

BUILDING BACK BETTER (3)

(Sermon Summary)

Morning: Sunday, 24th July 2022 – Chris Hand

Ephesians 4: 1-16. (vv4:15-16)

Our 'building back' as Christians and as churches always has to have Christ as the foundation of all that we are and do. It has to be the true Christ who is able to save us to the uttermost, and not a Christ where we have to add our good works in order to be saved. What we build on that foundation has to be good quality and not be wood, hay and straw. We have also seen that, just as Nehemiah faced opposition when he led the re-building of the walls of Jerusalem, we too will face obstacles.

1. Our living head.

1 Corinthians 3: 16-17 gives counsel about how importantly the Lord looks upon the quality of life in churches. The building work in the church to make it a temple of the Holy Spirit is ongoing and there cannot be a mixture of some gold and silver, and some wood and straw. We have to build back better with the right quality materials. The church is something we have to love and cherish. It involves both our 'vertical' relationship with the Lord and our 'horizontal' relationships with each other. Ephesians 4: 15-16 tells us the church is a living entity which derives its life from the Lord Himself. It is a working, growing, edifying, and loving enterprise. We work together with our eyes upon the Lord and upon each other. We learn together, apply the truth together and grow together. 'Building back better' means that there is a quality of life that is seen and experienced in the local church.

We saw the pressures upon the church last week that try to interrupt the church's progress. We are to speak the truth but there will continue to be pressures on the church not to speak the truth but to speak lies. Our doctrines on family and sexuality will be areas of continuing tension on into the future. Likewise, the errors of so much of contemporary church teaching are not going to go away but will still have the capacity to blight the life of the church.

2. We must be prayerful.

This is absolutely vital if we are to have the life of our living Head freely expressed in our midst. This is taught everywhere in the Scriptures (See Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2;

and Philippians 4:6-7). We should not be making excuses as to why we do not pray. We should not leave it to others, nor discount the value and importance of prayer by saying that we are too busy to pray. If we are able, why not come to the Prayer Meeting? Or if we cannot come, then perhaps we should be praying more at home for the cause of Christ. We should be vigilant over ourselves and our walk with the Lord to ensure that we are praying for ourselves and seeking the Lord's help.

3. The imperative of holiness.

If we are looking to be Christ-like, which is central to building back better, then holiness is an absolute requirement. Growing up as a Christian means that we will be growing in holiness.

For us as fallen creatures, it will mean that we are living a life of repentance, always learning more and being ready to turn from our sin. We have to leave behind old ways, habits, manners of living, and thinking. Unfortunately, over the years, the wider church has developed more than a few weird tendencies, practices, and ideas. We have to move on from these. Some of these are assisting the death of churches while others might draw people, but those people do not grow up. We have to avoid being dominated by guilt and fear which will make us glum and sad. True holiness brings joy to the soul as it brings us nearer to the Lord and the Lord nearer to us. If we are building on the foundation of Christ, then these things will follow. Christ as our foundation, prayer, the work of the Holy Spirit, obedience, holiness and love will all work together.

4. A living relationship.

Obedience brings to us the Spirit's help. This entails bringing into our soul the Person of Christ (John 14: 15-18). John 14:21 tells us that obedience will make the love and the Person of Christ to be revealed to us. If we abide in Christ, then we will grow (John 15:4). There will be progress as we see in John 15:5-7. Our prayer life will lead to fruitfulness. We are to abide in the love of Christ who saves us (John 15:9-10). We are to be alive in our living Head. We are to seize every moment to grow into greater Christ-likeness. We are to build back better both in our vertical relationship with the Lord and horizontally with each other.

So we have to discard immorality and the uncleanness of this present age. We should avoid manipulating people to get what we want from them. We should be careful not to boast in men (1 Corinthians 3: 3-4). We should be rid of carnal attitudes (1 Corinthians 3:21). This can involve the slavish and unthinking following of men where we can end up defending the wrong people, or becoming proud, critical, and dismissive of other people. People can indulge in one-upmanship where they are seeking to know more than other people. We can make idols of ourselves and reckon we are experts.

We should be loving and have a concern for the welfare of others. This is something Paul appreciated in Timothy (Philippians 2: 19-22). We should have real concern for those who are perishing, not being sentimental about them because many of them are very opposed to the truth. We cannot promise ourselves that revival is coming or that one more evangelistic thrust will make the difference. But we are to stay concerned and diligent.