

**Genesis 11: 1-9; “The Lord Came Down To See”, Sermon # 37 in the series -
“Beginnings, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 13th, 2018,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

In Genesis 9: 1, God again gave the mandate to Noah and to all of his descendants that he had given to Adam in Genesis 1: 28. “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.” Chapter 10 gives us the list of Noah’s descendants and where they eventually settled. In Genesis 10: 25 it mentions one of Shem’s descendants, a man by the name of Peleg. And there, in the margin of my Bible, it says that his name means division; “for in his days the earth was divided.” The passage that we have just read tells us of a scheme of some of the great men of that day who did not know the Lord; to build something so great that the result would be a standing monument to their efforts. They did not want to spread out and fill the earth according to the division that Noah had arranged, and what he had promoted with God’s blessing, in the days of Peleg. These men wanted to concentrate their efforts in building a city and a great tower.

This might sound like a great thing, but they were not at all building in a way that was pleasing to the Lord. I want to bring to your attention this important truth; that each one of us is a builder as well. We are building something with our lives. We may not realize it, but it is so. The things that we do with our lives, in the end, will either be a standing monument to God’s grace, or a standing monument to our selfishness and sin. This is the overall lesson of this text. I suppose that some of us may have the ambition to do something great; to impress other people with the strength of our intellect or the natural abilities that we have. The Lord is very concerned with what you are building with your life, as to whether the effort is to His glory or not; for that is the reason that He made you and all men. He is interested in the purpose that you have for what you build, and how you will use the strength and the time that He gives to you. And this passage teaches us that at crucial points He will intervene and interfere with your efforts where they run contrary to His purposes.

Well, when the Lord came down to see, He was not pleased with what He saw. And so He put those men and their efforts to confusion in a most unusual way, a way that affects us even to this day. But the question that you and I must ask ourselves in relation to this text, is this. What lessons can I learn from this incident that will help me not to be confused, and not be put to confusion, when I go about to attempt to build something with my life? If you want what you build with your life to be established, and to have everlastingly good effects, in a way that God will be pleased with your life and remember your life’s work, then you need to be willing to ask yourself some questions of this text. If you desire to be faithful to God, then you should ask yourself the following questions.

1st – What is my purpose in building?

The purpose of these men who built the city of Babel, and the tower or citadel in the midst of it, is very clearly stated in verse 4. They said – “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the earth.” They wanted to “make a name for themselves.” And they knew that they could not do this if “they were scattered over the face of the earth.” Now, I want you to see here that God has created man as a reasoning creature. Man was created with a mind to put things together, to build things like cities and towers, and to do this to the glory of God. But we must remember also that sin has gained entrance to every man’s heart through the sin of Adam in the Beginning, and so without grace from God, he will only build things for his own glory and according to his own pleasure.

There is, the Bible tells us, an inborn pride in man which opposes the purpose of God for their life. There is within every man, the “boastful pride of life.” Man wants to be free to make his own decisions and to pursue his own selfish interests irregardless of the purposes for which God made

him. It seems to make sense to me that it was probably Nimrod who was behind this scheme to build this city with its great tower. “The beginning of his kingdom,” it says in Genesis 10: 10, “was Babel”. Many of his fellow Hamites joined in his great plan; and there may have also been more than a few of Shem and Japheth’s clan who participated in this project. This should tell us something. It should tell us that it is possible for even the children of godly parents to easily fall prey to this kind of sinful thinking; the desire to be great, and to make a name for themselves. John Trapp, the puritan commentator says, “This is a disease that cleaves to us all, to ‘receive honor from one another, and not to seek the honor that comes from God only.’” (John 5: 44) “A rare man he is surely that hath not some Babel of his own, whereon he bestows pains and cost, only so that he may be talked of.”

So, I want you to see first off, from this passage, that those who know the Lord, if they are wise with the wisdom that is from above, do not build with their lives for their own glory, but for God’s glory. They deliberately attempt to live their lives giving glory to His handiwork and His grace and power in all of their life and their obedience to God’s word. Psalm 115, verse 1 says – “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory.” And, the question might then naturally come to you– Why should I give him all the praise and honor for what I do with my life? And the answer comes back – It is – “Because of your mercy,” God, “because of Your truth.” The only reason that you are able to anything great or anything good in this life is because of God’s mercy which has been shown to you, and His truth has been revealed to you as that which you should live your life by.

