

ACCORDING TO HEAVENLY PLAN
(Bro. Bakht Singh, Balance of Truth 1965, April and May)

Let us read 1 Corinthians 3:9-16; 1 Peter 2:1-10; Hebrews 12:25-29; Ephesians 2:11-22

These passages of Scripture may be summed up in what is expressed in 1 Corinthians 3:9. "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building."

In this same connection shall we also see the last portion of Hebrews 12:27; "And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

We, as God's servants, should always remember, that whatever we expect to do for God, that it will remain for eternity: and that all that we do is going to be tried, tested and proven. It may appear very good and acceptable in the eyes of our fellow-workers and fellow-men, but in the end, God will apply His own test. That is why our eyes must be upon the future, and not upon the present.

We are to be like the engineers when they are designing a building. They calculate, and conceive of all possible dangers and pressures, before they settle for a particular design.

This reminds me of a bridge in London built by Sir Christopher Wren, the famous architect who built St. Paul's Cathedral. This was the famous Waterloo Bridge over the Thames River. When it was constructed it was a very fine bridge. But during the first Great War, the Germans dropped their bombs near the Thames, forcing one pillar of the bridge to sink very low. The London County council had to spend more than 20,000 pounds sterling every year to reinforce and keep the bridge in repair. The British people are very sentimental about ancient buildings - not like the Americans! The Americans would bring a bulldozer and pull it down straight away. But when it became too expensive, they built a new one. Engineers from many parts of England came together to investigate the cause for one pillar of the bridge being effected, and not the other.

Perhaps you know that when a bridge is being built that first of all, long wooden piles are driven into the river bed. Every wooden pike has to be measured accurately to be identical with the other piles. When they lifted the upper structure of the bridge, they discovered that one wooden pile of that particular pillar was not according to dimension. Somehow the overseers had overlooked that detail. There was one quarter of an inch difference. The result was that while the bridge remained intact for hundred years, when the real test came – the bomb,- that part sank down.

The same is with the work of God. We may see blessing for many years; but what will happen when the test of God comes?

Throughout the churches, we come across many mighty men of God, full of the Holy Ghost, whom God has used to save souls. But remember that God always thinks of His work in terms of eternity.

Let us now turn to Exodus 25:1-9 to see how that early God began to show His heavenly plan- when He gave instructions to Moses to erect a tabernacle verse 8 and 9: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, *after* the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make *it*."

As soon as God had redeemed the Israelites and delivered them from the power of Egypt, He conveyed this significant message through Moses "Let them make me a sanctuary."

What is in the mind of God in asking us to go and preach the Gospel? Why does He want souls? Why is He, our loving God, so concerned in seeking a lost sinner? Why is He so much after us? It is because He wants a sanctuary. HE WANTS A HOUSE!

We have to tell people from the beginning just what is God's purpose is saving us – He has desired that you and I build that house. Every believer must be given that privilege though he may not accept it, but he must be made conscious of being part of God's sanctuary.

All the material used in the building of the tabernacle was to teach them in the first place about the Lord Jesus Christ- His grace, goodness, holiness, power, beauty, glory and fullness. And in the second place, how all of us become part of that fullness in becoming a member of that sanctuary – God’s habitation.

Then you find in Ephesians that the apostle uses seven names for God’s people. He calls them, the “Church” of the Lord Jesus Christ, because they have been called out from the world – God’s peculiar people. He calls them, the “Body of Christ”, because the same life flows through every member. That Body contains God’s fullness – the fullness of Him, which filleth all in all. The health of that life is supplied to every tissue, nerve and fiber.

He calls them “One new man”, no more Jew and Gentile – all human and national differences forgotten. He calls them, the heavenly “family” that we may be able to enjoy the divine love of the Father.

Then He says, “Ye are God’s building”, God’s Temple”,

Then finally, the “Bride” of Christ.

Now why are we called “God’s building”? Because a building is constructed by a plan.

There are some people however who think they can build a building without a plan. That is, they do not hire an engineer, but consult contractors for a plan.

Go to Bombay for instance. You will see that these wealthy people own many buildings that have been constructed without the help of an architect – they hired their own contractors. These buildings have a nice outward show, but they have no proper light or ventilation. They had no concern for the health of the people who would be living there.

An architect however, in designing a building, however, considers its light, ventilation, water, sewerage and sanitation. Then he will build. Nowadays, in proper cities the plan of every building must first be submitted and examined by experts and sanctioned to be built.

Now this is just to say plainly, "Ye are God's building". We are not merely concerned with preaching the Gospel to people. No, we have a far greater purpose than simply that.

We read in Revelation 21:7 that the overcomer "shall inherit all things". Do you see this determination of God through out the Scriptures – even to the end? It shows God working for the sinner, in not only redeeming his soul, but redeeming all that he lost because of sin. How will he inherit it? And how will it happen? See verse 3 of this same chapter. "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God."

