

The Church's Greatest Advantage
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Trust. That's a beautiful word. I doubt there will ever be a time in our lives when we will need this word more than we do at this season in history. It is now a day when the Lord is saying, "*Will you trust Me?*" There were such times, seasons of life back throughout scripture, that as you read especially in the Psalms (i.e. 35; 43; or 55) you can hear the cries of: "Oh, God! Everyone has left me! Why am I going through this *now?*" It helps us to know there were times in other lives that were not as wonderful as those people wanted them to be either. But there always was an answer for them – the same answer there is for us. That answer is in **finding God in the midst**.

It's so important that we know some of these things. I think of Micah, living at a time when Judah had been besieged by their enemies and wickedness prevailed: north – south – east – and west. It was much like we might say today: "Who can you trust?"

This is an odd day – today. I bought a few solar lights to place in my front yard for the evenings so I could see the walkway. As you get older, you need more light. (Now *that* will preach! ☺) But the very first night we put them out, someone came along and took one. ☹ It made me very unhappy – and "broke trust." Then I thought of all the nice things they could have broken in to steal – why a dumb little 25-dollar solar light? But that's the world we live in these days, isn't it? If it isn't nailed down or connected to an alarm or something that makes one fearful, like an electric shock – it's just gone! People will run over you with their cars if you're not careful and it doesn't matter if you're actually in the pedestrian lane or not. It's even come to the point we all simply expect to be cheated – and rarely are disappointed! ☺ It is just that kind of world in which we live today.

Micah lived in such a world (Mic.1:1; Jer.26:18; 2Chron.32) and one of the things that's so outstanding about him is, instead of moaning and complaining, he simply trusted and declared, "God, everything You do is right. Everything is right and everything is just. So, Lord, I ask forgiveness for what I've done – because I know I *do deserve this*" (see Mic.6:5b,13; 7:9). What an attitude!

But, you see, God always has been right – and He's right in what He allows to occur in our lives. These kinds of difficult times aren't always because we've been a "bad girl" or a "bad boy." They can be in our lives because He **knows what's in us, and on what foundation we're built**. So, He allows some hard things to occur in our lives to confront those other things.

Micah cries out at that particular time. He said, "*I will wait and look for the Lord. My God is my salvation. My God will hear me*" (7:7). I wonder if that ring of certainty is honestly our testimony – seven days a week? (I can hear the deafening silence there where you are! ☺). I wonder if people identify us (Christians) by that kind of positive attitude – or by the statement: "*My God will hear me! When I pray, my God will hear me!*"

Micah goes on to say, "*Because of this whole situation and I know that God will hear me – rejoice not against me oh mine enemy! When I fall, I will arise!*" (7:8). Micah obviously knew the "when" of that... and had the confidence of arising again.

"Wait!" you may say. "What about the scriptures that say, '*If you trust in the promises of the Lord, you shall never fall?*'" Peter said that, didn't he? Yes, absolutely, he did (2Pet.1:10). Yet, here Micah is saying "*If I fall...*" But you see there are differences in the concept – /fall/. Sometimes you can just trip for a moment and fall down, but you don't stay there. "*Distressed but not destroyed*" (see Paul - 2Cor.4:8,9).

I believe today, we have some unrealistic preaching taking place in some circles. This preaching says that you'll never have a problem if you give your whole heart and life and soul and mind and strength to the Lord. You will never have a problem. The trouble with that is – I can't find the verse! ☺ And I've looked everywhere! ☺ The real truth is – you will never be left like that – down, fallen (Ps.37:24). “*When I call, I KNOW my God will hear me; I shall arise!*” (Mic.7:8; see Jer.29:12; 33:3).

So – what is that all about? Where are we going with this discussion? My real question is this: What is the Church's greatest advantage? You know what that word means. Let's read it exactly from my good old 1828 Webster's Dictionary: “Advantage” is: “any state or condition or circumstance favorable to success, prosperity, interest, or reputation.” Now, read that again. That's what having an advantage is. Here's an example: “The enemy had an advantage because he was on elevated ground.” So – an advantage is a benefit, a gain, a profit. What is the *Church's* greatest benefit – gain – or profit? *What brings us to the condition, state or circumstance that's favorable to success and prosperity?*

Before I actually address that specifically, which I will get to, I'd like to first point out what it *isn't* because we've heard so many messages that say: “this will get you that.” But then “this” doesn't necessarily produce “that.” ☺ And we are left frustrated and confused, especially if we have dared to make the same statement to someone else: “This will get you that!” And then, when “that” doesn't come you wish “this” had never been spoken. ☺

When I say “the Church” I need to remind you – that designation refers to any and all who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Jew and Gentile alike become *the Church* in this day and era and age (cf.Eph.2:11-13). Everyone who has accepted Jesus as the Savior of his or her life is a part of His Church. Jesus is the Head of it. He loves the Church and gave Himself for it. With that in mind, let's look at our concept.

