.

What have we to understand by this? The 4th chapter of Philippians, 8th verse, gives us the answer. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Here we see what is the first thing for any child of God, for any person brought to Jesus, where the right foundation has been laid regarding the salvation of the soul, is in order that he may be able to build up himself on his most holy faith, to aim at everything that is lovely, and bright, and pleasing in the sight of God, which implies that we avoid everything which is contrary to the mind of God – “if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Now, as we are weak in ourselves, it becomes us to call upon God to help us to attain to this. To our “VIRTUE” we are to seek to add “KNOWLEDGE”. The knowledge referred to here is not the knowledge of the things and affairs of this life. I do not despise knowledge concerning the ordinary things of this life, in reference to science or languages, which may be profitable to this life, and may be useful and proper. While I allow this, it is not the kind of knowledge referred to here, but spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the knowledge of the vanity of this world, and of the reality of heavenly things; the knowledge which God has given to us in the Revelation which He has been pleased to make of Himself in the Holy Scriptures. It means, carefully to read the Scriptures, diligently to read the Scriptures, with prayer to read the Scriptures, and to meditate on the Word of God. Now let me ask my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, is this your habit? Are you habitually reading the Scriptures? There is great danger, through the multiplicity of matters, that we neglect the Word of God. There is great temptation lest through the multiplicity of books which are issued year after year from the press, we neglect the Holy Scriptures.

What will be the result of this? We shall injure ourselves spiritually, we shall not make progress in the divine life except we give ourselves CAREFULLY, HABITUALLY, DILIGENTLY, and WITH MEDITATION, to the reading of the Holy Scriptures. It is these means which God has specially used, and does use, for the advancement in divine life. Now as I love you, my beloved friends in Christ, and as I am come here for the purpose of leaving a blessing behind, with God’s blessing, I affectionately ask you if you are lovers of the Word of God. Ask yourselves in the presence of God, “Am I a lover of the Word of God?”

For the first twenty years of my life I was not a lover of the Word of God. I neglected the Word of God. From the time when I was fourteen and a half years old until I was twenty years and five weeks old, I never read the Word of God. Then it pleased God to show me that I was a sinner, and needed a Saviour, and I saw how to put my trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation. Then I took to reading the Word of God, and I read it every day. I cannot say I was a real lover of the Word of God, but in July, 1829, four years after my conversion, I became a lover of the Word of God, and it is a great delight to me to have the Word of God. I cannot tell you what a blessing it is to my soul. Blessed as I have been for fifty-eight years with work, my habit is first of all to have a good meal for my soul. I come to the Word of God, I read it, I pray over it, I meditate on it, and I apply it to myself. How does this comfort you? How does it exhort you? How does it warn you? How does it reprove you? Thus I read the Scriptures, and get a blessing to my soul, and then I go to work with all my might, with

earnestness, but I do not go to my work until I first have a good meal for my soul. And what has been the consequence? I am a healthy man, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. I have now entered my eighty-ninth year. I am not cold, and dull, and lifeless, spiritually; I am a healthy man, spiritually, and the great instrument that has been used by God for this is the Word of God, which I read with delight and joy, and which I would my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ do the same. They would find the healthfulness I have had, and the continued happiness I have had, year after year, and which I have now had for sixty-eight years. There is nothing to hinder you from being happy children of God, when carefully, habitually, diligently, you read the Word of God. Now, after we have added KNOWLEDGE to VIRTUE, it is said, “and to KNOWLEDGE add TEMPERANCE.” This does not mean merely to avoid excess in eating and drinking; all this is implied; but it means more than this. It means self-control, that is, to seek to keep more and more under, all our natural, evil tendencies, such as passion, envy, pride, the love of money, the love of dress, the love of worldly pleasures and amusements; to keep under idleness, to aim at all that which glorifies God. O, beloved in Christ, are we doing this? Are we seeking to act more and more according to this – that we have self-control over our natural tendencies? In ourselves we are perfect weakness; we cannot do it, but we can cry to God that He would help us, and strengthen us to keep down more and more these natural tendencies, for if we indulge them it will prove a stumbling block to the unconverted. If we seek to keep under self-control, we not only glorify God, but strengthen the children of God, and remove stumbling blocks.

Then to TEMPERANCE, we must add PATIENCE – that grace by which we meekly, submissively, without fretting, complaining, and much less murmuring, bear the afflictions of life. One says, “I am naturally impatient, and I cannot help it.” This is a mistake, my brother and sister. Being tried, immediately cry to God. He will enable thee to keep under thy impatience.