That very same thing is expressed in 2 Corinthians 6:16, which shows that it is only when we become God's temple, in a real sense, that God's fullness comes into us, and God redeems for us what we have lost.

To become God's building, we must be built, first of all, upon a strong and deep foundation – a rock foundation. We must be sure that we spend enough time studying God's Word with the people; otherwise they will remain weak spiritually. We must know that our responsibility is not only to preach, but to take the people deep in the foundation truths of the faith.

But if we want only a big report in order to amaze people; then all we have to do is count the hands – and feet also! You will please the people, but not God. He wants a pure and a deep, abiding work; and not a mere show of hands, and other outward signs.

We have to make sure that the people whom we serve are brought to a proper spiritual experience of salvation. Then we must help them to understand that they can have a share in the House of God. God makes that clear when He tells Moses, "that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart". It was to those who had the experience of the blood at that Passover night, that Moses gave this appeal. It was a sign that they were washed and forgiven, and now ready to receive more. But it was perfectly optional. There was no compulsion – no force – no pressure –

They were simply given an opportunity to become a part of God's sanctuary; and also to bring a willing offering.

This is how it applies to us also, but it is only a beginning.

I know of a missionary who came to the Punjab. He had never seen a chapatti made in the Punjabi way. Actually it is a very nice corn bread, about half inch thick, and twelve inches in diameter. It is baked in a slow oven. We had prepared some of these as well as plenty of green leaf mixture to go on top of it. He ate it- but only the mixture, not knowing that the other was bread, he said, "here, take this plate away!"

He never knew that it was bread! That is like so many people who do not learn how to enjoy their salvation. That is the duty of teachers and shepherds that those who are saved through us may learn how to enjoy their salvation.

I remember many years ago, while traveling in the train, some friends met me at a station and gave me a nice big basket which I put under the seat. Next station I got off to get something to eat, and managed to get some stale food. The next morning, I happened to see this basket under the seat, and looking in, I saw food! Plenty of nice bread and fried fish and so many other things, and I never knew it!

This is not like so many people who have a Bible, but don't trouble to look inside, nor do they know how to use it! Nobody has taught them!

In Karachi, one day a Hindu man said to me, "Show me one good Christian in the whole of Karachi, and I will be a Christian today." Numerically at that time there were about 14,000 Christians living in that city - 4000 Protestants, and the rest Roman Catholics. I could not show him one person who was truly a spiritual man! That gave me a burden to pray. About once a week, I used to fast and pray. The challenge of this Hindu man burdened me to ask the Lord to give me the answer. I was not going to be defeated by this man's challenge.

After many months of prayer, the Lord gave me a fearful message. He told me clearly, "I want you to go to all parts of India, and make every man who bears

my name to possess a full Bible, whether they are literate or illiterate. Tell them that if they are called by My name, they must have a Bible. Secondly, teach them how to use the Bible. Thirdly, teach them to pray, how to come to me for their needs.”

It seemed like a simple thing and yet I was so afraid to give that message. Furthermore, how could that message solve my problem? I had been waiting there for two full years in that place. So I began that evening. “Those of you who have brought Bible, will you kindly show them? Not New Testaments, I mean full Bibles.” There were only four Bibles, in the whole crowd! For four days I kept asking the same thing. They kept saying, “How can we bring one, if we haven’t got one?”

“Anybody who can afford to buy shoes for his feet, brass vessels for his cooking, can afford to buy a full Bible also” I said. So we ordered 200 Hindi Bibles from Allahabad. They were not given away – the people paid for them.

In the meetings, they used their Bibles. They had to be taught that it is not an ordinary text book like they have in schools. They were to use it reverently, and to expect God to speak, and answer their questions and problems from it. “If you have to visit any family, take God’s Book along, and ask God to answer all your questions from the Bible”. I continued to tell them.

Some people are very lazy. They take a chair, and a cup of coffee, and that is the way they study the Bible! We must go to it on our knees! And thus, faithfully, lovingly and perseveringly we taught them how to enjoy t his wonderful book.

(May Issue)

From this same wonderful book man can learn about the heavenly plan, and that God has a plan for everything. In many parts of India, I have found strife and court cases everywhere among Christians some of which have been going on for many many years! The pastors and missionaries invariably blame the people saying, “They are such a quarrelsome people”. I tell them, “You cannot blame the people- you don’t follow God’s Word yourself! How can you expect people to live in peace when they are ignorant of God’s holy Word and His heavenly plan?”

You cannot build a building without a plan, and you cannot make alterations in the building contrary to the plan. The builders and labourers have no business making changes without the engineer's approval. But we see that men have made many alterations in the name of what they call "Self-Constitution", in some blue book, red book or green book full of man's wisdom!

