

Pillars Stand For Something!

by John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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Several years ago my wife and I were blessed to be able to go on a Mediterranean cruise, one of those once-in-a-lifetime trips. We visited Istanbul, Ephesus, Patmos and many other wonderful spots, but by far the most exciting place we visited was the Acropolis with the Parthenon sitting atop it. To walk where Paul walked, to see Mars Hill and to walk among buildings that were over 2500 years old and still standing was truly a moving experience.

The Parthenon with its many beautiful pillars has been an example of architecture used around the globe. Our tour guide told us how those pillars had faithfully supported the upper structure for all this time, through storms, wars, fires and earthquakes. Even through the pollution of modern Athens' millions of people, the Parthenon's pillars still stand.

In one of our side trips, we had the opportunity to see the columns at Corinth. These columns are older than the Parthenon's and were cut from one huge piece of stone. The pillars on the Acropolis were cut in sections and fitted together with a bronze lock that snapped the joints together. It is only recently that these locks are being replaced.

We could not help but be amazed that these pillars continue to stand, erect and beautiful, faithfully supporting the roof, though thousands of years have passed.

This reminded us that God has called us to be faithful pillars in His house. "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God" (Revelation 3:12). If we are called now to prepare to be a pillar, then we should examine the characteristics of a pillar and work to emulate them.

A Solid Foundation

The primary function of a pillar is support! Synonyms of "pillar" confirm this: column, support, backbone, strength. Applicable verbs are bolster, brace, prop up, strengthen and sustain.

But a pillar, no matter how well constructed, can only serve its function if it is set on a solid foundation. If, as in Matthew 7:26, the pillar was set on sand, it would soon shift and harm the entire structure. So the first lesson we need to learn about pillars is that *one should have a solid foundation* of stone (verse 24).

If we have this sure foundation, we will be in harmony with Christ and His purpose. We will be seeking first God's Kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), eliminating the cumbersome distractions of a poorly prioritized life. A pillar's treasure will truly be in heaven and not in what he might accomplish in this world (Matthew 6:19-24). We will be applying ourselves in building upon our foundation by growing in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18), in solid Bible study (II Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17) and in putting what we learn to work (Romans 12:1-21).

Support Each Other

The second lesson we can learn is that *God expects us to put His instruction into practice by bolstering, propping up, strengthening and sustaining each other*. One person cannot do it all—it takes more than one pillar to support a building. The Family of God has been called to help and support each other. During this end time, we must learn to help the world by serving one another.

Physically, many of us serve by giving rides to church, helping in times of illness, making repairs to widow's cars and listening to and helping those who are alone, ill or facing trials. And of course, there are many that consistently pray for all of God's people, the leaders of the nations and this tired world. We should never stop doing these things because these are the things pillars do (Matthew 25: 34-40).

In our fellowship, we need to be encouraging each other to do what is right. To do this effectively, we must have our minds on what God's calling is all about.

Is His calling designed to have us involved with twigs or with the trunk of the tree? Does He want us to learn a series of interesting facts, or does He want us to build godly character? If we are encouraging and lifting each other up to overcome and build godly character, we will be helping to construct pillars.

Remember Paul's admonition in Ephesians 4:14-16: "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, *speaking the truth in love*, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Pillars standing alone cannot fulfill their intended purpose. A pillar must be joined properly to the structure to be able to serve its function. We all need to be very much joined firmly to what God is building. A true pillar does not separate himself and become a loner. Nor is he pushy with his knowledge and understanding, but he studies to be encouraging, edifying and wise in his fellowship with his brethren.

We can provide further support *in our heartfelt prayers for our teachers and their wives*. Too often we take the sermons and articles we receive for granted, not realizing the demands of time and effort that are placed on them. They need our prayers and encouragement and thanks. Remember that God notes our concern and thankfulness for the gifts He has given to His church (Ephesians 4:7-13).

We can also strengthen our brethren *in the faithful giving of tithes and offerings*. God has set a financial system in place to support the ministry, office and staff that provide many services, such as the phone hookups and publications, that teach and encourage us. And third tithe, excess second tithe and tithe of the tithe are all used to benefit the needy among us.

As all of us are concerned with our expenditures, ask God to help you to gain control over and budget your finances. If we set our minds to get this area of our lives in order, asking God for His help, He will not let us down.

In times past some have said all we have to do is "pray and pay." Presenting these valuable aspects of support in this derogatory fashion takes away from their importance. Anyone going through a trial

truly appreciates the prayers and concern of others. Any speaker at the Feast will acknowledge that the prayers of the brethren are essential in preparing meaty and inspiring messages. And those dependent on tithes and offerings for their livelihood could not serve their brethren without the faithful support of their brethren.

Pillars Are Witnesses

Joshua set up a pillar in Gilgal to remind the children of Israel of a great event, their crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 4:1-9). "Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: 'When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, "What are these stones?" then you shall let your children know, saying, "Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land" for the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, *that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever*'" (verses 21-24).

Just as that pillar stood as a testimony—and a pillar cannot serve while lying around—showing that God's hand was mighty for Israel, we should be standing as a testimony of God's way of life! He has called us to be pillars to remind the world of His righteousness, His right way of living. We should reflect God's character, honesty, deep love and faithfulness in all we do. We should exhibit the excitement of our wonderful calling to be members of His Family, bearing His name honorably in every way!

Who are God's pillars? The Greek word, *stúlos*, is literally a pillar or column. "Figuratively, any firm support, persons of authority and influence in the church (Gal. 2:9; Rev. 3:12); of the church as that which upholds the truth (I Tim. 3:15)" (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, 1992, p. 1318). Old, young, rich, poor, parents, children—anyone who upholds the truth is a pillar before God.

A Rewarding Responsibility

What is the reward for God's pillars? When we think of receiving a reward in this materialistic world, we automatically imagine wealth, power, prestige and leisure, but God had a much more exciting reward in mind. "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name" (Revelation 3:12).

Our reward consists of:

1. Becoming a pillar of perfect character with a firm and permanent position in God's Temple.
2. Remaining close to God forever. The phrase literally reads, "by no means will you go out."
3. Bearing God's name and the character, majesty, authority, honor, etc., that His name represents.
4. Living and working with God at His headquarters for all eternity.

Why does God offer overcomers the reward of being a pillar? Jesus Christ, the foundation and chief cornerstone, wants to share His office with us! What an honor! As pillars we will extend the strength of the foundation to support billions of others who follow us!

Because of the earthquakes in the region, the Athenian building code states that no structure can be built over six stories high. When earthquakes strike, writes one commentator, the safest place to stand is next to a pillar, as they always seem to survive. Pillars have an unswerving dedication to uphold and support and remain upright.

We must not allow the shakeups and tremors about us to cause us to sway and buckle. If we are solidly focused on the truth and building godly character, we will become a straight and strong pillar, able to help all of mankind.

Though it has stood for 2500 years, the Parthenon will eventually crumble, just as all that man has built will. But those who stand firmly for God's way of life and support and strengthen His people will not fall. They can look forward to a bright and wonderful future!