



Chronicles of Diversity

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Walls & Ceilings

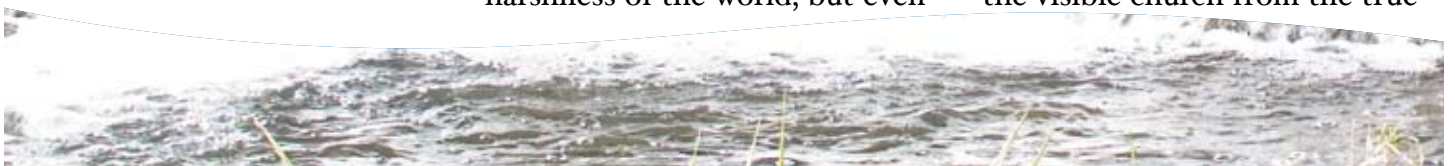
When you write commentary such as this, as we evangelicals like to say, by the Spirit, certain words or phrases sometimes catch your attention. You quickly dismiss a number as interesting, some force you to ruminate on them directly or indirectly, becoming the direction of another article, or series of articles. Last week as I wrote, “also facilitating church growth beyond building walls and ceilings,” I had such an epiphany.

In the context of the church and church growth, I was writing about natural walls and ceilings, but even as the words continued, I could not help but think that the real limits to church growth and development are not the physical walls but the invisible walls. These walls may be of God, but as I have continued to think about “walls and ceilings” over the last week I am convinced that they more often than not are of our own construction, to shield us, to protect us, from the harshness of the world, but even

more than we would ever care to admit, the reality of God.

Before we continue let us look at what I wrote last week to get the context of the walls and ceilings comment:

“The point is however, we don’t know what type of church the Lord would build in America if preachers did not preach anything but Jesus Christ crucified and raised for our justification. I would suspect that men would then find something they could build upon in church that relates not only to their real lives but also facilitating church growth beyond building walls and ceilings. In other words Jesus Christ would set them free to build the church not just watch from the sidelines, while wondering what the Seahawks or the Mariners were doing. . . . In that freedom in Christ and His church is the basis for changing the world in short order. Continued separation of the visible church from the true



gospel gives us more of the mess that is leading this world more rapidly to Hades door.

In the context of building, I cannot help but wonder, if the spiritual house we build in this life, is the structure we will inherit for eternity?

“Jesus is building me a mansion in glory, where I will receive and admire the crowns I received for doing His work on this earth!”

“Oh, really?”

The context of last week’s message was that Jesus was building His church in the world bypassing the understanding of missionaries, missions organizations, denominations, and their supporters here and abroad. This brings up the question, “If what we are doing isn’t working the way God is working, perhaps we should change our building programs.”

What we are building then is not God’s church, but a church we would like God to admire. Walls and ceilings of our own understanding of God, but not of His true nature. Those walls may be lined with gold and precious gems, the best art known to man, but they are still temporal walls and ceilings of our own construction, trying to give us right standing with God. Worldly walls and ceilings that will not stand the judgement of God’s holiness, or even temporal time.

Probably Keith Green’s most popular song is, “The Sheep and The Goats” based on Matthew 25:31-46 To get the title referenced correctly, checking my iTunes playlist, I couldn’t help be amused by the next song on this album of his music, “Asleep in The Light.”

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’” Matthew 25:41-43

Now these walls and ceilings that we are building are a personal structure, a congregational building, and a larger visible to the world enterprise. That includes all the work we do, the application of the resources we are given, and the roles we play, both in the City

of God, but also the City of man. These eternal structures are our life’s work, for both redeemed sinners, and pagan sinners. There is little difference, if any, when these buildings are constructed by our own hands, in our own strength. It is the rare structure indeed, constructed upon the foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only justification for humanity, both individually and as the body of Christ.

Matthew 24 describes the events that will happen at the end of the age. Preceding the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 are the parables of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents. These chapters are known together by Bible scholars as the Fifth Discourse on the Kingdom of God: Kingdom Judgement. Therefore, the context of the ten virgins and sheep and the goats, directly relates to our vigilant investment of time and resources, and also our understanding of the times in which we live.

My God, is the God of creation first, the Bible second, and the church third. That is the way it has been all of my life as well as I can recall. As a consequence, I have trouble understanding why most evangelicals, especially in this age of stupendous change, are content to worship their God only for a couple of hours Sunday mornings, in a building which is increasingly a converted or a borrowed something or other.

Buildings, as walls and ceilings, have certain elements of infrastructure that facilitate the congregational aspect of the church, but should it be a creation to make people feel at home, or should it be a facility that gives God glory no matter it’s roots or foundation? I suppose that depends upon the foundation and the roots, not the limiting walls and ceiling.

