

Back to the Real Thing – How God Builds

I have called today's message "*Back to the Real Thing – How God Builds*" because in all our busyness of growing etc. we can often move away from God's actual design and plan and not even realise it.

REVELATION 2: 2-4 (ESV)

'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Other versions of the Bible say "LEFT your first love" not lost or misplaced – but left!

This can be so subtle that we do not even realise it and before we know it we have walked away from God's design, God's plan and God's purpose.

Actually – the truth is that people who are passionate for God are probably the ones most at risk of doing this because we can get so wrapped up doing the 'work of God' that we forget the 'God of the work'.

I read this in one of my daily reading books...

THE ABSOLUTENESS OF JESUS CHRIST

JOHN 16:14 He shall glorify Me.

The pietistic movements of to-day have none of the rugged reality of the New Testament about them; there is nothing about them that needs the death of Jesus Christ, all that is required is a pious atmosphere, and prayer and devotion. This type of experience is neither supernatural nor miraculous, it did not cost the passion of God, it is not dyed in the blood of the Lamb, not stamped with the hall-mark of the Holy Ghost. It has not that mark on it which makes men say, as they look with awe and wonder—"That is the work of God Almighty." That and nothing else is what the New Testament talks about.

The type of Christian experience in the New Testament is that of personal, passionate devotion to the Person of Jesus Christ. Every other type of Christian experience, so called, is detached from the Person of Jesus. There is no regeneration, no being born again into the Kingdom in which Christ lives, but only the idea that He is our Pattern. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is Saviour long before He is Pattern. To-day He is being dispatched as the

Figurehead of a religion, a mere Example. He is that, but He is infinitely more; He is salvation itself. He *is* the Gospel of God.

Jesus said—“When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, . . . He shall glorify Me.” When I commit myself to the revelation made in the New Testament, I receive from God the gift of the Holy Spirit Who begins to interpret to me what Jesus did, and does in me subjectively what Jesus Christ did for me objectively.

^{Mark}Chambers, O. 1993, c1935. *My utmost for his highest : Selections for the year* .

At the very core of EVERYTHING we are and EVERYTHING we do must be Jesus Christ and His purpose and plan. I feel we need to have another look at what our visiting speaker, Mark Crawford, of a few weeks ago began to teach us about how God builds and unpack it some more.

MATTHEW 16:18

“I (God) will build my Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail”.

HEBREWS 12:28

Therefore, since we are receiving a ‘Kingdom’ which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

We know that the scripture speaks of the people being ‘built together for a dwelling place - the Household of God’ as being made into ‘living stones’ (Ephesians 2:19-22)

We are instructed in Matt 6:33 to ‘Seek first the Kingdom’ not seek first the Church.

So if we are to ‘seek the Kingdom’ while God ‘builds the Church’ where does that leave us?

I believe we need to actually follow His example and as He builds the Church ... we the Church need to take that example out into the World and not just ‘seek’ the Kingdom but ‘SEE the Kingdom’ as God does.

‘All the Church is in the Kingdom – but not all the Kingdom is in the Church’

We cannot take that which God wants to be our lifetime commitment / lifestyle and reduce it to an event.

- E.g. Repentance – ‘this is not a ‘once done all time covered’ event.

Repentance is ‘present continuous’ – continually assessing and changing our thinking to bring it into line with the Mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

We are ‘transformed’ by the renewing of our minds. Renewing is a ‘time’ thing not an event thing. (Romans 12:2)

Today people are looking for information but ‘denying’ transformation.

We are conditioned to look for the instant fix formula without the true change that needs to take place and remain.

Even the Apostle Peter wanted a quick fix answer:

MATTHEW 18: 21-22

Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

If it takes 21 days of doing the same thing to ‘form’ a habit ... then I would suggest that having consciously and intentionally forgiving someone 490 times a good habit and perhaps even a lifestyle would be formed.

You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. Mike Murdock an evangelist and pastor

I have been reading through the book of Jeremiah recently and have been held captive by a small group of verses. I shared them with the service at our last Worship Night.

I want to use these verses and unpack them today and combine them with the three elements of God’s building process that Mark used.

JEREMIAH 10: 20-21, 23

1. GOD BUILDS RELATIONALLY

JEREMIAH 10:20

My tent is plundered, And all my cords are broken; My children have gone from me, And they are no more. There is no one to pitch my tent anymore, Or set up my curtains.

God did not send an email or a text message He sent His Son!

He gave us an opportunity to be His Children. He adopted us! This means we are eligible to every inheritance that a biological child has.

In the midst of change, a strategy of the Devil – the enemy of our lives – is to convince us to be ‘isolated’.

We should not be surprised that the devil uses this strategy. Everything he does is completely contrary to God. God wants relationship, the devil wants separation.

Why? It is common military strategy ... divide and conquer! An enemy is far easier to defeat if they are divided and separated.

Have you ever considered yourself as an enemy? If you are walking with Jesus, following His teaching and living in obedience to God you most definitely are an enemy of the devil.

God builds relationally and He wants us to do the same.

You can't help someone get up a hill without getting closer to the top yourself H. Norman Schwarzkopf - commander of the Coalition Forces in the Gulf War of 1991.

2. GOD BUILDS REVELATIONALLY

God does this in two steps:

- Revelation is ‘progressive’. It progresses and is unveiled as we seek the Lord.

JEREMIAH 10:21&23

For the shepherds have become dull-hearted, and have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

- Revelation is ‘positional’. It is not until we walk & arrive at a place where God reveals the next thing or the meaning of the journey.

Vs:23 O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

WE MUST HAVE RELATIONSHIP IN ORDER TO RECEIVE REVELATION

3. GOD BUILDS GENERATIONALLY

In the Book of Psalms it speaks numerous times about the generations and uses phrases such as “... to all generations”.

God describes Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Here's a thought:

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive. The Bible tells of us being cheered on by a ‘great cloud of witnesses’. Who would they be except the ‘Saints of Old’ cheering us on to ‘finish the race’ well? HEBREWS 12:1

An example of God working generationally.....

- 1 KINGS 13:2 – Jeroboam’s rebellion & Josiah prophesied
- 2 KINGS 22: 10 – Josiah as King & is given a copy of ‘the Book’.
- 330years between Jeroboam and Josiah yet God through the Prophet declared his coming.
- ACTS 3:24 – Peter speaking to the 3000 who were yet to be saved that the Prophets of old had foretold of these days.

We are not living for ourselves! We need to start living for a generation we may not see!

4. GOD BUILDS IN UNITY

God instructed about the ‘five major ministry gifts’. These five functions need to all be used or functioning in unity for full building to take place.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit all have their individual roles to fulfil but each works within perfect unity with each other.

They work in perfect unity and perfect relationship.

It all comes back to this...

‘Relationship’