



**B**UT he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. <sup>4</sup>He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. <sup>5</sup>I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. (1 Corinthians 14:3-5)

**F**OR though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed (II Corinthians 10:8)

**A** GAIN, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. (II Corinthians 12:19)

The preaching of the Gospel may be as hot coals on the head of the lost sinner, but are as gentle words of comfort and encouragement to the believer. IT has ever been that way; however, the modern church seems to have exhausted their supply of ‘hot coals’ and have opted rather to preach soft words that make the sinner feel he needs no repentance.

It is true that the ministers of God are to edify the members of the body of Christ, but only with sound words of truth and true doctrine. These will edify the saints but not the unbeliever. The unbeliever must be made to realize his lost and helpless unrighteousness and his need for a Redeemer.

What do the scriptures mean by the word ‘edify?’ The word means to build up a thing or a faith. An edifice is a constructed structure built up from the ground level. To edify one another in the assemblage of the Church is not to tear each other down, but to build up in faith. That does not mean dismissing sin as tolerable to God! When we build a building (or edifice), we count the cost, plan the structure, purchase the materials and contract the workers to complete the building according to the plan. God, too, has a plan for his Church. Each stone (member of varying size and proportion) is carefully measured and placed in the vacancy specifically designed for it. There can be no stones of deceit, of theft, of lies, of murderers, of adulterers, etc. All must be chosen stones for the structure. If any of those stones that are unfit arise, they must be culled out and discarded; or else hewn to the proper dimensions to serve the purpose of the Builder.

When a man or woman does commendable service in the church, it is appropriate to laud their efforts as a matter of encouragement. That is edification. Edification animates the believer to do more than he can do. If we are doing the work of the Lord, we are all doing more than we can do. How is that possible? Because the labors of love

we perform are not ours at all, but belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who works in and through us and our organs to perform His works.

The best way to improve the skills of a new organist is not in criticizing every mistake they make. Simply choose the good points of their performance and commend them for those. You will find the result will be far more satisfactory than simply criticizing. My mom used to compliment me to no end on how well I could perform new chores around the house – until I proved I could do them well and then it was the least expected.

We need not condemn the attire of a gentleman or lady who enters the Church. Simply commend them for their choice of colors, or their desires to come and serve God. Our good examples will correct any deficiency in dress or conduct in the process of time. But inappropriate dress or conduct cannot go unaddressed in the House of the Lord as a matter of habit. Once a person knows Christ and the requirements of modesty in dress or conduct, they must be held to that standard within the Church.

It is not edifying to a fellow Christian to walk up and tell them how sickly they look, or how much weight they have gained. Every one of us has some commendable points on which to comment. Rely on those and not a constant negative. Edify in good works, not on our skills at constant critique.

In the church of our Lord, there is also a means of self-edification. This is not a proud boasting of our accomplishments, but rather an inward property of righteous devotion in our thoughts, deeds and habits. One such self-edification is that of prayer. Private prayers are just as important as corporate prayers. It is the prayer of the believer when no one else is watching that is heard in greater decibels in Heaven than even corporate prayers in public worship. In those prayers, there is no hypocritical showmanship – no grand-standing. We come alone face-to-face with our Lord just as the Woman Taken in Adultery who was left alone with her Lord at the end. This is a moment of solemn and sincere faith. All is said strictly between you and the Lord. Habitual private prayers are essential to the edification of the human spirit.

Another means of Christian edification is self-examination! We often desire to win an argument so badly that we stretch the truth and facts in order to better the other person. But when we get alone, we recognize our wicked intention. We resolve to never repeat that breach of trust again, and we go to the person and let them know we were wrong. In doing so, we are building a strong inward wall around our heart that discourages our doing the same in future. Each day in our evening devotions, we should first exercise a time of self-examination of our faults and sin of the day.

One of the most potent means of self-edification, and one that is essential to every believer, is scripture study. The purpose of the Comforter is to bring to our remembrance all things written in scripture about our Lord Jesus Christ. How can the Holy Spirit bring anything to our remembrance if we have not even yet read it out of the Bible in the first place? We eat our physical bread daily to maintain our physical strength and stamina. Do we not need the same spiritual manna to nourish our souls daily?

Another essential means of self-edification is in hearing the Gospel preached in assembly. At such a time, if at no other, the Church is of one mind and one focus. “*17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” Romans 10:17 If we fail in our regular attendance at worship, how shall our faith be edified in hearing? “*24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*” (Hebrews 10:25) The word ‘provoke’ has a belligerency associated, but here it means that we must strive, even against all opposition, to

encourage strongly in love and good works. The scriptures often use terms appropriate to a military army since we are all, in fact, members of the militant Army of Christ.

There is also something profitable to be said of meditation – not that kind that stares in space for long periods, or utters babbling sounds that mean nothing to God or man; but the kind of meditation in which one reads the scripture with great care and stops and thinks deeply about every word, every line, every sentence of it to glean the most gold that can be mined from it with our mortal brains. It may then be applied to our lives in real time.

I love to discuss the mysteries of God's Holy Word whenever I can find a willing ear. I love God's Word, and I want others to love it. It cleanses, it saves, it grants peace, it rebukes, it encourages, it gives hope, and it opens the celestial gates of God's promises to the devout student. Having found such a treasure, by the grace of God, why not eagerly share that treasure with every creature we meet!

We do have a responsibility to edify others in the faith, but by what means? To edify others there should be love, spiritual conversation, forbearance, faithfulness, benevolent exertions, and uniformity of conduct.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Temple which neither the Jewish rulers, nor the Roman cohorts, could destroy. His Temple (body, the Church) is a building! Every YOU-SHAPED vacancy in the walls have a YOU-SHAPED stone that is precisely the one that is needful of filling that vacancy according to the predestinate will and calling of the Lord. Present yourself to the great Builder and you will not be the stone that the builders reject.