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## THE NEED OF EDIFICATION

IT IS interesting to observe how much the Bible uses the figure of a building to describe the things of the Christian life. One of the most notable passages where that is done is the great passage in the third chapter of I Corinthians. The only foundation of the Church, Paul says, is Christ: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

But then, Paul goes on to say, we build upon this foundation, and let every man take heed how he builds. Every man's work in building upon the foundation will be tested by the judgment day. That majestic Day will be revealed in fire, and the fire will test every man's work, of what sort it is.

Very sad will be the case of the man whose work in building upon the one foundation will not stand the test of the judgment.

It will not, indeed, be like the case of the man who actually defiles the temple of God. About such a man the apostle seems to speak in very different terms, when he says: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Unlike such a man (whom the apostle seems perhaps even to place outside the category of true Christians altogether), the man who does not destroy what has already been built, but builds with perishable materials, is distinctly said to be among those who are saved.

Yet his case will be a sad one—at least in comparison with what it might have been. Although he will be saved, he will be saved so as through fire. He will be saved, but his work will pass away.

How shall we avoid the shame of having our work thus destroyed at the judgment day? How shall we avoid the shame of finding that our work, of which perhaps we were so proud, was but wood, hay, stubble, after all? How shall we learn to build, instead, with the gold, silver and precious stones that will stand to all eternity?

Surely we can do that only by attending to the directions that are given in God's Word. If we do the things that the Word of God plainly directs us to do, and do them with an honest heart, then we may very humbly and yet very confidently hope that our work may endure to all eternity.

What then are the things that the Word of God plainly directs us to do; and are the activities of our present-day churches within the number of those things?

Well, about many of the activities of our present-day churches we may well be in doubt. Perhaps they are things that the Word of God, by implication, directs us to do; but perhaps also they are outside the category of those things. Perhaps they are gold, silver or precious stones; but in some respects they do look uncommonly like wood, hay or stubble. Frankly, we are in doubt about them. We ought no doubt to be slow about condemning them when others are carrying them on. We ought always to remember that Christ is the judge, not we. Our brethren stand in His presence, and one day they will stand before His judgment seat. But for ourselves we surely ought to seek those kinds of service in the Church about which there is no doubt, those kinds of service which are clearly in accordance with the directions which God has given us in His Word.

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# Higher Ground

By the REV. JOHN J. DeWAARD

Pastor of the Calvary Presbyterian Church of Cedar Grove, Wisconsin



Mr. De Waard

IN Cedar Grove, where it has been my privilege to preach the gospel for eleven years, we have moved to higher ground. The beautiful church building in which my people worshipped for sixteen years stands in what is almost the lowest place in the little village. The site was once a hole, the hole has been filled in and it now is an attractive place for a building. The new building, now in process of erection, stands on a knoll, very nearly the highest place in the town. The higher ground to which we have moved is so much higher that the main floor of the new building will be almost on a level with the peak of the building we could not keep.

One day last summer, while pretending to help the men in the work of excavation, I looked down towards the church we could not keep, across the field a little more than a city block away. A feeling of sadness and discouragement came over me. It seemed such a waste of effort and money to build still another church in this little village. There are already two large churches in the town of about eight hundred inhabitants. These two churches are large enough to accommodate the people of the village and surrounding country for years to come. One of these churches, with a seating capacity of about seven hundred, will have less than two hundred gathered in its auditorium for worship. And now we are building another church with a seating capacity of about six hundred. Are we busy in a bit of folly which better judgment will have to condemn when a few more years have gone by? There will now be two Presbyterian churches where there should be one. I thought of all these people, whom I had learned to love, and who had been worshipping together in one church. I thought of those who could not go out with us. Their pain was just as great as ours. Some of them are honest, sincere, and lovable people. They also spent nights in thought, asking

the question which so many of us asked ourselves over and over again during the past year, "Why must it all be?" If I had ever been anxious to spare my people unnecessary expense, for they work hard for their living, I had been more anxious to spare them unnecessary pain, for life is full enough of troubles.