I was once in a place close to Poona, where about 20 pastors were having their committee meetings. They were quarrelling and fighting for two hours: "Please see our rule No. 25; rule No. 3; now rule No. 7 from the blue book". After that they gave me an opportunity to speak to them. I said to them plainly, "I could hear you talking about the blue book for two hours – how about the Bible? Which is more trustworthy- the blue book or the Bible? Why can't you say, 'Let us see what the Bible says? You are very bothered about the blue book; but you are not in the least concerned about God's Book!

Can you not see how in the name of the "Constitution" men often introduce friction?

Scripturally speaking, it is not right to put ungodly men into power. They make their own rules concerning communion. Money governs the vote; and when they need money they go anywhere to beg for it! How can we expect God to put His seal on such doings?

Now we see in the Bible, that there is a heavenly plan for the work of the Lord. We cannot have fellowship in anything with unbelievers. Preachers and missionaries often say to believers that they must not marry unbelievers. "If you are a born again Christian," they say, "then make sure that your life partner is also born-again". But these verses in 2 Corinthians 6:13-15 teach truth which goes beyond that. It applies not only to marriage, but also in church matters. How can we labour effectively with unbelievers? It is impossible!

We cannot build the Church of God with a mixture – it won't work. We can only lay a good foundation if we ourselves have a deep, abiding and a living experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the chief corner stone.

To build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, does not mean that we build upon the bones, but upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets. What we have been taught, we practice. And declare what we have fully obeyed.

We cannot be governed by our own fancies and practices, however good that might be! Our safety lies in obeying God's Word.

Now the Bible has given us a complete plan for all our supply. Just as the apostles and prophets were sent by God in other days, even so now, they can be raised up by prayer. We need to follow God's Word accurately in determining how to be shepherded, how to be controlled, how to be governed, how to gather for worship.

The clear instructions which you read in 1 Timothy 3:1-10 were what was being practiced by the apostles. If a man desired the office of a bishop or of an elder, he had to be taught, tried, tested and proven. And when he was found ready, and fully qualified, he was allowed to be chosen – but not by one man's only!

According to Acts 14:22, 23, we see Paul and other members of the team going from place to place "confirming the souls of the disciples". They were taught by a good shepherd either by the apostle himself or by men like Titus or Timothy, who were left behind to guide and teach the flock; and after they were fully taught, elders were ordained by prayer and appointment of the Holy Ghost. This was general practice followed by the apostles and their co-workers and that is how they fulfilled God's plan. This is how the early church was able to withstand and remain strong when awful persecution arose. They had been properly instructed.

Then for the protection of the believers, the apostle warns them in Acts 20:28-32, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

He tells them that the devil would be busy. They would be attacked by 'wolves'. They would be deceived by perverse men. For that reason, the "Holy Ghost has made you overseers". And to make sure they were God's appointed workers Paul taught them himself for three years, even with tears; that they might be properly warned and protected. We know from God's Word that the enemy is more active in these last days than ever before; and that believers are going to be attacked through all kinds of weapons of the enemy's devices; by wrong doctrine, by false teaching, by oppression, by persecution, suffering, poverty, strife, deceitful workers. If we fail to protect them by proper teaching, we have failed God.

Let us give an example. The people know there might be war. They know something of the weapons being manufactured in Russia. They know that the Americans are spending much money for a strong national defense. They agree that the Government must now make provision to defend their country, their allies and their friends. War may break out and there may not be anyone left! Nevertheless, it would be wrong to keep quiet, and say carelessly, -'Let us see to this matter afterwards'.

Now as an apostle, Paul had several types of ministry. He had to function as an apostle, and also as a prophet, evangelist, and as a pastor. God's servants have the same ministry today, but are we fulfilling it? If we ourselves cannot do this work, let us pray that God will raise up men so that His flock will be protected. But do not hinder God's work. If He has not called you for this ministry, then please stand aside, and do not interfere in the work of God.

It was the 31st of May, 1935 when the earthquake came in Quetta. I remember that an engineer in 1933 had warned the Government saying: "There may be an earthquake in this city area in about a year. You had better now make some provision, and construct some earthquake-proof houses". But no one bothered about it. They said, "How can an earthquake come? We have lived safely for so many years!" The railway officials, however, accepted six quarters which were earthquake-proof as an experiment. The earthquake came, and in 18 seconds, 58,000 people were killed, and every house became rubble – all the stone, brick and mud houses. Now, it has become Government law that every house built in Quetta, be built earthquake-proof. They learned their lesson by experience.

Let me say again, that there is going to be, not only one, but many severe attacks of Satan upon God's people. He will come like a roaring lion, or grievous wolves, or like a flood, or even like an angel of light.