The Great Advantage for the Church is NOT:

1) Our Faith.

I know that's immediately shocking to some of you. You were just sure you were going to get the lollipop award for knowing the right answer! ☺ I know you were thinking, “Oh, she's going to say “Faith is our greatest advantage because the Bible says, ‘*what is it that overcometh? Even our faith*’” (1Jn.5:4). But you know, you can have *faith* in the wrong person – a little “g” god-thing (which becomes an idol, of course).

Or – to some people success is a result of “this,” but to others success is “that.” They each seem to have *faith* for whatever it is they reach out to grasp saying, “When I get *there*, then I will be successful.” And yet, those of us who travel meet many successful people, ones of great means or wealth or position, but who are totally dissatisfied, unhappy, depleted and defeated regardless of the fact that they have apparently reached their goal. And the on-lookers think, “WOW! If I had everything they have, look at what I could do!” Maybe – maybe not. They didn't attain happiness or satisfaction although they originally had *faith* that certain achievements or measurements would bring that desired success.

So it really isn't our *faith* that is our greatest advantage, yet we get nothing from the Lord without it (Heb.11:6). But just having faith is not our *greatest advantage*.

2) It isn't our Fellowship.

What could be more wonderful than our relationship with God? Don't we just love the *fellowship*? And we *can* have great fellowship with the Lord (1Jn.1:3; Jn.15:15). There's an old hymn we used to sing long years ago – “I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.” That is so personally meaningful to me. And there's another old hymn that speaks to us

about “Friendship with Jesus – fellowship divine. Oh what blessed sweet communion! Jesus is a friend of mine!” How wonderful! And it is so necessary for us to have that relationship with Him.

But that’s not the Church’s *greatest advantage* – to have friendship with Jesus, or even with one another.

3) It’s not the **Filial Love** either.

It’s not our *family* love – the Family of God – although that too is sweet to have. In each individual church, we can have such a loving experience together – truly a family. In a great church, where the feeling of “family” is important, the people are glad to see visitors come back again and say, “Thank you for coming back.” “Good to see you again.” “Welcome!” “Welcome!” Oh yes, *family love*! There’s nothing like the love of the family of believers.

In fact, I followed a car all the way across town one Sunday. The license plate was 1COR13. I just knew it stood for First Corinthians 13 – the great “Love Chapter” of the Bible. And I thought, “They’re going to some church.” And when they turned from the street, it was into a neighboring church parking lot. That’s a wonderful thing for believers to have love for one another. The love just comes out of us and we really care about one another – we take care of one another. We need that too.

Recently in a church service, I observed a brother who had been praising the Lord at the altar during the Worship Service. He was sort of stumbling to get back to his walker when another brother just quickly came over behind him and was just there if he needed assistance. That’s *filial love*. I like seeing that demonstrated! Don’t you?

But that’s not the Church’s *greatest advantage*.

4) It’s not our “**Followers**.”

Jesus said, “Go and make disciples” (Mt.28:19). And oh, how thrilling it is when He uses us in that way! Just yesterday I received a telephone call from someone in another state. And this person said, “I just want you to know the incredible impact you have had on my life.” This is a person who is out in the ministry today – and gives me a lot of credit for the encouragement, training and mentoring from years ago.

It’s wonderful to have followers! People that hear your testimony of what God has done for you and what Jesus has meant to you, and they grab hold of that and follow or copy the good things of your life. (If you’re wise, you don’t let them see anything other than the good stuff. ☺) But that is thrilling when people give a good report and credit you with some important part they claim you have made in their lives! Influence.

But that’s not the greatest strength or the *greatest advantage* of the Church.

5) And then there’s **Favor**.

There’s a lot of preaching about *favor* today. Oh, yes, we all want to be under the *favor of God*. I would raise both of my selfish hands in the air to claim His favor! ☺ I want to be under or within the favor of the Almighty God! I want Him to say to me, “*Thou art highly favored among women*” (Lk.1:28). When He favors me, everything goes smoothly for me. It’s a wonderful thing and I love it when I can sense, in the natural, the supernatural favor of God!

But that's not our *greatest advantage* or asset. That would simply set us apart from everyone else and they'd say, "Oh, yeah. Well, that church. They're just *favored* and – you know, we're not favored." And that is not the truth! God is "*no respecter of persons*" (Ac.10:34; Rom.2:11; 10:12,13).

- 6) It isn't our gifts – our **Fabulous Gifts** – or, wonderful giftings!

Tongues – interpretation of tongues – prophecy – or the laying on of hands and seeing the sick recover. Those are all just marvelous gifts of the Holy Spirit! A Word of knowledge – or the word of wisdom – or, faith (1Cor.12:1-11). All those are gifts from Him – and there are many, many more (see Rom.12:6-8; Eph.4:11-13). Wonderful favor-filled gifts...