And I thought again of the events of the past year. It would have been so easy to compromise here a little and there a little, and so have avoided the split in the church, than which there are few things harder to endure. Just a little compromise on things most surely believed to be according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ and all this trouble might have been avoided. I had been willing to make the compromise, once I had even expressed my desire to compromise in public. But the freedom actually to compromise with untruth would not come and what I wanted to do I did not dare to do. The liberty to do that which would have kept the relatives and friends of long standing together in the same church was not given. It seemed to me that afternoon, however others may judge, that the Lord Jesus Christ had Himself complete control of all the events which issued in the building of another church on higher ground. And if the Lord Jesus Christ, whose demands are always exacting though not unduly severe, was the author of what had happened, He would also complete the work. By His love He would constrain us to move to higher ground in the years which are before us. And if the Lord Himself would constrain us to move to higher ground, then the building of another church and the pain we had all suffered would not be useless. I dug my shovel deeper into the ground and the men around me, not knowing the thoughts I had been thinking, smiled to see me work, and they did not quite understand me when I said, "Fellows, it is sound theology which makes the dirt fly."

I want to speak to you on the subject, "Higher Ground," for I do believe it is our privilege, under God, to build our new church on higher

ground. But it will not be easy. The separation was necessary and the separation was hard. It has cost us very much to break these associations which were dear to us. But the work which is before us in building our church on higher ground is more difficult. "To pluck up, to break down, to destroy and to overthrow," which a real love makes necessary so often in this world of sin, requires courage and strength of conviction. But "to build and to plant" requires more courage and even stronger convictions. The task before us is more difficult than that which the Lord has thus far done through us. In a very short time Israel went out of Egypt, but they wandered about in the wilderness for forty years. Yet the same Lord who led them out of bondage was with them every day. As the Lord Jesus separated us from a church which ceased to be a church when it ceased to believe in the Bible as the very Word of God, so will He by His grace enable us to build our church according to the pattern He has made in heaven. And as the Lord refused to give us liberty to compromise, so will He also graciously refuse to give us His peace until we have done all to place His church on the higher ground from whence her light may shine out in every direction. We are few in numbers and we do not have much money but we are persuaded that we do have the blessing of our Lord. So let us look around and see how we may move our church to higher ground, uphill work though that necessarily is.

We will have to educate our people in the specific doctrines of the Reformed Faith, beginning with our children. There is a great deal of so-called Christian Education in the churches of our day, even in those churches which are known as Reformed, which is not at all Christian. Arguments supporting overtures to the Syracuse General Assembly in regard to the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. have shown us how much Modernism is being taught by that Board in the Sunday School literature

used in the churches, as well as in other literature distributed by the Board. However, even if there had been no specific heresy taught in the literature approved by the Board, its literature would not have been satisfactory to us. For one looked in vain for those specific doctrines of the Reformed Faith which distinguish that system of truth from other systems. The teachers and leaders of that church seem to be afraid of the "grand particularities" of the Reformed Faith; certainly they do not believe these "grand particularities" to be according to the Word of God for they studiously avoid them. A moderator of a recent Assembly expressed in the last Assembly, in another connection, the principle which also dictates the policy in religious education, in these words: "We must not emphasize the shibboleths of our own form of Christian faith." There is an effort in that church to attract the sympathy of as many people as possible with various and contradictory opinions concerning Christianity which, as Dr. Frank Stevenson (who knew how to say a thing) once expressed it, is "like trying to speak words of no particular language in the interest of universal speech." Even if there had been no specific heresy taught in the literature of that Board, we who love the "shibboleths" of our Reformed Faith would have been more than merely dissatisfied with it.

In contrast to the spirit in the church we know best, consider the spirit of the Presbyterian fathers. From 1846 to about 1870, there was in the Old School Presbyterian Church a strong movement to teach, especially the children, the doctrines of the Reformed Faith. Not only in the Sunday School and in the Catechism classes, but even in the grade schools established and maintained by the church, this movement found expression. In 1847, Dr. Charles Hodge preached a sermon in the Assembly of that year in which he urged the church to adopt the plan of establishing grade schools in every parish, a high school in every presbytery, and a college in every synod in which "religious instruction from the Word of God, in connection with sound, intellectual culture" might be given. The plan was adopted. Dr. Courtlandt Van Rensselaer, corresponding secretary of the Board of

Christian Education, threw himself into the plan with characteristic zeal. There were at one time one hundred of these "session schools" as they were called, scattered through the country, one of which continues to this day. I am telling you this bit of history to show you that the Presbyterian fathers did not apologize for the particularities of the Reformed Faith. They believed that the shibboleths of that system are true and they knew how to say shibboleth, too. In these schools, in the Catechism classes, and in the home the Shorter Catechism was the chief text-book of religion, and that precious little book deserves to have that place again.