The world is looking on, and by thy impatience thou art dishonouring and weakening the hands of thy brothers and sisters in Christ, while, on the other hand, thou art glorifying God by bearing the trials and afflictions of life. “All” these “things work together for good,” and out of all these difficulties and trials God will bring blessing to thy soul. By thy impatience thou art dishonouring God, and by patiently bearing the trials of life thou art glorifying God.

Then to PATIENCE we are to seek to add GODLINESS. Godliness – that is the grace by which we do what we do, to the honour of God, in the sight of God, as looking to God for help and strength, so that, more and more, we get into this state of heart. “Whether we eat or drink, we do it to the glory of God.” If we have a morsel of meat, or drink of water, we do it to the glory of God. Ah! this grace. O for this grace! It is the kind of grace that the Blessed One had, who had it for His meat and drink, to do it to the glory of His Father. Although we do not compare ourselves with Christ, as if we were anything like Him, yet what God did for Him, He is willing to do for us. He is willing to “strengthen us with might, by His Spirit in the inner man.”

Then to GODLINESS we are to add BROTHERLY KINDNESS – the love of the brethren, the children of God, not because they are our relatives, not to love them because they are in the same position in life, not to love them because they are of the same education, not because they are of the same church to which we belong, but to love them because they are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The more we do this, the more we glorify God. All the believers in Christ should love one another. No distinction between rich and poor, learned and illiterate, whether they belong to us of the same church, or to another church – we are to love one another because we belong to Christ. Is

it this after which we aim, my beloved friends? This is the very reason why I came here. I love the beloved brethren and sisters in Philip Street Baptist Chapel. I love all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and for seventeen years, in which I was almost always travelling about in all parts of the earth – in Europe, and all over Europe repeatedly, and in China and Japan, and in the six colonies of Australia – wherever I went I preached in the Church of England, amongst the Congregationalists, amongst the Baptists, amongst the Methodists, among all denominations, and I preached provided they loved the Lord Jesus Christ. I would not preach in Socinian chapels, lest it should be supposed I did not care about the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would not preach in the Roman Catholic churches and chapels, lest it should be supposed I was an admirer of the Pope. Wherever the foundation of our “most holy faith” was laid, there I preached.

Now, let us aim increasingly, beloved brethren, after this – that we love all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then to this BROTHERLY KINDNESS we should add LOVE. To love those who do not love us, to love those who are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and our very enemies, because the more we have of this love, the more we have of God, for it is expressly said that “love is of God”, and the more we are like God, the more we love.

What will be the result of all this? We see in the next two verses. “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

No-one will be an idler in the Church of God who aims at thus building up himself on his most holy faith. He will care to win souls for Christ in one way or another, nor be “unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”. He will live to God’s honour and glory. “He that lacketh these things is blind.” Spiritual dimness of sight is the result of this, if we do not seek “to build up ourselves on our most holy faith”.

Again and again in our day, when persons are brought into spiritual difficulties, they know not how to act because they have been so little acquainted with God and His ways. “They do not build up themselves.” We should know how to act in difficulties, and this will be the case if we seek to build up ourselves; and if we do not know how to act in difficulties, the remedy is to aim at this – that we build up ourselves. And another boon we need continually in our day – people do not know whether their sins are forgiven or not. How comes this, if they are believers in Christ? Because they do not build up themselves in their most holy faith. They do not know how they stand before God, and that their sins are forgiven. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Here is another blessing – the result of building up ourselves on our most holy faith. We know we have been called out of the world, that we are on the road to heaven, and when this life is over, we shall enter into everlasting life. This is the result of building up ourselves. And another blessing will result. We are thus “kept from falling” – that is, a person who is seeking to build up himself on his most holy faith will not bring disgrace on the name of the Lord. He will not be found a drunkard, he will not abscond with large sums of money in his pocket. None of these things occur on the part of those who profess to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and build themselves up on their most holy faith.

And one more blessing in the next verse. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” We should desire to enter the haven like a vessel, under full sail, enters the harbour. Do you think of this?

It has been thousands of times my prayer that my last days may be my best, and that I may, like a vessel under full sail, enter the haven. O, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, should this not be yet the aim of all of you? Ask God to bring you to this mind, that you, in the remainder of your life, may glorify and love God, and that at last, like a vessel under full sail, you may enter the haven of eternal love and blessedness. God grant it, for Christ’s sake!

The word "Müllers" is written in a large, black, cursive script font. The letters are connected and have a fluid, handwritten appearance.

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