But spiritual gifts are not our *greatest advantage*.

Are you getting curious? ☺ I hope so! That's the purpose of identifying all these *others*! ☺ I want you to be thinking – all the time! Keep thinking – what IS the *greatest advantage* we have as the Church?

- 7) It is not our **Feelings**.

We will – trust me when I say "will" – we WILL come to understand the difference between enthusiasm, volume, feelings, and – anointing! We will learn to discern between them!

Some people – many people – have never learned to discern what it is they are seeing in others, or experiencing in themselves. Some people have served the Lord for long periods of time but they still don't know the difference. They think if you don't scream and shout or something loud, it isn't really anointed. But I have heard people who barely spoke beyond a whisper – and the anointing was so obvious – and powerful and – effective! It was so wonderful to see and hear the voice of God in that way. And what they spoke came to be.

So it isn't our feelings, although admittedly I, of all of you, love to *feel* the Presence of God! I do! Sometimes I just sit in a church service and say, "Let me *feel* Your Presence, Lord. I know You're here because I read the Book and there's more than two or three of us gathered in Your Name (Mt.18:20), but I want to *feel* Your Presence!"

But that's not our *greatest advantage* – even when we do *feel* Him.

- 8) And, it is not our **Function**.

I have seen churches go through many changes over the years. They would begin in small buildings with few amenities and only a few people – with a single guitar or maybe two. And if they were lucky, one of them could play. ☺ I've watched the changes in these churches and approved of every one of them as additions were made to the structures, or color was introduced, and the people worked hard to brighten up the whole building. And look what has happened! Over some time, they may have grown to two choirs, added a Youth Ministry and Children's' Church, and Adult Small Groups, even a Recovery Ministry – all worthy *functions* of a growing church.

But it isn't our *function*, Church, that is our *greatest advantage*.

It isn't how big we can make the church become. It's not how many people attend. It isn't our *function*: how well you sing – or how well you write – or how well you do whatever it is you do – none of that is the Church's *greatest advantage*.

“Well, then – what is it?” I thought you’d never ask! ☺ What is the Church’s greatest advantage? We’ve discussed 8 things that important advantage *is not* – now let’s see what it is.

The only way I know to answer that question accurately is to find out what *God says* is our greatest advantage – because people have endless personal opinions. Isn’t that correct? If you’re trying to make a decision – ask ten people and you will receive ten different opinions about the decision. It’s frustrating, isn’t it? So, you pick the two you like best and say, “*In the mouth of two or more witnesses....*” ☺ (Mt.18:16).

The whole advantage the Church has, as God sees it is... Let’s read it from Isaiah 28, verse 16: “*So this is what the Sovereign Lord says...*” You cannot vote on that statement, my Friend. He is Who He says He is! And that is definitive! Now, here’s what He says, “*See, I lay in Zion*” – that’s the Church as we’re looking at it in the light of today – “*a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation...*”

THAT is the Church’s greatest advantage! We have a **SURE Foundation!** “*...the one who trusts will never be dismayed.*”

“*Zion*” is used here for an entire Empire, a Kingdom – the Church, in general, universal, upon the earth. Now, God says, “You’re looking for an advantage? Do you want to know how you’re going to win? How you’re going to be successful – victorious? Over anything? Over every situation? I’ll give you the answer! I’ll give you a **sure foundation.**”

The essential idea of this passage is the perpetuity of His Kingdom – that’s something that is unchanging, consistent; not stopping or being interrupted; continuous; running indefinitely; eternal, infinite, without end. It’s not – and I don’t want to take anything away from our rejoicing – but it’s not God looking down and saying, “Oh, Iverna, you have served Me for many years, and so I am going to give you a *sure foundation.*” That’s not what He’s doing here at all!

What He is saying is, “*I’m going to give you everything you need to maintain My Kingdom forever. I’ll give you all of it in Christ. He is your foundation. What you do on that foundation makes a difference only in your personal life – not in My Kingdom.*” That is enlightening and powerful!

