

Cutting Corners With Untempered Morter

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Ezekiel 13:1-15

Many are leaving out critical directions given in the Bible, and cutting corners to avoid following the instructions given by God. Jesus gave the directions we must follow, but few want to follow His directions to the letter. In Matt. 7:24-27, He said if we hear him and follow the instructions given by His word we are wise builders and our spiritual house will withstand the storms of this life.

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” (Matt. 7:24-27).

Today, many Christians are building their spiritual houses with untempered morter. The words “Untempered Morter” are in the Old Testament and are only found in the book of Ezekiel. Lynell and I came across this passage during our daily reading and I mentioned this would be a good topic for a lesson.

God tells Ezekiel how the people were using untempered morter. *“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that **prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!** O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because **ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies**, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing*

of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and **one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall:** there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. **So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;** (Ezekiel 13:1-15)

About the untempered mortar.

Mortar is an amazing substance. “IF” it is mixed properly with the proper ingredients, it will last for centuries! Contractors have disassembled old-time flues from brick, and smoke stacks made of limestone and in many cases the outer material will break instead of the mortar joints. A good grade of mortar that is allowed to cure and temper in the joint is as strong as the substance that it bonds together. For it to be that good, everything has to be exactly as the instructions spell it out.

It must have the exact amount of sand, exact amount of mortar mix, and the exact amount of water. Then it must be applied before it goes stale. On government jobs, mortar has a time limit on how long it can be mixed before use. If the time lapses, it has to be dumped and a new batch made so as to insure that the strength will be the greatest and that it will last the longest. Anything less begins to deteriorate in a very short time.

The same can be said for our spiritual strength.

We must follow the instructions to the letter, stay fresh, keep the heart from going stale, and always mixing, adding, and using only that which God has given us.

You have heard people say, “Churches of Christ, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.” This expression may have a familiar ring to it. “*But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*” (Heb. 13:8).

However, it reflects neither the truth of scripture nor the reality of history. Churches of Christ do change. God’s instruction never changed, but the churches in history have.

For example, the church at Ephesus had both a beginning and an end. In Acts 20:29-31, the apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders: “*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*” (Acts 20:29-31).

At first, the church at Ephesus was resistant to false teachers, and was even commended by the Lord for this. But eventually, it left its first love (Rev. 2:1-4). Unless the church would repent, the Lord promised He would remove it (verse 5).

History tells us that the church in Ephesus did cease to exist. When we consider what Paul said to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-31, we can imagine the process: Having lost their ardent love and zeal for the One who had so graciously redeemed them, they (the church) waned in their desire to “*...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*” (Jude 1:3).

As a result, they began to tolerate the false teachers they had once so steadfastly resisted. Eventually, even their own leaders began to teach things that were false. To use an expression that had been used earlier in describing the failings of fleshly Israel, they built a security wall and “*daubed with untempered mortar*” (Ezekiel 13:10-11).

Today, it seems like many among us are trying to build a wall of unity and security with untempered mortar quoting the 14th chapter of Romans and allow all sorts of things to be done in the church worship — for the sake of unity.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with true unity and security, which is provided for us in Christ, but a man-made wall of false unity and security built with untempered mortar is destined to come tumbling down.

Like Israel of old, many churches are in serious trouble today; but, instead of acknowledging it and then doing something about it, they are, instead, falsely encouraged by those who cry, “*Peace,*

peace! When there is no peace” (Ezekiel 13:10; Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11). “Individual cups, yes! Instruments of music, yes! Yet, God has not spoken it.

This cry is heard today in the messages of those who are preaching and teaching that things are really not as bad as they seem, and that churches are really better off today than they have ever been.

From all appearance, this is simply not true. Nevertheless, many Christians have been lulled into a false sense of security.

As our man-made wall of unity and security comes tumbling in on us, those who are intent on building the self-esteem of their listeners by crying “*Peace, peace, when there is no peace*” have only “*healed the hurt of [God’s] people slightly*” (Jeremiah 6:14). These modern-day Pied Pipers have cured nothing. In truth, they have only aggravated the problem.

In the name of a unity that will make us secure from “splintering and dividing into a thousand different groups, each with their own peculiar little doctrine, one that ultimately would have us tolerate just about every kind of false teaching, is being used to construct a wall put together with untempered mortar.

It is true that the teaching of Romans 14 was designed to preserve unity in the churches. This is done by instructing Christians not to divide over matters of indifference, but, the principals taught in Romans 14 were never intended to teach churches that they should overlook false teaching, or overlook the one who teaches it. Those among us who try to use Romans 14 this way are “daubing with untempered mortar”.

The stop-gap measure of a misunderstood and misapplied Romans 14 does not actually provide the unity and security it promises. On the contrary, just as untempered mortar would cause a wall to ultimately crumble, a tolerance for false doctrine actually develops false factions within the churches of Christ.

Conclusion

God has cautioned us about making sure that our spiritual mortar is not untempered, and tells us that man is not qualified to create his own spiritual ways to worship and thinking there is a better way to get to heaven than what God has proclaimed.

- Jer. 10:23, “... *the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*”

- Prov. 16:25, *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”*

The walls of untempered mortar will fail.

God tells us that we should study His word, forsake our own way, and do exactly as He has told us.

- Isa. 55:7, *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”*
- 2 Tim. 2:15-19, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”*

In His written word He has told us – He has warned us – to pay attention to His word and not make any changes to it. *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”* (Rev. 22:18-19).

Let’s make sure our mortar is tempered and keep our churches strong and everlasting.

