

Devotional Thoughts :: This Old House

This Old House - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/7/29 1:22

This Old House

by

Jimmy Humphrey

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock... (Matthew 7:24; NASB)

Recently, the denomination of a Church I used to attend, and from whose Bible college I am a graduate, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), had their General Assembly at which a measure was being voted on whether or not women could be ordained into the office of a bishop. The measure was a controversial one in which many pastors said they would leave the denomination if such a thing happened. The measure failed to pass.

But before it failed to pass, many within the denomination were praying about the issue, and attempting to search the Scriptures and understand how God would have them move as a denomination. Should women be allowed to be ordained as bishops within the Church of God? Though I'm no longer part of that denomination, I had the opportunity to talk about the matter with some who were, and give my opinion on the matter.

Instead of giving your traditional yes or no answer to the subject, and outlining various theological reasons as to why such was or was not permissible, during the discussion I said that the debate that the denomination was having was ultimately a futile and pointless debate. Indeed, I went on to say that the Scriptures had no answer for the question being put forth for vote on the General Assembly floor.

Why did I say this? Because ultimately, I believe that the Scriptures explicitly condemn the practice of denominationalism. Therefore, if the Scriptures do not support the existence of a denomination to begin with, then how can one ever turn to the Scriptures to answer the problems that arise within a denomination concerning the workings of their form of Church government? The entire issue at hand was built upon a foundation that has nothing to do with the word of God. Therefore, it is my conviction that the Lord has nothing to say to the Church of God General Assembly on the topic.

You see, when you build a Church on foundations that don't include God's word, and then ask Him to fix the cracks in your walls, without changing the foundation your house is built upon, you are engaging in a futile repair effort that is doomed to ultimately fail in the end. The only way to truly solve the problem is to tear down the house entirely, and rebuild it on a good foundation, the foundation of the word of God. For the long term structural integrity of a house ultimately depends upon having a rock solid foundation. If it does not have this foundation, natural forces that erode the foundations of the house will eventually cause stress fractures to appear, and threaten the entire existence of the house altogether. If the foundation is left untreated and is compromised, a great disaster is lurking just around the corner.

Now, I've not said all of these things thus far to give some great theological discourse on how churches ought to be governed. That is another message for another time. Rather, I've said all these things so that we might ultimately consider our own individual lives, and discover what place God's word has in our lives. Is God's word the very bedrock of your life? Does it support everything that you do? Is it the very foundation of everything that you are? Do you build your life upon it? Or are you building your life upon the foundations of your own human wisdom, and the corrupt dictates of a sinful heart?

Jesus taught in Matthew 7:24-27 that the outcome of our lives and eternal destiny ultimately depends upon which foundation we build upon. The Lord said it is the wise man who hears His words, and builds his life upon them. Such a man can be compared to one who builds his house on a rock solid foundation, and as a result, can weather any storm. But the foolish man is the man who hears the word of the Lord, and does whatever he wants to do in life anyway. Such a man, Christ said, can be compared to someone who builds their house on sand. Such a person is always one storm away from disaster.

This illustration is ultimately the Lord exhorting us to stop doing things our own way. The cracks we see in the walls of our house, such as run-away-debt, relationship troubles, and ugly attitudes, are all signs that tell us we have built the house of our lives on everything but the word of the Lord. And instead of doing things our own way and building on a bad foundation, I believe the Lord is showing us that we desperately need to experience a fundamental change that gets to the core of who we are as people. Ultimately the call to build our house on the solid rock, instead of the shifting sands, is a call to repent.

But such a repentance is a costly thing. For in it, one will either have to completely tear down or abandon altogether the previous house they were working on, because of its faulty foundation. A new work will have to begin, and a new foundation will have to be laid. For anybody who has ever done such work, one knows such is no easy task. It's a painful task that requires much labor, and careful attention.

Knowing such a difficult task lay ahead, as one brother I know put it, many people are content to merely white-wash the problem with a fresh coat of paint and do a little spring cleaning. They think that the steps they've taken at changing their lives are, "good enough." A little personal reform here and there, dropping a few dirty habits, etc., etc., and before you know it, everything looks brand new! But such persons have only deceived themselves, and in embracing their "happy compromise," they are willfully ignoring the fact that they are not building their lives on the solid rock of God's word. But in spite of the superficial changes they've made, disaster will soon befall them, because they've not addressed the foundations upon which the house of their life is built.

Our repentance is never truly complete until we've experienced the fundamental change that must take place in our lives, where we stop doing things our own way and start ordering our lives according to His way. The old homes of our lives (including the denominations we have built) must be altogether forsaken, unless we become like the fool in Christ's illustration, and have everything we built come crashing down on our heads when the storms finally do come. Such a fundamental change cannot happen though, until we see the error of our ways, and completely surrender our lives to serving the Lord Jesus Christ. For apart from that surrender and that commitment, we will continue on in our futile building project, and our madness will never cease.

Therefore my brothers and sisters in Christ, let me encourage you to be fully committed in your walk with the Lord. Make no room for superficial half-hearted service unto the Lord. Allow for no compromise. Don't build on a bad foundation. Rather, be committed to being disciples of Jesus Christ, and frame everything that is your life upon what He has taught us. Walk like Jesus, talk like Jesus, and in everything you do, be like Jesus. For it is by His word alone that you will ultimately stand in the end. Otherwise, be certain, you will surely perish.