You see, God’s Kingdom is perpetual – it is without end. It is going to go on with or without you, Dear One. When God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that whosoever would receive Him should not perish (Jn.3:16) – that was **salvation for every individual**. God had a plan that preceded the sending of His Son. That plan existed – *before* the beginning of time. It has always been God’s plan. And He said, “*I am going to establish My Kingdom on this earth. I will do that!*”

We simply didn’t understand what it meant to pray “*Thy Kingdom come*” (Mt.6:10). Jesus tricked us! ☺ Sort of. We just wanted to learn how to pray and He said, “*When you pray say, ‘Our Father which are in heaven, hallowed – holy are You’*” (Mt.6:9ff). And then He said, “*Pray ‘Thy Kingdom come, and Thy will be done on earth.’*” **I know it’ll be done in Heaven! He knows it’ll be done on earth!** If we could, in truth, get just that much revelation into our understanding, it would be a “big chunk!” ☺

Now – in the eternal, unchangeable, impregnable plan of God, He *allows* us, as individuals, to be a part of that Kingdom – *if we will!* He says, in this Isaiah passage, “*I will – give you a foundation*” (28:16,17). The sentiment of this verse is that through the tempest of all calamities... How many have just gone through some tough things? Not huge things. The truth is, in this country we really don’t know what *trouble* is. We sit here in air conditioning – we drive in air conditioning – we have beautiful homes – and food on the table – but it’s still “trouble” to us when something negative happens.

Our inconveniences seem so large in our minds. I have a fan blowing on the floor at home where I had a water leak last night. Amazing in Phoenix, but we’ve had a lot of rain. Besides someone stole my solar light!! I’m in *real trouble!* ☺ Right. ☺

Those are little aggravations of life. But when I look at the world and the condition of the world in which we live – listen – in comparison to when I was a young girl – things are so much worse now than then! They're not much *better* – they're worse! Many things have progressed greatly, positively – like in the fields of education and technology. We know a lot more these days. My grandsons are only 6 years old but they know a whole lot more than I did when I was 12! Maybe more than I know now – but we're not going there! ☺

What kids learn these days! And at so young an age. You can sit a preschooler down in front of a computer and they just assess things so quickly: “Is this the ‘on’ switch?” and off they go! Education has increased. Abilities have increased. But things aren't *better* because of the increase! “*He that is filthy is filthier still*” (Rev.22:11). It's a rotten world out there in so many ways. Can you say, “Amen” to that?

The reason things aren't better is that the progression of evil has far surpassed the progression of – *purity*. Oh, that condition will not last, Church! Come on! God has a plan! God has a purpose. It is not a permanent thing – the way things are progressing negatively – but it is a nasty now and now. And that's why I said, “Maybe there's never been a more excellent moment for this message than today,” because we are alive and quite capable of hearing what the Spirit is saying to the Church (Rev.2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13). And I am just simple enough to believe THIS generation can turn things around!

God – in giving us the foundation – said, “*it's the cornerstone*” (Isa.28:16). We know the main weight of any building is set upon the corners. Therefore, the *strongest stone* is chosen to be set there – even if there's a little sagging in the middle of the wall (denominational bickerings??), the corners are sure. God says, “I'm putting My foundation on the corner. I'm giving you a cornerstone. And it's going to be solid.”

If you walk back through history you'll see that they tried to put out our Light – oh, yeah – even before Jesus' day. There has been an attempt by the evil one to shut down anyone who believed in – now we'll say, *the Church* – back then, it was the nation of Israel. Look at what they went through. Every time God brought success to them...

Well, the first thing that happened is they were proud of it, thinking they brought the successes on themselves. So – the Lord said to their enemies, “Oh, fine. Go get 'em.” ☺ And they went through all sorts of being captured by enemy nations and going through various trials. And God says... (You cannot read the Old Testament without saying “Amen” to what I'm about to say). Every time God allowed defeat and captivity to happen to them He'd say, “But I've got a plan. And I'm going to redeem you and I am coming back for you and I am going to open your eyes and your ears and your understanding and I will have a generation among you that's going to bring...” Okay, it's worded a little different than that in the King James Bible ☺ but read your Old Testament history Books.

Then we step into the New Testament and look back through our history – not just in the USA but throughout the world – and see how there's been an attempt to stamp out the Church – over and over and over. Even here in our little *spit*! If you could go up on a satellite and look down at us – we're just a little *::phfft::*! We feel, “Well, we're just a little *::tssst::* in a *::phfft::* right now. ☺ I mean Phoenix is getting big but it's still just a *::tssst::* in a *::phfft::* ☺ because it's nothing compared to the whole picture. Are you understanding this with me? I am trying to make a point. We look at that smallness and cry out, “Oh, dear Lord! How are we ever going to make a difference?” You've heard me say before that I know I'm just one little drop in the bucket – but it will not get full without me!

