

BUILDING BACK BETTER (1)

3rd July 2022 – Chris Hand

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 (v10)

The expression 'building back better' is heard a lot in this period after COVID as societies try to recover from the damage of lockdowns. All times require us to think about what we are building. I, myself, am back from a number of speaking engagements. We are also seeing the return of some of the meetings we held pre-COVID in what we call 'the 'old normal.' This is at the same time as some of the new friends made and ventures started during the 'new normal' of COVID times also carry on. Besides that our days are marked by the uncertainties of the situation in Ukraine.

Yet, wherever we might be personally, the thought that we should 'build back better' is a valuable one. We do not want to return to the 'old normal' but want something better than that. In fact, we find ourselves, as a church, still busy with much to do with the building and our new status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Things are changing around us but we want to ensure that the people we are, are being built into something of value.

It is Christ's work to do such building (See Matthew 16:13-20; Hebrews 3:1-6; and 1 Corinthians 3:9-13). There are always improvements to be made in the church which is a living organism (1 Peter 2:4-5).

1. An apostolic task.

The apostle describes his work as being a master builder (v10), reliant upon the grace of God that had equipped him to do this. Elsewhere the apostles' work is described as being foundational. We do not have apostles today but we are following the work of the apostles to build on biblical lines. Their doctrine is still fundamental to the life of the church.

It is the particular duty of Church Officers to follow those lines laid down carefully. Scripture tells us what we should confess, what we should do, how we should live and what we are to expect. Every church has a unique profile in respect of its location, history, age profile, size, gifts and opportunities. Neither is this simply something for

Pastors and Church Officers to be taken up with but we are all to be active in bringing to fulfillment God's plan for the local church.

So we want to build back better in relation to God, to each other and to the outside world. We want to be able to say to anyone who inquires who we are and what we are to be known for.

2. Building is work.

Building is work that involves toil. When we have builders in attendance there is noise, dust and a lot of manual labour, but the end product is good. Building work can unearth unexpected things, some of which need attention. There are issues like material shortages and there might be opposition (See Nehemiah 2:10, 19-20).

Mainstream culture is not sympathetic to the Christian message. People may not be violently opposed but they are apathetic and show no urgency about the needs of their souls. The ruling culture, as seen in the media and wider politics, is more overtly hostile. This is before we have looked at church culture which can be very confusing with such a wide range of belief and practice. There are so many books with so many points of view. Liberals deny the supernaturalism of the Bible and void the message of the church by taking away the gospel. Those of a Pentecostal/Charismatic persuasion hope to see some supernatural power at work, as they would define it, and try to teach the church how to find this. Others would have us to return to the church's Hebrew origins, or follow a programme like 'Purpose Driven', or seek to take over society and culture.

Our work has to reflect on these challenges and be very deliberate in what we are not as well as what we are. We have to be robust and capable of withstanding some of the pressures that come.

3. Christ – the only foundation.

That Christ is the only foundation at the centre of all building is vitally important for us to believe. It proves the unique place of the Lord in what the church is to believe and the message she is to preach. He is to exercise His authority as head over the church. It is to be His doctrine that is at the heart of all we do and all we are. This we can see in, for example, John 3:16; John 14:6; and Acts 4:12. We are to come to the Father through the Son. He is the One appointed for our salvation and whose glory is attested to everywhere (Hebrews 1:1-4). We are to believe on Him to be saved. He is the subject of our preaching, our practice, our hope and the whole of our life. The confession of Him is the rock that the Lord builds His church on.

We are to ensure that is the true Christ who is at the heart of our beliefs and confession. We always need to know who the Christ people believe in is, and what He does. The right Christ is the only foundation we can have.