

I Will Build My Church – Part 6

Matthew 16:18-19 (KJV) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

- This series is about discovering God's blueprint for building His church!

PRINCIPLE #9: A LIVING LEGACY

(Acts 7:48-51)

Acts 7:48-51 (KJV) ⁴⁸Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, ⁴⁹Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? ⁵⁰Hath not my hand made all these things? ⁵¹Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

- When he is arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, Stephen recounts an eloquent and lengthy history of the Jewish people from memory – HE VALUES HIS HERITAGE!
- However, he gets in trouble when he tells the Sanhedrin the truth – that they have tried to confine God to the temple, when He is bigger than that! They are holding on to the “letter” of their legacy, but they have let the “spirit” of that legacy die! It is now little more than dead tradition!

2 Corinthians 3:5 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

- God refuses to be confined by our concepts! He will not be limited by our legacy (no matter how wonderful that heritage may be!)
- What the Sanhedrin needed to do was take their limitations off God, but they resisted the Holy Ghost and refused to change their mentality. They believed that God was still confined to the Temple – even while He was walking through the streets of Jerusalem in bodily form!

Isaiah 43:19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert.

Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

- God is going to do something greater in the last days than He has EVER done before! The only question is, how much do we want to be involved in the last days harvest?!

Amos 9:11-15 (CEV) ¹¹In the future, I will rebuild David's fallen kingdom. I will build it from its ruins and set it up again, just as it used to be. ¹²Then you will capture Edom and the other nations that are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken, and my words will come true. ¹³You will have such a harvest that you won't be able to bring in all of your wheat before plowing time. You will have grapes left over from season to season; your fruitful vineyards will cover the mountains. ¹⁴I'll make Israel prosper again. You will rebuild your towns and live in them. You will drink wine from your own vineyards and eat the fruit you grow. ¹⁵I'll plant your roots deep in the land I have given you, and you won't ever be uprooted again. I, the Lord God, have spoken!

- James told us that this Scripture applies to US!

Acts 15:14-17 (KJV) ¹⁴Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. ¹⁵And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, ¹⁶After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: ¹⁷That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

- The Pharisees had a LEGACY, but it was no longer LIVING. It had not kept pace with God. What about our concepts and mentality? Have we lowered our expectations and reduced our commitment? Are we keeping pace with the Almighty, or are we lagging behind in what He is wanting to give us?
- **IS YOUR GOD “TOO SAFE”?** While we honor our heritage, could it be that we are hiding in our history? We must know God for ourselves!

2 Kings 2:13-14 ¹³He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; ¹⁴And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

Deuteronomy 6:10-12 ¹⁰And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, ¹¹And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; ¹²Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

- By nature, human beings resist change. People are quick to criticize innovations, because the necessary changes frighten them.
- Once people said that cars would never replace the horse and carriage. Others said that the light bulb wasn't any better than the kerosene lamp. Some said that movies could never entertain like vaudeville could. Others declared that television would never replace radio as the primary source of entertainment. When Alexander Graham Bell invented an instrument called the telephone, which enabled people to talk through a wire over great distances, he was almost laughed out of town!
- The digital watch you now wear on your wrist contains more computing power than existed in the entire world before 1961. That birthday card with a 10-second message prerecorded by your kids contains more processing power than all the vacuum tube computers in 1950. Your car has more computational power to get it down the street than all the computers combined in the Apollo 11 spacecraft that carried Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin to the moon. We are now living in a world where it is cheaper and faster to send a signal over 20,000 miles up to a satellite and back to a vibrating pager than it is to have someone walk 50 feet to tell you your table is ready.
- The Arabic cultures of the world are in many ways fairly primitive, unchanged for thousands of years. In fact, the closest thing Islam has to our Western notion of "heresy" is the Arabic word for "innovation." They hate change! And they are not alone in thinking any change is heresy! Some Christians would fit in well with the Arabs!
- The early Christians were opposed to the change from communicating the gospel orally to writing it down! We would not have had a Bible if someone had not changed their methods!
- Obviously, we live in a changing world. But some changes are good and some are bad. As far as the Apostolic church is concerned, the slightest change in MESSAGE would be absolutely fatal. However, even the early church wrestled with the issue of changing METHODS (Jew to Gentile, Apostles only to Team Ministry).

- The church that refuses to occasionally evaluate and change its METHODS is not protecting its message, but hiding its message behind obsolete traditions. This is what the Pharisees did!
- The human body is an incredible mechanism built by God, and like all of his creations it must change constantly to stay alive. In the medical world, a clinical definition of death is a body that does not change. Change is life. Stagnation is death. If you don't change, you die!

Hebrews 6:1-3 ¹ Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, ² Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this will we do, if God permit.

- Growth is the "name of the game" in the church – and growth is, by its very definition, **CHANGE**.
- **WHY OUR CHURCH MUST NEVER STOP GROWING:**

1. **Because God loves people!**

“The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.” (2 Peter 3:9)

“For the love of Christ compels us ...” (2 Corinthians 5:14)

2. **Because God commands us to witness.**

“... Go out into the country ... and urge anyone you find to come, so that [my] house will be full.” (Luke 14:23)

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me ... unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

3. **Because growth is God's will.**

“Under Christ's control, the whole Body is nourished ... and grows and God wants it to grow.” (Colossians 2:19)

“(Jesus said) ... upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.” (Matthew 16:18)

- There are lots of unbiblical EXCUSES for not growing (“God isn’t interested in numbers” ... “Our church wants quality, not quantity” ... “Large churches are impersonal”) – what they all have in common is SELFISHNESS.
- At First UPC, our purpose is to grow an **Apostolic church** – not just to create another religious group!
- Your body is alive only because it is constantly changing. Death and changelessness go together. Life and change go together!
- Bumper stickers: "Change is good. Unless it happens." "Change is good. You go first."
- To grow, have revival, and do the will of God, our local church may occasionally have to change its METHODS. However, you can be assured that we will never change our MESSAGE.
- **To change a method doesn't mean eliminating the old, but rather incorporating the old within the new.** Notice that Israel did two contrasting things when they left Egypt:
 1. Moses took with him the bones of Joseph (Exodus 13:19). Those bones were the symbol of the Hebrews' history, prompting them in their struggle to remember, equipping them in their war against forgetting.
 2. But Israel also plundered the Egyptians (Exodus 3:21) when they left – they used the inventions of the Egyptians to do the will of God in their own nation.
- We need to do what Ezekiel did (Ezekiel 37) – we need to make those old bones live! Use every bit of modern technology and method, but keep ourselves tied to our heritage, making it come alive!

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

John 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

- Jesus used the analogy of "living water" when He talked to the Samaritan woman to describe the gospel. Water fills any receptacle without retaining the form of any. The container doesn't matter. Content stays the same, containers change.