We all need to take that same attitude! What we're each doing is just a little part of the whole, but my Friend, altogether we're going to fill the bucket! God will use all our little bits. He says, “Now here's what I want you to do! I want you – one person at a time – one family at a time – one area at a time – one city...” You know, some of us have carried God-given burdens for our neighborhoods or cities. We may even carry them for years – especially pastors who stay in the same location for the long term –

consistently praying for a divine breakthrough in their own areas. Praying for souls. Praying for the salvation of the many. Such a man or woman – clergy or not – is the right person in the right place for that very reason. “God, just one big Revival would change a whole region of our city!” Absolutely. His outpouring would change the whole thing! People from all over would be wondering and inquiring: “Hey! Where’s that church – the area where things are happening – where *good* things are happening?” Everyone is going to want to come and find you because they know – *that’s where the River of God is flowing!*

A family at a time – an area at a time – a city at a time – a nation at a time. You can understand the picture, can’t you? I don’t know why God does it that way! I think if I was in charge (God help us!) ☺ I’d do it all at once! I believe I would! I’d just send Revival to the whole world all at once and put an end to all the evil. But that isn’t a *building* – that will last.

I could take you back to places where I’ve ministered in the past – where they experienced such powerful Revivals – so much so that they’re known throughout the world for these mighty moves of God. Honestly known throughout the world. But if you stepped into those places today – some of them (most of them) – if you stepped in there today you would say, “What’s happened? How can this be? How can it be that there was so much power here – so much of the flow of God – and – where is that today?”

Here’s another more personal example. When I was in my 30’s, I was in a church where we had six straight years of Revival. It was a tremendous move of God! My brother Judson Cornwall was the Pastor and I was the flunky – uh, co-worker. ☺ For 6 years, people would just – “get saved” – like, all by themselves! They didn’t even know what they were coming into the building for. Many people would follow the choir’s opening processional right up to the platform, stop at the altar and cry out, “God, be merciful to me!” And it was like that at *every service* – not just once. We didn’t even know it was *Revival*, or to call it such at that time, because no one bothered to tell us what it was all about. ☺ It was just the way of our church! ☺ We thought it was fairly normal.

The people simply walked in off the street. Others reported, “I was driving along, going somewhere else and my car just veered in here!” We had six years of that glorious repetition. And then, God called our Pastor, Judson, and sent him out to the Body of Christ at-large. Now, some of you can say, “Thank God for that!” because Judson, as a traveling teacher, was a great blessing in your life, visiting and ministering so powerfully from the Word in *your* church somewhere around the world. And then later, God even used this little sister, sending me out to minister to the Body in the world-at-large. And that church at home just – atrophied! It went from 3 choirs to a few singers. How could that be?

I hope I’m shocking you because I know there’s going to be a mighty, dynamic move of God – and when it comes your way, I want you to remember these things that the old lady said. ☺ What God does – always – is the same generally – whether He does it “this specific way” or “that way.” This is what He does: He gives a ***foundation for every individual to build upon*** – and if each one doesn’t build, the building doesn’t go very high. I hope that is meaningful to you. There is a responsibility we each have to respond to Him individually as well as corporately and what we do as individuals will impact and affect the corporate body.

You see, I can sit in a corporate anointing, where there is a measurably blessed time *together* and everything is flowing and it’s simply wonderful. And in that setting, I can love everyone there. I can just rejoice in the blessing of it all. I can sit there for a year – listen to me – 2 years – 6 years – and yet *never build anything!* I can simply, personally enjoy that incredible move of God. I even can wallow in it and invite other people to come with me: “Oh, it’s wonderful! You ought to come hear our Pastor. Oh – you’re going to... I tell you! You can just sense the Presence of the Lord!” But you can, my Friend, at the same time, in the same moment – if you’re not very careful – sit there and almost backslide – by attending church every time the doors are open! I also have to build something *lasting* on that foundation for myself.

God laid a foundation – a cornerstone. He said, “The cornerstone will be *unshaken*.” So, don’t you blame Jesus for anything that falls away. The cornerstone is what God put there – and it remains. Jesus Christ is the same – always! (Heb.13:8). He is! That’s how God described Himself. “I AM!” (Ex.314).

Moses says, “Well, great. You’ve got this big mission for me, who am I going to say sent me?” (Ex.3:13). And God said, “Tell them I AM!” I can just hear Moses, can’t you? “I AM? That’s Your name? I AM? You ‘am’ what?” ☺ Sing it boldly when you sing it, Friends: “He is all I need!”

“I AM everything you need! I am comfort when you need that. I am a kick in the...ummmm – ummmm – when you need that.” ☺ “I AM your God! And I bring Myself, *in My Son*, to be the cornerstone of your – opportunity to build.” Are you beginning to see the picture?

God asks, “What will you build?” I can’t supply myself with the cornerstone. I wouldn’t know what to build that would produce the right foundation. I’ve heard so many people preach and teach and I’ve listened to the tapes and read the books. I’ve been in the Church almost all of my 76 years walking with the Lord. And I’ve heard “this” and been bent this way – and then I got bent “that” way – and then I’d get bent the other way. I’d consider it all and think: “Well, what’ll I build on?” The answer is – “the cornerstone, dumb-dumb.” ☺ The one thing that will last – the only thing that is *safe* to build on – God laid it!