And what does the Psalmist say in verse 4 about unbelievers? “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.” Isn’t it amazing how easily men link the work of their hands, with their religion, and thus establish a false worship? It happens in our day as well. Many people have a false god which consists of the works of their hands. They want to “get a name for themselves” by doing something great either for themselves or for other people, so that they will look great and wonderful in their eyes. As though it is the approval of men that they are courting and seek. They are not much concerned, if at all, for God’s glory. This is why the Psalmist in Psalm 49, verse 16 says – “Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.” “Though while he lives he blesses himself (for men will praise you when you do well for yourself), He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.” “A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts who perish.” O, may each of us see this all-important truth, even now. Do not live for the praise of men and do not do what you do for the praise of men, for it is the praise of God and living for His glory that really matters.

2nd – Who am I building with, and am I united with them spiritually?

Verse 1 says – “Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.” “And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.” “Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’” “They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.” “And they said, ‘come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’” These people in our text were unbelieving people, and yet they had unity of purpose. It is evident that they realized an important truth, even though in their case it was sinfully applied. They realized that more could be accomplished to bring about the building of their city and their tower if they were united in purpose and in the actual work, with those of like mind.

The only problem with their thinking was that it opposed God’s good purpose. God’s purpose was to scatter them over the face of the earth so that they would become the nations of the world that He intended them to become. Did you know that God has a great purpose in relation to the nations, the families, the tribes, and the languages that they speak? He does have a good purpose, and you ought to be a person who delights to discover what God’s purpose is. Do you realize that

God is not a globalist in his thinking, as some politicians in our country are, at this time? It is God's idea that there be nations, and that, even though some nations will come and go, that He will continue to approve of the whole concept of nations because it was His idea in the first place. God sees that having many nations of people in the world fulfills His purpose to display His own glory. God does believe in unity in diversity, but He conceives of it in a righteous way, so that through many nations of people, His glory of diversity in personhood and even in culture might be displayed, but without the sins of idolatry and the sinful selfishness of men seeking their own glory, and seeing everything as coming from themselves. He also sees that it is for the good of His creature man, that he might not live alone, and apart from everyone, but in a society of like-minded people, politically and religiously speaking, worshiping the same God; Him, and not worshiping the many gods of their own creation and imagination.

In verse 31 of chapter 10 of Genesis it says this – “These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.” “These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.” So, let us affirm that this is a good natural principle to work by, but it is even a better principle if you are a Christian and have spiritual life and the strength of wisdom and grace, to be able to do all that you do to the glory of God. It is good when you recognize the value of being able to do all things to the glory of God with other people in the same country which God has placed you in. All Christians need to have a righteous view of unity and diversity within that unity, but not to the exclusion of God's word or His will. There is only one true and living God, and His Son is Jesus Christ. And if you and I need to focus politically on any one truth that we as Christians could bring to the people in this nation, it is that we are one nation under God; not many gods, but the One True and Living God. And therefore, all the rights to freedom of worship that we have established in this great nation only exist if they are understood properly in terms of the truth that our God, the God of the Bible, is the only true and living God.

And further, we need to understand this principle to be true, in the sense of our participation in the building of the kingdom of God. God himself states this truth in verse 6 of our text. “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.” The language of the true Christian is Biblese. That is, they speak the language of the Bible; the language of Canaan, spiritually speaking. And their unity is found first of all in their unity of truth; not simply a unity forged by their own humanistic ideas of His truth, but realizing that it has taken God's changing their heart to bring them speak the language of a Christian in sincerity and truth. That is what has resulted in their true spiritual unity of participation with other Christians. You might remember John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and what happened to Christian and Faithful when they came to Vanity Fair?

Here's what is said – “Now, these pilgrims, as I said, must needs go through this Fair.” “Well, so they did; but behold, even as they entered into the fair, all the people in the fair were moved, and the town itself, as it were, in a hubbub about them, and that for several reasons; for, First – The pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that fair.” “The people, therefore, of the fair, made a great gazing upon them. Some said they were fools; some, they were bedlams; and some, they were outlandish men.” (1Co. 4: 9, 10.) “Secondly – And as they wondered at their apparel, so they did likewise at their speech; for few could understand what they said; they naturally spoke the language of Canaan, but they that kept the fair were the men of this world; so that from one end of the fair to the other, they seemed barbarians each to the other.” “Thirdly, But that which did not a little amuse the merchandisers was, that these pilgrims set very light by all their wares; they cared not so much as to look upon them and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears, and cry, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;” and look upwards, signifying that their trade and traffic was in heaven. One chanced mockingly, beholding the carriage of the men, to say unto them, “What will ye buy?” But they, looking gravely upon him, said, “We buy the truth.” (Proverbs 23:

23.)