We as God's servants are responsible for the flock. We are given the ministry of warning people and making provision for their spiritual protection. Do not be deceived by temporary blessing. God is gracious, but He keeps to His original plan.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6 we notice that Paul the apostle has gone a step further when he admits that "I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase."

He admits that there is need for many co-workers; and that he himself is not sufficient, even though he is an apostle. There are some men whom God uses to plant; others are necessary to water; but they must labour in oneness and unity. If you have been called only to sow the sacred Seed, and have no other calling or burden, then you must also pray that God will send an "Apollos" to water the Seed.

Paul was one who could not always remain longer than to do the planting. But as he was leaving, he would also remind those who came after him – "This is God's work, therefore, 'let a man take heed how he buildeth thereon'". He must know how to build upon the labours of others; and how to labour in the Spirit.

What we do in the flesh will be burned up. What we do for our own glory will be burned up. What we do which is not according to the Scriptures, will also be burned up.

It is for this reason, that the Apostle Paul is so emphatic when he says in I Cor. 3^{12, 13}: "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

The same idea is brought out in Hebrews 12:27, 28 where God says that there is going to be a "removing" and a "shaking" like that of a fruit tree. Everything will be shaken, and even the heavens and the stars shall be removed.

Why is He going to shake the heavens? That He may bring into existence His unshakeable, unchanging, everlasting kingdom. There have been many great kingdoms, but they have all disappeared and gone. The Lord Jesus Christ will establish a kingdom which cannot be shaken. In the same way our labours are also going to be shaken by the Lord; whatever is not for eternity, will not stand it. Whatever is not a part of God's house is going to be shaken severely.

You would have heard of the flood which came to Poona. I don't know how many crores of rupees they spent in building the dam there! It was an earthen dam, and it ought not to have been used so soon. This was the mistake of the engineer. An earthen dam must be allowed to stand at least six months before being used. But because of a common opinion that it was good and strong, they began to use it for the water supply. When the heavy rains began to fall some body noticed a small breach on one side of the dam. If only the engineers had taken warning in time! It was not an ordinary breach, but foolishly they struggled all night with iron sheets and cement bags to try and fill it up. Alas! It became wider and wider. It was midday on the 12th July, when the workmen had just come out for a cup of tea, that the dam collapsed. Just imagine that huge wall of water, about three feet high, moving at a speed of 47 miles per hour! Huge stone boulders were being carried away like straw. No one knows how many thousands lost their lives in the force of that flood. All because of the negligence of the engineers!

If God's servants fail it is most serious because it is God's work that is affected!

God has warned each one to take heed how he builds thereupon! We can't just go on preaching the Gospel without feeling responsible for the consequences of that Word. Most people will not understand the full meaning of this warning, but those who are preaching and teaching God's Word must take heed. Let us remember what happened in China! Who would have believed that one day China would be so severely shaken? It may happen also in India. We must be prepared for any condition which may arise. The Scriptures warn us in Revelation 12:12 that "the devil has come down unto you, having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time?"

Why is it that the allies seek to give international help? Why do they spend so much money in other countries? They may have plenty of money in America, and plenty of weapons, but they also realize that there is greater strength in creating more allies. They cannot stand alone against Russia! In case of war, they know that they must be able to count on their friends.

Spiritually, we must stand together. Our safety is in oneness. When we as a Church remain one, we are better able to withstand and attacks of the Evil One. You cannot stand alone. God may have used you mightily, and we can thank God for that but remember when you are being attacked by the devil, you suffer alone! It is by ONENESS that we can defeat the devil- not by knowledge, not by miracles, nor by science, not by wealth, nor by any other thing than by standing together in the power of God. Oneness is our strongest weapon. We cannot be one by being independent, though by nature man wants to be independent. We see that the Lord Jesus Christ especially prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in them, that they also may be one in us..." What a joy and inspiration and blessing there comes from being untied!

Spiritual oneness is only possible in the Church, where we are brought together first of all as a family, then as co-workers and fellow-partners of the Lord Jesus Christ, having one common Head, though being many members in one Body.

An example of this oneness is found in the story of Joseph. His brothers determined that they didn't want him. So first of all they cast him into the pit, then they sold him' and almost killed him. They said among themselves, "We are eleven, so what does it matter if one dies!"

But then God sent a famine, and through their sufferings the brothers realized how much they need Joseph; and we find them going to Egypt themselves to fetch him back. Joseph also said, 'I too want you; I cannot do without you; even though you forsook me, and sent me to Egypt. When God delivers you, carry my bones back with you.' What did he mean by these words?

Joseph wanted to be wholly and solely identified with his own people. He wanted to be entirely separated from Egypt's glory. "Ye are my brethren. Ye are my people," he said.

We too must remain together as a Church, for it is only then that we can be benefited by all the gifts of the Church; the apostles, prophets, teachers and pastors, all working together in harmony and in oneness.