Great. Now I know on what to build – the cornerstone provided by God (Jesus) – but how do we build? The scripture says, “*I lay in Zion, the cornerstone. It is chosen. Rejected by men, but chosen by Me,*” says God, “*and precious to Me,*” He adds. “*A precious cornerstone and the one who trusts in Him will never be ashamed or put to shame. I chose Him*” (1Pet.2:6f).

We never get used to who it is God chooses. Do you? I never do. ☺ You say, “Here am I send me!” (Isa.6:8). God says, “No, not today,” and then He sends someone else. And I think, “Oh, that’s not right! I wouldn’t choose them. They’re not as good as – him. They’re not as good as...” And God responds, “No, maybe not, but they’re chosen and precious. I mean, they’re chosen and precious to Me.”

You may not agree with this, but of course I’m right. ☺ You are going to be amazed at the people God uses in the end of this generation. You simply will be amazed! God will choose people that you wrote off long ago – because of whatever YOUR reasons were, and you figured, “Well, *they’re* not going to be a part of it, and *they’re* certainly not going to be a part of it...” But God says, “Just remember when I chose My Son. He was My Choice and He’s unchangeable.” I can just see Him stand back then, fold His arms and declare, “He’s precious.” Oh, my Friend – *you* are chosen. God goes right on to say, “*You are a chosen generation. You are a royal priesthood*” (1Pet.2:9).

Oh, there are lots of people – if they could vote you out of the Lamb’s Book of Life, they would! ☺ Aren’t you glad they cannot? They don’t have the eraser! They may have the memory of things about your past and they may even make all that known to the Lord. You know how that goes – they’re just supplying “unknown information” for Him – in case He missed it. ☺ People call it “praying.” ☺

But God says, “I knew that. I knew that when I called him (or her). Yeah, I know all about it. You’re right. There’s only one good thing about him that’s precious.” “What is that, Lord?” “He builds on the right foundation.” Oh, my Friends! If we can get hold of this today, we will see every scripture that talks about building in a new light – His light!

Jesus – is teaching and said, “If you will listen to what I’m saying and if you *do* what you listen to...” (Oh, *that* would preach for a week!) “If you listen,” Jesus said, “to what I’m saying and if you do...” or, if you prefer the King James language: “*he that heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them...*” Jesus is saying – “If you get it and put it into focus in your life, you’ve started a building! And that will be a building that is built on a rock” (Mt.7:24).

“Behold,” says God, “*I lay in Zion, a Rock, a solid foundation.* Whosoever *builds* on that Rock will not fall – you’ll make it! Because if the winds blow and the rains come, and the adversities and problems of your life progress, and the national political scene changes to a darker storm, and if – if – if – if – if... None of that will cause the house to be destroyed. But, of course, if you built on any other foundation than the Rock, it won’t take very much to *whoosh* – blow it down.”

I re-discovered an amazing scripture as I was preparing this message. Have you ever read a particular scripture, and then when you read it again – it’s as if this time was for the first time? ☺ It’s at that specific time that the Holy Spirit supernaturally opens something to your understanding – something you never saw before. I had that situation just recently. Paul says, “*Don’t you know that all of you – together – are the Temple of God, and the Spirit of God lives in you*” (1Cor.3:16). He continues, saying, “*God will bring ruin to any man that destroys My Temple* (1Cor.3:17). *And any Temple that’s built on something other than Me...*” – he’s pretty strong on that concept. What he was saying is, “Don’t fool yourselves. If you think you’re wise by the world’s standard, you’ll have to become foolish so that you can become wise by God’s standard – for the wisdom of this world is – foolishness to God” (1Cor.3:18,19).

Do you have an imagination like mine that’s kind of over-developed and you can see God sitting up there in Heaven looking down at all the leaders of all the nations as they convene together to discuss an impossible goal? “We’re going to come together and discuss – peace.” Or, “We’re going to come together and discuss – war.” And the Lord says, “You can’t do either one without Me!” ☺

Read the Book. On many occasions, the Israelites went to war without Him – and they lost – every time they engaged in war without consulting Him first. **There is no peace apart from God.** How many times have we seen peace treaties broken in just your short lifetime? God says, “Don’t you understand that this great wisdom of mankind is just foolishness – you can’t even pick a Superior Court Judge!” ☺ (Winter 2005-2006 – President Bush nominated replacements for two Supreme Court Justices creating great debates).

