

THE CHURCH

The Church Being Built Up

2 Peter 1:3-11

Week of January 16, 2022

Before Connect Group

- 2 Peter 1:3-11
 - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-11, ESV

Sermon Notes

The Growth of the Church is intimately connected to the war that is waged against sin in your heart.

One of the main premises, is that Church growth is a very biblical idea, but the way we present and speak of Church growth within the church today is not. When we think about Church growth, we should make sure that we are thinking about it in terms of how the Bible describes it.

Though our reading is from 2 Peter, our driving text is Acts chapter 9. This verse is the concluding verse to the narrative of the Church's first interaction with a converted Saul. *Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. (Translation by Joseph Smith).* Remember that the phrases in this text are not separated, but rather build upon one another that we might fully understand. I will read my expanded translation one more time. "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and this led to their being built up, which in turn, caused them to walk in the fear of the Lord and experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, the church multiplied." This week we will turn our attention to the second idea in this text "being built up."

Being Built Up, Assumes Getting Torn Down:

- 2 Peter 1:3-4
- Tension between life and godliness and sinful desire. Church Growth is not simply watching numbers in a gathering place grow.
- Acts 9:31 specifically uses the term "multiplied." This communicates strongly that the numbers became great and of course we saw that truth when we turned to Acts 2 and saw that thousands were added to the church in one day.
- However, that is a convicting work of the Holy Spirit, not a convincing work of a community.
- When we talk about Church growth, we often end up in talking through strategies to either give people what they want or help them to find comfort.
- We use phrases like "helping them find their fit" and "we have something for your whole family." There is nothing wrong with these things, unless of course our idea of Biblical church growth strategy is based on them.
- *Acts 2:37-38 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
- This is not a move of comfort that led to thousands being added into the Church. And you can't wash this away with some cultural argument. Why? Because they didn't like being uncomfortable back then either!
- The 1st century Jewish and Roman culture were as drawn to easy and comfortable as we are. They liked to be entertained and pursued their luxuries.
- Yet, the church growth movement rests upon the phrase "they were cut to the heart." - convicting work of the Spirit. Having revealed sin and when they ask what they can do, Peter tells them to Repent and be Baptized.
- The Growth of the Church is intimately connected to the war that is waged against sin in your heart.

- This is where the reality of the Power of the Gospel is attached to the growing of the Church! It is not about being more appealing, it is about the work of communicating the Truth of the Gospel. From the pulpit, from the youth ministry, from the children's ministry, fellowship events, etc.
- We are in danger of building churches today who have found another way to grow their church. It is possible to attract thousands and do it by some other way than the truth of the Gospel.
- These churches will call it God's blessing and favor when they see more and more people come, but they then unfaithfully hold back the full convicting truth of the Gospel in fear of losing what they feel they have just gained.
- If thousands of people were to walk in here today and I claimed that God brought them here, then when I or you stand before Him in the end, I don't think he will be asking me how comfortable I made them feel. I don't think he is going to ask our Worship Team how well they played that morning. NO! He is going to ask us about the fullness of the Gospel preached! He is going to question our faithfulness to His Word and the Pure Heart of Worship.
- On the surface, the path that Scripture marks out for church growth is opposite of any logic we would produce or creatively come up with to grow a church.
- It is based on the revealing of sin, the destruction of sin, and then living and laboring toward the life of godliness that has been graciously given to us through Jesus Christ.
- This is hard because we have manufactured a Gospel that attaches itself to the life you're already living, not the true one that tears it down.
- The great beginning work of the Gospel is the deconstruction of the sinful and confusing reality that this world has labored to build in you.
- *Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
- This point is the center of the frustration of the faithful pastor in the church today. If you preach this Gospel you will be accused of not being encouraging. And you will likely not fit the model of Church growth that is most widely accepted.
- I cannot tell you the countless conversations I have had with people who have visited church and walked away saying that they just needed to hear that Jesus loved them so they could go out and survive in this world.
- If the Gospel is just a word of encouragement that exists to help us think positively, then we are going to eventually step away from our faith. Why? Because we will build a rhythm of living our lives daily in sin and coming to church so we can have a better view of ourselves.
- This is not the Gospel, the Gospel is truth that pierces our hearts and causes us to see the reality of who we are. The world will sell you a philosophy that you are a good person who struggles with bad things. Yet scripture teaches the opposite.
- *Ephesians 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*
- Once we can accept this truth, we can begin to live freely and boldly in the Grace and Love of Jesus Christ which builds us up from the ashes of our sin. "Cut to the heart"
- The building up that this verse in Acts 9 is talking about can only happen when you have walked through the hard door of being torn down.
- Some of you here this morning need to understand that your life has been built on sin and philosophies that are of this world and not of the Gospel. The Gospel which

is the foundation of your faith cannot simply coexist with this in your life. You need to understand that your starting place must be getting torn down. Please do not take this as anything other than the greatest encouragement possible. The Gospel promises that when this work of getting torn down is done, the sweetness of being built up is even greater.

