

Vessels of Up-Building



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... Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another (Romans 14:19).

Did you know that God has called us to a life of *up-building*, that we are His chosen vessels to such a *grand* purpose?

In the divinely established principle of contrasts – where all about us is constant conflict, division, strife, contention, hatred, judgment, rejection and tearing down – we are His *contrasting* instruments of reconciliation, peace, love, grace, acceptance, and building up.

The English word *edify* simply means to “build up.” It is akin to the word “edifice” – a building, a structure. This is also the meaning of the Greek word *oikodomē*. Thus some translations use the words “*build up*,”¹ or “*upbuilding*”² in this verse.

Paul lays out our divine course – *following* peace and edifying each other. Obviously, we are not to do so to the detriment of truth – for there can be no *true* peace or building apart from the truth – but we are to be in *constant pursuit* of peace and edification, they are to be our lofty aim. Listen again carefully to Paul’s words,

... Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another (Romans 14:19).

Opposition to the truth is divisive enough on its own; so, Paul pleads that we must *actively* seek out the divine path of peace and building up.

If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18).

1. e.g. *An Understandable Version, Darby, Emphatic Diaglot, Moffatt, Youngs.*
2. e.g. *Rotherham, Weymouth, Williams.*

... *Let all things be done to edifying* (I Corinthians 14:26).

Paul tells us that the Body of Christ is to be “*edifying itself in love*” (Ephesians 4:16). He tells us that what comes out of our mouths should be,

that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers (Ephesians 4:29).

Edification (building up) is the opposite of destruction (tearing down). Twice Paul tells the saints at Corinth that his own divine authority as an apostle was given to him by the Lord “*for edification, and not for destruction*” (II Corinthians 10:8; 13:10). After all, he told them that edification was his own personal aim *in all things*.

... *We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying* (II Corinthians 12:19).

Even Paul did not seek “*dominion over their faith,*” but desired to be “*helpers of their joy*” (II Corinthians 1:24).

This, too, should be our own heartfelt aim – with all that is within us (“*as much as lies in you*”). *And there is a lot in us!* Paul tells us that God, our Father, is in us (Ephesians 4:6), as is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:27). Rich, abundant, unexhausting resources for overflowing love, grace, peace and edification!

The world is in desperate need of such a contrast. There are so many empty, hurting, rejected, broken lives.

Paul’s passion was to live *constructively* (edification, up-building), not *destructively* (tearing down). His actions were bold, but not mindless. They were thoughtful and with purpose, “for the use of edifying” (*i.e.*, for the purpose of *building up*.)

Paul also knew that divine up-building was found only in faith: “*godly edifying which is in faith*” (I Timothy 1:4); and that faith was to be found only in God’s Word (*c.f.* Romans 10:17). Therefore, he actively and boldly taught the truth, doing so in the context of love, grace, peace and edification. In fact, he revealed to us that the Body of Christ actually “*edifies itself in love*” (Ephesians 4:16); and the use of such edification “*ministers grace*” (Ephesians 4:29).

Edification is the divine process of escorting one to true freedom in Christ through the indispensable means of *faith, love* and *grace*. These are the powerfully *constructive* principles of *edification* that God brings to bear in the details of our daily life.

Let us always remember that we are God’s chosen vessels of *up-building*, rather than *down-tearing*. Let’s not join the world in its role. We are Father’s instruments of loving and peaceful edification. This is our divine calling. One of my very favorite songs is sung by Ricky Skaggs and is called “*The Mind of Christ*.” It was written by Michael Puryear and Geoff Thurman, and has in it this wonderful line: “*to build up when others tear down*.” I am moved to tears every time I listen to this song. Here are its lyrics.

The Mind of Christ

To receive when others reject,
To treat each one with true respect.
To shield when others throw stones,
To be with one who's all alone.

To think and choose to see the very best,
To live like this is nothing less than to possess
The mind of Christ, my highest goal,
The Lord's delight, the desire of my soul.

The Father's heart will always guide my life,
If I will have in me the mind of Christ.
To build up when others tear down,
To seek the lost until their found.

To give grace where it's needed most,
Rejecting pride when others boast.
To sacrifice my all without regret,
To live like this is nothing less than to possess

The mind of Christ, my highest goal,
The Lord's delight, the desire of my soul.
The Father's heart will always guide my life,
If I will have in me the mind of Christ.

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