“**You don’t have enough of anything – without Me – to be successful in any area of life.**” Oh, maybe for a little while – whatever you call success. But the *winds* are going to come and the adversities are not getting any better or easier for a long while – because God’s going to have *lions in the pew!* He’s going to have strong, bold men and women who can say, “*None of these things move me*’ (Ac.20:24) – I’ve been there. I’ve been out on the desert. I didn’t die! I wanted to, but I didn’t.” ☺

I think when I was a little girl in my Daddy’s church we knew more about this teaching than we do today in this great prosperity we have been enjoying, because we used to sing songs that demonstrated the process. You know them, I’m sure: “Some through the water, and some through the flood; some through the fire, but all through the Blood!” We knew that foundation. And then, unfortunately, we took back ownership unto ourselves – our own ability to build – and we just built wherever it *seemed* like it was God – or good.

Paul cautions them not to try to be followers of a single man – “*Let no man glory in men for everything belongs to you!*” (1Cor.3:21) *Paul – Apollos – Peter – the whole earth – life and death – the present and the future – everything belongs to you* (vs.22). *And you belong to Christ and Christ is God’s* (vs.23). And that pretty well summarizes it all – and it’s all from 1Corinthians, Chapter 3.

Why did Paul have to say that? For the same things that exist today existed then. There are some people who only have tapes of one certain speaker – and that’s wrong (unless it’s me, of course ☺). You hear them say: “Oh, I really... When I hear *him*, I just hear God!” That’s good – but you need to come back to 1 Corinthians 3 – you need it *all*. Why are you going to lock yourself into what one *person*... “Well, you know, I’m... I’ve been a Methodist all my life. I’ll be a Methodist till I die.” Are you going to lock into *that*? Are you going to *build* on that denominational cornerstone? Are you going to *build* on that one person’s revelation?

Paul – Apollos – Peter – all these were great gifted men of God. And when God pours out His gifts, they are always coupled with His *revelation*, so each person has a piece of the whole (1Cor.14:26; 1Cor.13:9). This person has *this* revelation, and another has *that* revelation – and you do yourself harm, or severely limit yourself, when you come to the foundation and take only one revelation on which you try to build your all. It’s like saying, “I’m only going to put one window in my house.” That isn’t enough, Church. It restricts you. I trust you can understand my meaning here. We need to build on the whole counsel of God.

God says, “I give you everything.” And then He says, “You know, you can use...” – this is an amazing thing! He says, “...you can use anything you want to build with.” God lays the foundation – and you can choose to use whatever: wood – hay – or stubble – if you want those. Or, you can use gold – silver – and jewels – if you want that (cf.1Cor.3:10ff). It’s up to you to make the choice.

Now, I’ve personally been in both places – building both ways. God knows the truth of that! ☺ I prefer the latter, by the way. I like the jewels. ☺ But it’s so important what we use to build with! That’s where people get their *faith* and their *hope* and their *trust*. It’s in what they are building on or with – it’s from the revelation they embrace. I think, “What would happen if you lost all your income and all your big buildings or all your favor in society or even in the Church? What would happen to you?”

Well, the question is easily answered in the Word of God. He says, “They can build on anything they want, but there will be – a test! It will be a test of fire (1Cor.3:13). In the New Testament, fire speaks particularly of trials. He’s saying, “There *will* come a test – a time of testing. There will be a proving ground.” I thank You, my loving merciful gracious God, that you never test me until it’s necessary! Because I’ve put years of effort and energy into building with the wrong thing! I’m certain you haven’t done that. ☺

Believing – if “believing” would get it done – I was believing – every time. With all of my energies and my heart and my life, I was believing that *this* was the way to do it! Now, the Lord let me go on believing that – because it was my choice to make. Oh that He had stopped me when I picked up the first bale of *hay* – when I said, “I’m gong to build with *this*!” Why didn’t God send a prophet with revelation? “Iverna, this will not last – it will not stand the test.” I think His answer had to be: because I would’ve just switched from the bale of hay to the woodpile. I didn’t know any better back then.

God knew. “That won’t teach you anything. But just let her build.” So, I’m building. I’m “working for Jesus.” We used to sing it. We were so proud of our *work*. “We’ll work till Jesus comes – we’ll work.” Don’t you dare sing that here – or now! ☺ The song went on: “And we’ll be gathered home.” We were so proud of our work – and we called it that. That’s about the only honest thing we did! ☺ We’d say, “This is our ‘work.’” “This is their ‘work.’” No, it isn’t! I mean, if it is... ::*whoowhh*:: the wolf’s already huffing and puffing at your door. ☺ And when the wind blows, it all will come down – unless you’ve built on the cornerstone. On the Rock God gave.

This is amazing! This is grace! This is God’s grace! Listen: He says about those who build with the wrong materials – but if they build on the right foundation – and it is tested by wind or it is tried by fire – it – the work – will go ::*poof!*:: – but the foundation remains – and so does the workman! (1Cor.3:12-15). Oh! You want to talk about the *grace* – God’s grace? *The workman remains*. He didn’t destroy me when my whole house went down! Now, of course I’m talking spiritually – I hope you follow this.