- There is a war that must begin in you between the life of godliness and the sinful desires of your heart.
- When you come to this realization, you are entering the most encouraging place you could ever imagine. You are ready to be built up as the Church.

Being Built Up Can Only Happen on The Foundation of Peace

- *Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and this led to their being built up.*
- One of the points we navigated last week was this idea of Peace. One of the main ideas we discussed was that true Peace only comes from one place. That is Jesus Christ.
- The reason so many of us struggle to experience the Peace we desire is because we are asking the church to give it to us. The church can communicate peace, the church can display peace, the church can radiate the glory of God and the Peace of Christ, but the church cannot “be” the peace that you need.
- There will never be a church who has all the things on your check list just right, rather it is more likely that God has placed you in this church because the church needs you to help it display more of the peace of Christ.
- There will never be a church you find that is your “retirement” church. I finally found the place I want to live out the rest of my days and relax. Rather, the church is wherever God moves you next and will always demand your work and labor to build a God glorifying community.
- Your peace is in Christ alone. He is our Peace (Eph. 2). Though the church may have been the one who proclaimed that peace to you through faithful preaching of the Gospel, the church needs you to constantly administer the peace you have over her.
- It is out of this Peace, this faith in Jesus Christ, that we can begin to understand the real idea of being built up.
- Peace leads to being built up, not the other way around.
- 2 Peter 1:5-7
- Many will come to the church and seek to learn all of the “good” things about Christianity, hoping that it will lead them to some inner peace philosophy.
- This is best represented by those who come to the church to make amends for their guilt. They come and engage in as much social and sacrificial work as they can to try and overwhelm the guilt that they have from sin in their lives.
- This is the spouse who engages in church activities to make them feel better about themselves because they are regularly giving into the passion of an affair.
- This is the one who comes and receives their training to serve in the children's ministry because they had an abortion decades ago.
- I'm not trying to step on anyone's toes, I'm just trying to amplify that this is normal logic for us. However, our growth and development in these “good” things of Christianity are built on the foundation of Peace, not the foundation for peace.
- But let's turn back to Church growth for a moment. Because this idea is important to the way we navigate and think about the way we move as a church.
- The attributes of 2 Pet. 1:5-7 are the authentic products of Peace/Faith
- The danger of reversing this order is that we begin to manufacture or produce these things rather than them functioning as a natural outflow of our faith.

- We will put on façade of brotherly love all while we are consumed with anger and jealousy inside.
- Being built up is a work of God through the church, not a work of the Church using God.
- Reversing the order (being built up before peace) will cause us to become dependent upon an aspect of the church rather than Christ and the community as a whole.
- We may come to the false conclusion that our being built up is attached to a certain preacher, certain small group, certain leadership structure, certain style of worship, etc...
- Being built up is growing into the Gospel, not growing out of it.

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- How does our sin rob us of the peace that God intended to us? What are the consequences of being built on the foundation of sin both in the immediate sense and in the eternal sense?
- What does it look like to be torn down by the Holy Spirit? How does
- How does Jesus Christ become our peace? What does it mean that Jesus Christ is our peace?
- Describe the role that people play in the life and ministry of the church. How does this relate to serving and ministering to the body of Christ?
- 2 Peter 5:7 tells us *“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.”* Which of these do we struggle with supplementing our faith with? Why do we resist this supplementing the already present faith with these things? How does peaceful faith lay a foundation of these things?
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Challenge For The Week

The life of the Christian to be the church is built on the foundation of peace. Our faith is an expression of the foundation of Peace, established by Jesus Christ who is our peace.

- Where do we look to build up before peace? Where do we give in to the desires of our preferences and wants at the expense of true and authentic relationship with Jesus Christ? Take time and ask God to reveal His peace to you.
- We are all born God hating and dead in our sins. As Christians, we have been raised to life in Jesus Christ. Yet, not all the world has. Who are you actively praying for this week that they would be hearing the Gospel and being transformed by the peace of Jesus Christ?

