

Continuing in the Word, "The Aim of Edification" Ephesians 4:13-15

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Edification seeks to build unity of the faith, unity in the knowledge of the Son of God, and Christ-likeness in Christians. Various things are required of us in the pursuit of these ends, one of them being self-sacrifice. Without it edification and that which it aims to accomplish is greatly hindered.

Oswald Chambers in "My Utmost for His Highest" encourages believers in this area of self-sacrifice, calling us to abandon self in "every particular". He then rightly points out that when we do there is joy - joy that can only be found in completely abandoning the old life and embracing the new life we have in Christ. This life is not self-centered but Christ-centered. That difference in focus is essential for the spiritual health of the individual believer as well as for the well-being and growth of the Church.

Chambers makes a vital point when he says, "Beware of letting natural affinities hinder your walk in love." There is that which we naturally like, want, and are drawn towards, but oftentimes the pursuit of those things draws us away from a growing love of God and love of others. He takes the idea a step further in saying that we kill love by "disdain built on natural affinities." This is lived out through rejecting someone or some godly thing because of a disdain that comes from self-interest that prefers someone or something else.

Romans 15:2,3 addresses these things in these terms: "*Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself...*" Our Lord and Savior did that to which He calls us to. He was self-sacrificing for the good of those that He would save. He was faithful to that which He was to do because He was faithful to set aside self. We see this clearly in the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus said "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).

Christ was self-sacrificing and on His sacrifice His church has been built up. As we are self-sacrificing, as we "seek to please [our] neighbor for his good", Christ's Church will continue to be built up. As we ruthlessly set aside our natural affinity for self - our natural desire to please ourselves - and take up our cross and follow Jesus, edification will result. Furthermore, Christ will be honored and glorified and we will have a joy that remains mysteriously elusive to those whose desire is bent on themselves.

God grants us the strength to live self-sacrificing lives through which He will build up His church. May we walk in that strength and be selfless saints.

Pastor Jim