He didn’t destroy me with it! He so compassionately said, “Watch, Honey. Let me show you what you’ve built that won’t last!” And He just let the rains come, and the winds blow, and the fire came and down went my – my – my – my – my... Do you hear it? “My!” And then what was left? The cornerstone remained – *in me!* And I rejoiced! “Oh! Hallelujah! You’re still there!” And He said to me, “I never left!” ☺

Then I asked, “Well, what am I supposed to do now? The hay’s gone. The wood’s gone. The straw is gone. The jewels are gone. The gold is gone. I spent everything I had to get this thing going!” And as always, He said, “*Build up yourselves on your most holy faith!* (Jude20). Your faith was in the wrong thing. You need to bring it back to the cornerstone – to the One who said, ‘*I will never leave you nor forsake you*’ (Deut.31:6; Heb.13:5) – to the One who said, ‘*All things the Father has given Me and I have given to you everything the Father has given to Me*’ (Jn.16:15; 17:14a, 22, 26) – to the One who said, ‘*You think this is wonderful now – greater things than these shall you do!*’”(Jn.14:12).

That’s hard to believe when you’re looking at just ashes. That’s very difficult to believe when you don’t see anything of what you’ve put your whole life into and there it is, just – nothing – when there’s only ashes. The song writer wrote it years ago and I’ve quoted it hundreds of times: “Though this way be straight and narrow, all I claimed was swept away. My ambitions, plans and wishes, at my feet in ashes lay!” I’ve been there. Have you? Are you there now? What will you do?

The song writer continued, “I will praise Him! I will praise Him! I will praise the Lamb for sinners slain! Oh, give Him glory all ye people!” Give Him glory for the thing that lasts: “...for His Blood has washed away each stain!” Not our *works* – that’s not where it’s at! Not what we call *success*. But it’s Whose we are! That is where the value and worth remain.

We stand today with all of the glorious opportunities of this moment and hear the Father say, “*Be not deceived. God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Gal.6:7). We know the truth of that negatively when we sow bad seed, but do we also know it positively? What are you sowing? What are you building? Don’t be discouraged if it’s not going up very high or very fast. I love to watch buildings going up – I don’t know anything about construction but I love to watch them as they’re being built. The thing that excites me most is when they finally get finished with all the necessary “stuff” I can’t see – down in the ground – and that takes months! They dig and dig and run lines and pipes and things. And if you’re trying to build a church, you’re raising money for the next phase, and can’t even see the first phase completed yet! ☺

And then a foundation is poured and there’s a whole bunch of “stuff” under it – that we’ve paid thousands of dollars for and can’t even see! I like it when all that is behind us and the walls go up. “Ahhhh. Now – oh, yes! I get it now! I can see it! Ooooo. That’s going to be bea-u-ti-ful!” And the walls go up and we feel so proud of what we’re building! Then again, it’s months more of the inside structural things. They’re putting things in the walls. They’re running lines up and in the ceiling – then down and to the little outlets. Now, that part is just not the fun of it all. ☺ I don’t like that part. I want to – decorate! ☺ And I want to decorate – tomorrow! ☺ Oh, I can hear you laughing – with me. ☺

We’re exactly the same way spiritually. I want to come to the altar – meet Jesus – be filled with His Holy Spirit – dunked in the tank (or get sprinkled or whatever it is you prefer ☺). And then – I want *instantly* to be decorated with all the gifts and all the treasures with all the favor of God... And inevitably, someone comes along and says, “Where do I plug in?” ☺ “Well, we didn’t build – outlets.” ☺ “Really? Oh, I see... I *think* I see!” But we need the outlets.

So, I say to you as *a church* – be encouraged today. I say to you as *The Church* – anything you have built on the Cornerstone is unshakeable. It will remain. I say to you as *individuals* – we are blessed beyond the curse (Gal.3:13ff). We are blessed and cleansed. We are changed (2Cor.5:17) but we’re also being changed (Rom.8:29).

Build well. Build your life on the sayings of Jesus Christ – on the living Word of God – on His whole counsel (Ac.20:27). For if these things – Peter said – if these things that are taught in this Word – “*If they be in you and abound...*” (2Pet.1:8a) – if you’re growing – not just living on one move of God... “*If these things be in you...*” If you’re overcoming every day of your life – if you’re applying the Word – “*they make you that you shall not ever be barren. You won’t be unfruitful*” (2Pet.1:8b). Your testimony will be heard. Your life will be a witness (Ac.1:8). Your children will come back to God.

“If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful...” because you will be always abounding – listen – in the work. It actually says, *“...in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Our knowledge of Him (full discernment, intimate acquaintance with Christ) should make us *active in serving* Him – the work. “I thought we got rid of *the work*.” Oh, no. We got rid of *my* work. This says, *“You will always abound in the work of the Lord.”*