

Build what Endures

Eph 5:1-9 (ESV)

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of God for today is from Eph 5, from St. Paul's exhortation to Christians to imitate their God and act as sons of God.

Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

It is amazing to see what lasts, to see what endures. Here in the United States we haven't been around that long to build enduring things, at least compared to world history. At most, there are some buildings which have lasted hundreds of years. If you get to travel, and visit Europe or Asia or Africa, you might have a chance to see things which have lasted thousands of years. Seeing these wonders which have lasted might make us think, "How can we build that? How do we build things which endure? (instead of building things which come and go)." Greater than physical buildings or institutions which man has made, are the actions and deeds of man which can last forever. God, speaking through St. Paul, encourages you to build towards eternity, building things which will last forever. This is opposed to the evil actions and deeds which will vanish and disappear. The evil will disappear.

ONLY THE GOOD WILL ENDURE.

It is not worth holding onto the things that will go away and disappear. The empty thoughts and actions of this world are vanishing. They are vanishing because the wrath of God will destroy them. All creation is under his care and his judgment. Nothing escapes his view and his observation. He will weigh out what men and women have done. He will measure if their thoughts, words, and deeds come out in the clear. There are those who will inherit the kingdom of God and there are those who will not. There are those who will receive the wrath of God and there are those who will bask in this grace.

God has clearly marked what tips the scale towards sufficiency, towards goodness. The only thing good and pleasing towards God is how Christ has loved us. How do you know this? St. Paul says that Christ's love for you is "**a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**" In many and various places throughout the Bible God has shown that he is satisfied by the proper sacrifice and offering; whether it's God killing an animal to provide the skins for Adam and Eve's nakedness, or receiving Abel's animal offerings over Cain's grains, or receiving Noah's animal sacrifices after the flood, or the whole tabernacle and temple daily, weekly, and yearly system for the Israelites to offer their sacrifices. God wants offerings and he wants good ones which make up for the wrongs and evils. The ultimate and most pleasing sacrifice to God was the death of his Son. The most delightful and acceptable good done for God was Jesus showing himself as the obedient Son, not only for himself but for all the disobedient.

The weight of this deed tips the scale and allows all other deeds to be measured. The weight of Jesus' obedience shows the lightness and emptiness of all human evil. The evils St. Paul really shines a spotlight on are human evils against the second table of the Law, sins against the neighbor. He says, "**But sexual immorality and all impurities or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place.**" These are words and actions which will not last, they will not endure. They will not endure because of the righteous judgment which God will bring. It is not fitting for them to be found among the saints, among those who will enjoy eternity. The reason these deeds do not fit, or are not proper, is that they were actions of serving the self in the here and the now. They were actions which were never concerned about the future and eternity. They were actions that treated one's own life and the lives of others in a careless and inconsequential manner, just to benefit oneself in the here and now.

The sexually immoral, those who revel in impurities, can only think on the things of the body. Everything else is put aside except what serves one's own body, one's own desires. That is seen too with those who covet. There is no thought about what is good for others; there is only thought about what is good for me, my wants and my needs. Those who speak with a filthy mouth, with crude joking and foolish talk, act carelessly with their words. They do not think about how their words act upon others and act upon themselves. They treat it as inconsequential, as having no effect on the future, no effect on others well-being.

The evil actions of the sons of disobedience will attain to nothing. Those who will not inherit the kingdom of God act in a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. They act carelessly for themselves and those around them. They don't treat their own bodies or the bodies of others with the respect of eternity. They don't think about what it is that they are working towards. And so, their work vanishes and disappears, just like their care and concern.

Unlike the evil that is vanishing away, the good has been established forever. The good will last. The good has a future. First of all, God has established the good in the love his Son Jesus has shown. Jesus Christ has established the good in the fragrant offering and sacrifice made to his Father. Now, because of that sacrifice, Jesus is not the only son who will inherit. No, you too will inherit because you are now brothers and sisters of Christ, true children of God. That is why Paul can exhort and encourage you as the children of God. He can say, "**Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us**". You will inherit the kingdom, as all those who believe on the Lord Jesus. You will forever be children of light, walking in the light of the Lord. So you have been established because of what the Father and the Son have worked.

Because you are established, you get to act with eternity in mind. You get to imitate the one who is eternal. The one who has died and will never die again, Jesus the Christ, is the one who is your model and guide. What he has done will never be lost, will never vanish away. What he has done is what is good and right and true. These are to be yours too. For St. Paul says, "**Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)**". The children of God get to build and work for the future. They can take great care and think about the consequences because they are not just living for the here and now. They are living for their children and the grandchildren, their neighbors and their neighbor's children, their congregations' great-great-great grandchildren. The children of God and their actions will touch upon each of these people. They should certainly act for their benefit. They should think and care so that the good, right, and true is established so that those may last. If they turn again to the evil that will vanish, they are setting up others to receive things that will not last.

Instead of sexual immorality and impurity, the children of God will build up and establish chastity and godly love. They will not seek the fulfillment of passing and fleeting desires. They will build families of love where self-sacrifice treasures every single life which God gives. There, love will multiply and grow exponentially based on every dependent added, and not on the multiplication of the self-appointed appetites. Instead of covetousness and envy, which seek to tear down others so that one might get ahead and prosper, the children of God will build up and establish giving and mercy. There, thanksgiving for everything God has granted (even if it seems like little) will grant the eyes to step out and seek the well-being of others and their own possessions. They will not seek to build up and establish their own little kingdom, but seek instead the kingdom of God and its treasures distributed everywhere. Instead of venomous and caustic mouths, which only tear down and destroy, the children of God will have grace-filled tongues. These tongues will spread God's love and concern towards others, with careful and caring words. If these grace-filled tongues have to seem harsh, if they have to rebuke or correct, it is never self-serving, but for the establishment of truth against error or love against hurt. This is the good, the right, and the true which our Lord Jesus has established, which all the children of God can participate in on our journey to eternity.

With eternity in mind, man's perspective is completely changed. He will not ask himself what is only good for the here and now. He will not ask himself what is good for ten years, or twenty years. No, he will concern himself with what will be good for 100 years, 1000 years, for the future kingdom which has no end. What is good for the future kingdom is not the evil and careless works. These will be destroyed. These will not last. What the man of God will be concerned over will be the good, the right, and the true. He will want to follow the example of the Lord Jesus; to follow the good and precious offering to God. He will do all this because he has now been made an eternal child of God. He will do it because he has been established forever. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.