It will not be possible for us immediately to establish and maintain these "session schools." Most of our churches are at present financially and numerically too weak to do so. But we can gather the children together in week-day Bible classes and help the children to memorize the Shorter Catechism. We can urge our people to use that precious little book in their homes. We can also use this little book in our preaching service. It will not be easy. Children do not take to memorizing the Shorter Catechism as a duck does to water. The little book is by no means the simple, superficial milk diet upon which so many sickly Christians in our day attempt to sustain their Christian life. It is not easy to preach on all the questions of the Shorter Catechism for these questions take us into the deep things of God. Our task in teaching the doctrines of the Shorter Catechism in special classes for that purpose, in Sunday School and in the Church services, will be the more difficult because so many of our people are accustomed to a much easier method of education than that which was used when this Catechism was written, but the method of our day teaches the child nothing. However difficult our task may be we dare not neglect a serious attempt, asking the Lord Jesus to bless our feeble efforts. Our church cannot occupy higher ground unless our people are informed. They cannot love with us the principles of our Reformed Faith unless they know these principles. If the men of another day are going to justify the erection of another building in Cedar Grove it is my task now to teach the children to pronounce the shibboleths of our Faith. Though

the work may be difficult it can be done. A subscription to THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN which treats the Catechism in every issue will be no mean help to pastor and people alike. Application to our task and our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ will crown our efforts with success. Increasingly our church will occupy higher ground if we do not fail in this our opportunity.

In the second place, we must make a more diligent and more intelligent use of the Scripture itself. One of the reasons which constrains us to give this instruction in the Reformed Faith is that our people may use the Bible itself intelligently, without note or comment. One day when I had read a paper in presbytery in which I constantly appealed to the Confession of Faith, a fellow minister said: "Mr. DeWaard seems to believe that the Confession is the infallible rule of faith and practice, for he constantly appeals to it as the final authority." If that brother had known the Confession he would have made no such foolish remark. For when we appeal to the Confession of Faith we do not imply thereby that the Confession is the Word of God. Our appeal to the Confession, aside from the fact that it helps us to state our meaning accurately, also shows clearly what our conception of the Scripture is. For the chief corner stone of the Confession is the Scripture to which it always directs us. An earnest and careful study of the Confession of Faith leads us directly to the Word of God and instructs us to use that ocean of infallible truth intelligently. And if some one should say to us, "But you come to the Bible with certain presuppositions," we would answer, "So also does every one else and of all the presuppositions that are possible we, by the grace of God, have selected the best.

Now it is but recently that God has driven us out from a fellowship in which the Bible is not honored as the very Word of God. Our former association has had influence upon us. It cannot be otherwise. Our minds are never like blank sheets of paper and we are not now returning to the Bible with minds like blank sheets of paper on which the Father may write whatever seems good in His sight, while passively we receive the impression. Some methods of Bible study, perhaps even unconsciously acquired, we will have to exchange for others.

Some ideas which seeped into our minds by the pressure of modern church life will have to be uprooted, thrown out and cast into the fire to be burned. New and better ideas will have to take the place of these and only in the sweat of our brow can we acquire them. We must work. If the task before us is difficult let us take courage in the thought that we have in the history of the Christian Church a great help. Mighty men of God have labored abundantly in the Scriptures and the fruits of their labors we can make our own. We do not have to begin in 1936, as a little church, where the Church began in the year one hundred. There is a testimony of the Holy Spirit in the history of the Christian Church and we may and must make use of it. Let that humility of heart, characteristic of the Christian who knows that he has been saved by grace, express itself in this also, that we thankfully and joyfully receive the inheritance of our fathers, which does indeed help us to a better and richer understanding of the precious Word. For the experience of the Church in the past is a good, perhaps even the best, commentary on the Word. Just how seriously we meant it when we said that we believed the Bible to be the Word of God will be shown in the years to come by the way in which we use it in our churches and in our homes, even more than by our actions of the past.