As I said last week, and I try to say every week, the foundation of the church should be the historic Christian gospel. That in time and space two thousand years ago, the God man Jesus Christ came to earth, lived the only sinless life, was crucified by God as our propitiatory sacrifice, and has become the only source of our justification for Godly righteousness and our hope of eternal life.

My non scientific survey suggests that this historic foundation is absent, except in passing in most churches, and not at all in many of the largest. That gospel passing seems always leading you toward

living the successful Christian life materially most of the time by doing this and that again materially and not doing anything bad, wrong, or dare I say sinful, which will take away your reward here and now, or in your eternal mansion filled with crowns.

That is not the true Christian gospel, but it is a gospel of worldly works righteousness that leads to bondage, despair, and much deeper problems. The power to live the Christian life does not come from your work to overcome your sin, your contributions, your Our Fathers and Hail Mary's, or their Protestant extemporaneous equivalents. The power and the freedom to overcome sin comes through resting in Jesus Christ alone, for what He has accomplished historically in time and space. When He said on the cross that "It is finished," it was finished.

Trying to add to that is not only blasphemy, personally and corporately, it can and does build walls and ceilings, some with beautiful ornaments, but they are also the walls and ceilings of sin inherited limitations, bondage, and eventual destruction.

Probably the most powerful Christian message ever recorded is the New Testament book of Romans. Romans was the basis for the Reformation. It is great to dissect it into parts, but its greatest impact comes in one gulp. Preferably by listening to it read, so you don't think you are doing any great feat by reading it yourself. As an American as it sounds be completely passive and let Paul speak to you and what Christianity is all about.

How can I live a Holy life before God if I don't try? Take it as a miracle! We look for miracles everywhere, why not in just resting in Christ's finished work. The miracle in that rest, is that the power then becomes present to do much more than a list of the laws that we can never keep. Call it the ability to rise above the law and our flesh. It changes our focus outside ourselves. Changing the focus to outside ourselves, really takes a miracle the way the world is operating today.

Since I got the Netflix subscription I have seen more than a few documentaries, a lot of them made by those left wing, commie, pinko

types, but a few by those right wing, libertarian, individualists. The last one I watched was probably the most scary, when you put it into the context of all the rest. The title of that one was "The Future of Food." Because of my background in biology I was able to understand somewhat the nature of what is happening with genetic engineering of our food supply. Agri business is in the process of putting in a killer gene in much of the seed they sell. That means essentially that you have to buy seed for your crops from the business to grow your harvest, because the gene keeps the produced grain from being a viable seed.

If this isn't big brother enough, all this isn't being done in laboratories, like other bio engineering and stem cell research, but in open fields across the world, and no governments know where those crops are planted. Furthermore, the United States is the biggest advocate of this research, without any safeguards or governmental oversight whatsoever.

So what happens if this killer gene migrates to the other seed stock outside the engineered seed? You have worldwide famine like the world has never seen, but more importantly you lose all the genetic information of all the developed and wild varieties, that can provide for rebuilding the food supply. These varieties have been developed over the whole history of agriculture throughout the world.

The section of Matthew we have looked at earlier are the words of Jesus speaking about the end of the age and the need for vigilance. The book of Revelation is a more in depth look into what will indeed happen at the end of this age, as God installs His kingdom on earth, through the judgment of the Great Tribulation period. What is interesting in my strange sort of way, is that the third and fourth seals of Revelation 6 could be brought about by just such an occurrence as a man designed killer gene in our food crops.

Of course the majority of American evangelicalism sees no need for earthy vigilance because they will soon be raptured out to be forever with the Lord and to move into their mansion in glory. This is, somewhat in the context of Matthew 24 and 25, because of their attempts to convert America to a Christian nation and to give the rest of the world democracy. Oh, I forgot that the Matthew 25 context deals with helping your fellow man, not political power.

So what really is the abundance that is spoken about in the parable of the talents? God's kingdom work, or the work of worldly abundance conversions to a relationship with a deist's God?

Walls and ceilings, so what does your spiritual house look like? Does it reflect the God that all creation can only give us a dark vision, or is it a nice house in the suburbs, or a penthouse condo on easy street? Is its foundation based on Jesus Christ's finished work, or is it built on the substance of prosperity, self righteousness, legalism, and vain attempts to live the victorious Christian life.

As for me and my house, we will stick with the God of creation, and the assurance of Jesus Christ crucified. This house will expand as we grow in Christ throughout eternity for its walls and ceilings are just a way to moderate the climate and not a building to limit God's glory.

Our latest Chronicles:

Rootless in the world; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/rootless5-24-6.pdf>

Unity in Diversity; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/unitydiversity5-31-6.pdf>

Evolved Units; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/evolvedunits6-7-6.pdf>

Chaos Economics; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/chaoseconomics6-14-6.pdf>

Christian acquiescence; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/christianacqui6-21-6.pdf>

Building; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/building7-26-6.pdf>