

Ecclesiastes 10v18 By much slothfulness the building decays

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“By much slothfulness the building decays, and through idleness of the hands the house drops through”

This physical truth is also relevant in the spiritual world. Anything which man constructs has obsolescence. As soon as it is finished it begins to fall apart. God's constructs are different. The human body, the most complex form of matter known, can restore itself by cellular reproduction. Only the divine curse of condemnation following Adam's sin has broken the very good state that He initiated in the beginning.

Proverbs 14v1 *“Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish plucks it down with her hands”*. The man usually does the hard physical work of construction leaving the domestic chores in the domain of the female. In this chapter the house in question can be considered to be the family itself, her domestic circle.

As with a physical house that needs to be repaired constantly in the various aspects of its construction, so with the family itself. A family unit needs to be constantly worked on. If it is just left to its own devices it will begin to drift apart if not actually collapse like a termite infested building!

Believers have three houses. I am not meaning the holiday home by the sea or the second home in tribal lands, I mean the physical home, the domestic family and the spiritual house of the Ecclesia. All of these three are in need of attention, and getting the balance right of how we split our efforts is something we must all reflect upon. If we commit all resources to the ecclesia then our natural families will suffer, if we think nothing of the physical house God has blessed us with then it will decay and eventually fall down, leaving us destitute and less able to help others but instead become a drain on the efforts of others as they must now divert attention to support someone else who is now in need.

In Ephesians 2v19-22 the application of the believers as a spiritual household is explicitly taught. *“Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit.”*

The most important of these is the Ecclesia and accepting that this is paramount does not come naturally. Men and women all too often put their family first, or even their material possessions including their houses. Some have even left the Truth because they were not prepared to sign up to the principle of this.

However, it is not for the Ecclesia to legislate in every circumstance to codify the behaviour of the brethren and sisters but rather to let the conscience dictate to everyone in their own particular circumstances with robust and diligent questioning of those who may appear to transgress by taking a certain action.

How do we give the ecclesia attention? Well, that seems to be possible in two ways, we must contribute in our own personal capacity to the interactions, meetings, events and purposes of our local ecclesia as well as the over arching aims of Christ's ecclesia which is the aggregate of the brotherhood at any one time. This can be done regardless of whether or not we have been asked to fulfil any formal role or roles within the structure of our Ecclesia, perhaps as a serving Brother or even as a speaking Brother.

However, we can all read the Word and embody it more firmly in our minds as individuals. This will enable us to interact better with others who are like minded but will inevitably provoke friction with those of a different disposition.

Secondly, we should be able to consider the wider welfare of the other constituent bricks of the house of God. Only when we have achieved a level of improvement in ourselves should we attempt to help others. Novices should not go around trying to improve

everyone else and how the ecclesia operates without extensive work on themselves first. They should politely ask questions and exercise patience before thinking to rebuild the whole structure to a different plan of their own devising.

The house will also be compromised if it is divided as a house divided against itself cannot stand. When we build the house, we need to work in unison with common goals and common methods. No house however well intentioned will ever get built if some are using mud and straw and others brick and others wood but it will be a mis mash with great holes and unjointed seams which will let the water insects and other undesirables in!

No one of course wants to be regarded as slothful and God alone knows the energy and effort each member puts into the need to keep the wheels turning and the house being safely maintained. It is not for any to judge others directly, but we can and should exhort by word and even more importantly by action in our own endeavours.

If we stay in our own little bubble of existence, or to use management speak, our own silos, where everyone just gets on with themselves in isolation that is unhealthy and will ultimately allow dry or wet rot to take hold of the building at least in our own little area of responsibility if no where else and stay undetected. Only by interacting more effectively and more frequently can we grow as God intends and build a place fit for His habitation as Ephesians teaches us.

The animal we call a sloth gets a bad name. It is well designed by God and speed is not often a measure of success. A fast hunter like a cheetah is no sloth but that animal cannot build a house. A slow ponderous builder is of little use if its about to rain and the roof is not on yet. Everyone brings different skills to the project but its working together in true fellowship on shared and properly understood goals that will achieve success in any house building.

So repair that floor, fix those stairs, expand that garden, plant those crops. Work on personal relationships within our families, to the glory of God not despite Him. But above all put effort into our Ecclesias so that the One Ecclesia can be truly apostolic because it follows the pattern they established in their service to Christ.

A Voice from the Altar

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