But in this fact that we are returning to the Word to use it in our homes and in our churches, with minds influenced by the modern spirit, there is a danger for us. From one extreme we may fall into another. I can best say what I mean by using an illustration from the history of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. A very zealous and earnest Presbyterian, whose love for the Bible was felt by all, one day seriously proposed that the Board of Christian Education be instructed to ask men, sound in the faith, to write a commentary on the whole Scripture, to which the Assembly could give the sanction of its authority. According to this proposal there would be given to the people a Bible with an explanation of every text bearing the sanction of the church. Instead of placing in the hands of the people a Confession of Faith having general principles to guide them in the study of the Word,

the thought was to place in the hands of the people a Bible with authoritative interpretations of every passage.

It was an ambitious plan. Many serious objections were raised to this plan. It was said that there was no man or group of men who could write a commentary on the Word to which the church could give the sanction of its authority. If there were a group of men who thought that they could do this it was proof that God had given them up to strong delusion. A further objection was that no group of men could give an authoritative interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy, of the visions of Ezekiel, Zechariah, Daniel, or John. Because of these and other objections, advanced by Dr. Charles Hodge, the plan was not adopted. And it would have been a tragedy for the church if this plan had been adopted. For it is certain that there would have been some people who would have taken the several interpretations of the Word which the Assembly approved as the Bible, rather than the Word itself. Only the Word itself is life and gives life, not the several interpretations of the Word, however helpful very many of these often are. Beyond all doubt the commentaries of Lightfoot are excellent works that no student of the Bible can afford to ignore, but it is expressing a truism when we say that these commentaries are not the Word itself. And if our church should accept the many interpretations of Lightfoot as authoritative and final, while she could do many worse things she would nevertheless be on low ground.

Increasingly as the years have gone by I have learned to appreciate more and more the courses of study given by Dr. Vos. His courses were commentaries on the Bible, his lectures were exegeses of the Word. I loved him when I studied there; I love him more now, not because he has given me a number of valuable interpretations of the Word, but rather because he has given me through his lectures a desire to study the Word itself. He demonstrated in class that the method of Bible study which lies at the heart of the Reformed Faith is the best. As we listened to the lectures we forgot about the man speaking, while our minds were fixed on the wonders of the Word. We did not leave class with four or five outlines for sermons we could use in the pulpit later, but we did leave class with the desire to

show the people what joy and pleasure there is in the study of the Word. Perhaps there is no one in our fellowship who can do what Dr. Vos succeeded so well in doing. But we can attempt to do the same thing in a small way. If our sermons are little morsels of food which our people take on the Sabbath day in order to live thereby the rest of the week, their spiritual lives will be weak, and our church will occupy very low ground. I wonder, would it be really worthwhile to continue? But if our sermons are little bits of spiritual food which whet the appetite of our people for more, so that they themselves go to the Word in search of more, without contentment until they have found, then the spiritual lives of our people will be strong, and our church will occupy increasingly higher ground. Unless by the help of the Holy Spirit we can send our people back to the Bible to see for themselves whether these things which we teach them are true, our building is in vain and our efforts will go down in history as an illustration of how men ought not to use the Holy Bible.

And finally I should speak about the higher and nobler worship of God, which is necessary if our church is to occupy higher ground. As the study of the system of Reformed Faith leads us to the Bible, so does the Bible lead us to God, for the "Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." I was raised on the Heidelberg Catechism and it is a good Catechism too. The second question of that Catechism is: "What three things are necessary for thee to know that thou mayest live and die happily." And the answer, given in my own words, is this: First, I must know how great my sin and misery is; second, I must know how I may be delivered from my sin and misery; third, I must know how I may live a happy and thankful life for so great a deliverance. It is a high note which this beautiful Catechism strikes at the beginning. Certainly the salvation of a soul is important. But a higher note is struck by our Shorter Catechism when it begins with the words, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." But time does not permit me to develop this important thought.

