

The Replaced and Restored Church

Ezekiel 36:33–38 (NKJV)

³³ Thus says the Lord GOD: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable *you* to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. ³⁴ The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. ³⁵ So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities *are now* fortified *and* inhabited.’ ³⁶ Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places *and* planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*.”

³⁷ Thus says the Lord GOD: “I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock. ³⁸ Like a flock *offered as holy sacrifices*, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD.” ’ ’ ”

It is easy to conclude that things are getting worse each day. The attitudes of those in leadership, whether in politics, finance, or the church appear to write-off all that God intended to be good.*

That kind of thinking has created a sense of futility, disgust, disenchantment, and surrender to the forces of evil and destruction that continually come against us. Too many are contemplating suicide and the youngest of children are using guns and bombs to disrupt and destroy lives.* Families don’t come together; the rich have ignored that the poor shall always be with us; the sick give up on healing; and personal lives decline being restored.

Christian Churches, which are supposed to be havens of peace and a refuge from evil, are slowly becoming “hell and rumor centers” and the unsaved no longer seek the church sanctuary as a place where the Lord may be found.

There was the reintroduction to the Holy Spirit to some and the presentation of the Holy Spirit to others. This church adopted the theme of the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship – “Changing a Generation,” because we realized that we could not change folk who did not want to be changed and who had become satisfied with the limitations of spirituality that had been imposed on them by tradition. There had to be a new generation.* People had found sufficiency in the “Ole Time Religion”* that Grandma had, but they were uncomfortable with having a *relationship* with God through the Holy Spirit. They had “religion” but they had little “power.”

Thousands of people have come and gone through this ministry over twenty years. Those who came first and remain have witnessed it all. The names of the individuals and families are too many to recall.* Each time I meet a Cornerstone alumnus, they recall some experience that they had in this church that changed their lives. *

The Lord has revealed that it is time to take inventory and evaluation of this *changing generation*. It is important for us to recognize change in the context of God’s Promises to us. That’s true for the church and it’s true for our lives.

There are five (5) things that must be recognized as it relates to what He is doing in this church:

1. There ought to be a desire (not a need) to be changed. **Verse 33:** Ezekiel reminded Israel that they should *desire* and expect God to give them greater than what they had. The prophet was showing them that the best was yet to come. It would exceed what was prophesied by Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. It would be larger than rebuilding the walls or rebuilding the temple. It would be greater than restoring the fields. It was greater than their dreams.*
2. There has to be a foundation for change that matters. **Verse 35:** The Garden of Eden and God's Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made of the foundation for Israel's expectations and God's Promises.
3. You have to be prepared to handle the conditions of change. **Verse 36:** Folk will be introduced into your process of change that have neither the desire nor understand the foundation for your change.* Demonic forces will seek to deceive you to divert you from change. New folk in the church have no recollection of the foundation upon which you may be changing your life. **You** may be the only semblance of meaningful change that they see.
4. You have to pray while you are changing. **Verse 37:** Ask God to get you through your change.
5. You have to know that it is God who is changing you. **Verse 38:** God will do it; I've seen Him do it. It's not luck; it's not a fad. God is not a new thing; He's doing a new thing in you.
 - a. He will replace a ruined life and its new vitality.
 - b. He will restore your soul.
 - c. He will fulfill the expectations for you and your family and your church.
 - d. He will stand with you through every adversity and challenge.
 - e. He will fortify you when enemies come against you like a flood.