The Apostle Paul states the importance of this same “buying of truth” to the Corinthians in his first letter. In chapter 1, verse 10 he says to them, “Now I plead with you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” I want you to see that there is great power of the Holy Spirit at work in your heart when you see the importance of learning to work together with people in the local church of which you are a part. You will accomplish far more for Christ’s kingdom when you humbly believe that you do not need to be seen as a great person, but simply as a humble servant for Christ’s sake. When you are united with others in pursuing holiness and truth, and you learn to lovingly work with others, great good is accomplished and God takes notice of it, and He will reward you. In accordance with the truth of God’s Word found in Psalm 84: 11, “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

We could re-word it to read this way – No good thing will He withhold from those who build to God’s purpose and for His glory. Is this you my friend? Have you seen what power there is for great good, when you unite with the local church in the purpose of your mind to do them good, and to help them and not selfishly push your own agenda; when you truly and spiritually become a member of that body, and join in their efforts to work together, and become their closest friends in the body of Christ? How great a thing it is, when you decide that this is more important than furthering your own personal or worldly agenda. When you do this, then there is a holy unity of purpose which develops in the local church which is glorifying to God. The people of our text did not have this holy unity, but because they all spoke the same language. And because they had the same purpose, they thought that much could be accomplished for their own greatness and their own personal glory.

3rd – Do I believe that it is right for God to interfere with my life?

Verse 5 says – “But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.” “And the Lord said, ‘Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.’ “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” “So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.” “Therefore, its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.” Here we have another consultation between the 3 Persons of the Divine Trinity written down for our benefit. God does take counsel with Himself in relation to matters in time and space. It is not as though He needs to do for His own sake, for He is the All-wise God. He stands outside of time, and He has decreed all things for His purpose, and yet for our sakes, He pictures His interaction with Himself in this way. Certainly the Lord did not take counsel with the angels for He did not need to do so, but He did take counsel with Himself, as this action that He took would affect all of human history from that point until the end of the world.

Now I hope that you can see that it was righteous with God to interfere with their purposes and plans of these men because it encroached on His purposes and His plans. He had to make it understood that He was God and that they were but men whom He had created. He knew that there was only selfishness and sin in their hearts and minds when they determined to build this city and tower. We have seen that their sin was, that they did not remember their Creator; they did not remember their Maker, and their united purpose did not include Him. This should show us that unity of purpose when it denies or works against God’s purpose, and His will and His ways, cannot be blessed by God. It is sinful when you do not include God in your plans, and consult God in regard to your plans. And so, if you do not consult Him and look to Him concerning what He thinks, in accordance with His word, you will find that He will ultimately oppose your plans, and ultimately frustrate and defeat whatever schemes that you have, to live your life independently

from Him.

James Chapter 4, verse 13 says this – “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow.” “For what is your life?” “It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’” “But now you boast in your arrogance.” “All such boasting is evil.” “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” We can see here from these verses that knowing good and doing good comes from knowing God and doing His will, not your own will.

I think that it will be good at this time to ask whether you are submitting your life to God, to direct your way and your path. Proverbs 16: 9 says – “Man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” You say – Yes, I believe that but I do not believe in a God who would deliberately interfere with my life and my plans for my life. And I would say to you – This is an interesting thing. You believe, or you sense that God is sovereign, but you believe that He has no right to rule over your life in terms of His interference when your plans for yourself conflict with His for you. I wonder if you see that this is what brings you to a discouraged and depressed state. Why? Well listen to Jeremiah chapter 10 and verse 23 – “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”

The way of man is not in himself. This is the principle truth that I have to bring to your attention from this text this morning. It is good to make your own plans. God does not object to your making your own plans. But you should know that it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. Only God can do that and make it all work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to his purpose. So, my conclusion is this; that we as Christians should welcome God’s interference with our life, and when we see that things are not going in the way that we would want them to go, that we would pray for wisdom and take counsel with Him in the Bible, and then that we would learn His good way, to be led by the truth of His word and by His good Spirit guiding us in relation to all the truth of His word. This is how He will guide you into the good things which He has ordained that He would give to you and bring to you.