It was June 7th and it was the last Sunday morning that I was to preach

in the church where I had labored for ten years. There were about eight hundred people in the church that morning. As the hour drew near when I was to enter the pulpit, I felt utterly unable to say what I knew ought to be said that morning. It seemed to me that I could not say what ought to be said to the glory of God and the salvation of their souls. I could easily repeat the text I had selected: "They have not rejected

thee, but they have rejected me that I should no longer be king over them." I could also easily repeat the story of Samuel and the people of Israel which caused the Lord to use these words to his aged servant. But there is something more to preaching the blessed Word than just that, and I felt I could not do it. And as I think about the future and the work I must do among the good people of Cedar Grove, as a servant of the Lord Jesus

Christ, in teaching young and old the doctrines of our faith and the use of the Word in their homes, I often feel that same way. It has pleased the Lord Jesus Christ to use the sermon of June 7th. If with utter humility of soul, with application to my task, I do my work, I am persuaded it will please the Lord Jesus Christ to bless. And my people will not have laid one brick in vain, nor spent one penny uselessly. May God grant it.

## Constraining Love

By the REV. J. GRESHAM MACHEN, D.D., Litt.D.

A Sermon Preached on the Opening Day of the Second General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church of America, the Sermon Being Followed by the Administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

*"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (II Cor. 5:14f.).*



Dr. Machen

**I**N THESE great verses Paul speaks of love as a constraining force. Love, he says, hems us in. There are certain things which love prevents us from doing.

Earlier in the passage he has spoken of another restraining force—namely, fear. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," he says, "we persuade men." Since we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, it behooves us to stand in fear of Him; and there are many things which because we shall stand before His judgment seat we are afraid to do.

That motive of fear is used in many places in the Bible. It is used in the Old Testament. It is used in the New Testament. It is used with particular insistence in the teaching of Jesus. I think it is one of the strangest of modern aberrations when men say that it is a degrading and sub-Christian thing to tell man to stand in fear of God. Many passages in the Bible might be sum-

marized by the words: "The fear of God constraineth us."

### "The Love of Christ Constraineth Us"

In our text, however, it is something other than fear that is the thing that is said to constrain us or hem us in. It is love. "The love of Christ," Paul says, "constraineth us."

What then is here meant by the love of Christ? Our first impulse, perhaps, might be to say that it is our love of Christ, the love which we bear to Christ, the love in our hearts for Christ our Saviour. The comparison with verse 11 might perhaps suggest that view. As there the fear which is in our hearts when we think of our standing before the judgment seat of Christ constrains us from doing things that we might otherwise do, so here the love which is in our hearts when we think of what Christ has done for us might seem to be the second constraining force of which Paul speaks.

Now if that is the right interpretation, the verse tells us something that is certainly true. It is certainly true, and eminently in accordance with Paul's teaching elsewhere, that the love of Christ which we have in our hearts restrains us from doing things which otherwise we might do. We refrain from doing those things not only because we are afraid to do them, but also because we love Christ too much to do them. Ah, how powerful a restraining force in the Chris-

tian's life is the love he bears to Christ, his Saviour! That love in the Christian's heart is a restraining force even more powerful than any fear.

As a matter of fact, however, that is not Paul's meaning here. The love of Christ which he here says constrains us is not our love for Christ, but it is Christ's love for us. We are restrained from doing evil things, Paul says, by that unspeakable love which Christ manifested when He died for us on the cross.

### "Because We Have Thus Judged"

Well, then, if it is Christ's love for us which constrains us according to this verse, how does Christ's love for us produce that constraining effect in our lives?

The following words give the answer. "The love of Christ constraineth us," Paul says, "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." I do not think that the translation "because we thus judge," though it appears in both the Authorized and in the Revised Version, is strictly accurate. It ought rather to be "because we *have* thus judged." The great conviction that Christ died for all and that therefore all died is not formed again and again in Paul's mind as though it were a new conviction, but it has already been formed. It is one of the basic convictions underlying all Paul's Christian life. "The love of Christ