

Edify One Another (Encourage)

February 24, 2013

At the close of Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica, he exhorted them to "edify one another" (1 Thes. 5:11). The word "edify" comes from the Greek word *oikodomeo*. This word occurs thirty-nine times in the original text, and all except eight times it is translated as "build" or "built." Our Lord chose to use this word in Matthew 7:24 when He spoke of the wise man who "built his house on the rock."

The idea Paul had in mind was that Christians should "build" one another up in the faith. After defining the word, Thayer comments that it is "the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian's wisdom, piety, holiness, happiness". W. E. Vine said the word is "used metaphorically, in the sense of 'edifying,' promoting the spiritual growth and development of character of believers, by teaching or by example, suggesting such spiritual progress as the result of patient labor."

One of the highest duties that a Christian has is to encourage others. In a world filled with pessimism, violence and despair, our need for encouragement is great. It is all too easy to let the "ways of the wicked" become our ways. The happy man is the one who refuses to "stand in the path of sinners" or "sit in the seat of the scornful" (Ps . 1:1).

After a week of listening to the gripes and complaints of this sin-sick world, Christians should look forward to an isle of retreat on the Lord's Day. A place where the name of God is blessed, not cursed. A place where we can enjoy the "seasons of refreshing" which only God can provide (Acts 3:19). It is truly a shame the Christians do not spend more time in each other's company. The Hebrew writer bids us to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" (Heb. 10:24). After the command, he tells us how it is to be accomplished, i.e., "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25).

In the days of Haggai, the people of God grew discouraged while the working to rebuild the temple. God commanded them to get back to work, and then gave them comfort by saying, "I am with you, says the Lord of -hosts" (Hag. 2:4). Consider what it meant for those Jews to whom Haggai spoke to know the Lord was with them. Surely they could remember the stories of how Jehovah had been with their fathers as they passed through the Red Sea. They knew that God had "led them by the hand" through the wilderness on their way to Canaan. In view of God's goodness, how could they doubt Him now?

In a similar vein, Jesus has promised to be "in the midst" of His disciples when they assemble (Matt. 18:20). What a thought! The Son of God in our midst every Lord's Day. He has also promised to be with us as we carry out the great `commission (Matt. 28:20). Do you desire to be in the presence of the Lord and His people? As we run our race toward eternal glory, let us continually encourage each other and "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1,2).