4th – Let us ask ourselves what materials are we using to build our life with?

I want to go back to verse 3 for this. “Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’” “They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.” It appears that this was a great discovery of that day. It was probably a new development in building to make bricks and fire them in a kiln. It was probably a great discovery when an asphalt substance, which was very strong, was found in the plain of Shinar. This allowed them to conceive that they could build a tower “whose top was in the heavens,” or whose top “would reach to the heavens.” The true Christian also conceives of themselves as building something with their life, and they want to do it to the glory of God. How do they do this in a way that will be pleasing to God.

Well, turn with me to 1st Corinthians chapter 3, and verse 9. Paul is talking about how both ministers and true Christians are God’s building, His temple. And he says, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.” “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it.” But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.”

The true Christian is one in whom God is building, and also one who builds for God. He does so, based upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, His blessed Person and work. There is no other basis upon which anyone can live the Christian life, than upon what Jesus Christ has done, by His life and death. Anything we do for God is built upon what Jesus has done for us. Now what Paul is saying here is that we must take care that we use the right materials in building. We are building something with our life either to God’s glory or to our own. We must learn to think this way. A

minister, those to whom Paul particularly refers to in this passage, must build with gold, silver, and precious stones of doctrine that is true to the Bible and righteous living in accordance with Christ's commandments. The minister is being willingly taught by God, and then he is teaching those who are the sheep under his charge. He cannot mix truth with error. He cannot use the worldly wisdom of wood, hay, and stubble, which are substances that cannot withstand the fire.

Whenever gold, silver and precious stones are put into fire; they may be refined, and dross may be consumed but they stand forth in a better condition. All that has been lost by the refining in the fire, is the dross or impurities. Even so, the true Christian minister must strive to build God's church by using the good materials of sound doctrine, the truth of God's Word and the holy example of that teaching, which leads to godliness. He knows that the Day is coming, the day of judgment which will try each man's work, of what sort it is. This passage also applies to every true Christian building his or her life on the foundation of Jesus Christ. It says in verse 11 – "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And verse 12 says – "Now if anyone (not just the minister) builds on this foundation..." He could have said that this applied only to ministers but I think that it is apparent that the principle that he is enunciating here applies to all Christians and what they are building with their life.

Each and every Christian is expected by God to use the same materials to build with, as the minister does; that is, good and sound doctrine, and the practice of keeping all the commandments of God by means of faith and love to Christ and to all the brethren. The capstone of this building project is to do all that they do to the glory of God and Christ. The amazing thing is, that we become the kind of materials that we use. If we build our lives based on the revelation of God in His Word, then we shall be able to say with holy Job, "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23: 10) If you build with earthly wisdom and skill, if you build with false or erroneous doctrine, if you neglect to practice what you preach, or what you have been taught from the Bible, if you are living for your own glory, or to be seen by others, the result will be that you will suffer loss.

It is not the loss of the soul that is being talked about here; it is the loss of reward. The persons themselves will be saved, it says here, because they were believing in Christ and building upon the foundation which Christ laid. But in the refining fire of the judgment of the great Day, when Christ returns, all that is erroneous and wrong in our conception of things will be corrected and all the works which we did which were not done for God's glory, this will affect our everlasting state of personal glory, or what you will be rewarded for having done to His glory. A person can be saved and lose their reward. A person can be saved and have great reward. "Only one life, too soon is past, only what's done for Christ will last." If what you are building with your life; the doctrinal truth that you preach and live by, and the works that you do in righteousness are done to the glory of God, are found to be of true help to others, and they are done in love, and in faithfulness to God's word, you will receive a reward.

Let me ask you in closing - What are you building with your life? God doesn't need to come down here to see, in order to know what you are building; He already knows. But let each of us examine ourselves to see whether we are building to the glory of God. Galatians 6: 3 – "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself." "But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Let me ask - Is your faith resting on the foundation of Christ? Are you building with the gold, silver, and precious stones of sound doctrine? How do you practice and live out your doctrinal faith? Are you willing to compromise sound doctrine for the approval of men, or to obtain some better earthly situation in your life? Or will you build solidly with good materials, and faithful practice, being mindful that the Day is coming, and you are looking to so labor and so run, as to receive a full reward? May it be so with each of us.