

Taking Away to Establish

16 October 2016

Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 10:5-9

*"Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." **He does away with the first in order to establish the second**".*

Today I want to focus on this last verse because in it I see a principle that seems to occur over and over again throughout scripture and in life in general. The principle is simply "taking away in order to establish". The writer of Hebrews is obviously talking about doing away with the Old Covenant in

order for the New Covenant to be established. At the time when this was written it must have caused a stir amongst Jewish believers - it must have been hugely offensive for them to hear that the very basis and foundation of their religious belief should be done away with so that a new order of things (the New Covenant) could be established. This new order was all about doing away with legalism, tradition, and ritual. In short the Law of the Old Covenant was under threat and obviously the Jews strongly resisted this. But among them were some who believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They were living under intense persecution due to their newfound faith in Christ and some were even considering returning to Judaism to avoid further persecution and suffering. It was to them that the writer addressed this letter of encouragement around 67AD.

The writer is at pains to emphasize that the New Covenant in Christ is far better than the Old Covenant. In the Old it was all about laws, rituals and traditions, whereas in the

New it is about relationship, righteousness and liberty.

Human beings are creatures of habit and whenever something new or different to what we have been used to comes along, generally our first reaction is to resist the change. The problem is as someone (I think Tony Robbins) once said "if you keep doing what you have always done, you keep getting what you always got - nothing changes".

Scripture, on the other hand, tells a different story and the principle of taking away to establish should be the norm for believers. Ok, let's look at how this principle plays out right from the beginning. Turn to Gen 1:5, 8, and 13 which is the account of creation.

"God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day". Genesis 1:5 .

Notice the sequence here.

"And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day". Genesis 1:8

"And there was evening and there was morning, the third day". Genesis 1:13

This is the pattern throughout the first six days of creation - evening followed by morning.

I have noticed this pattern at work in my own life quite often. Most of the change that I have experienced was preceded by darkness; some crisis or difficulty or challenge that seemed negative.

In the natural our days start with the morning but this is not always how it is with God. I have come to realise that a change or new beginning for us as believers often begins with darkness - a taking away.

The encouraging thing is that darkness is followed by light - morning follows evening and whenever we experience an evening or darkness event we also seem to eventually experience a new morning in God. God allows something to be taken away in order to establish something better.

In each of the first six days of creation God moved creation to a higher level each day until on the sixth day He creates the pinnacle

of His creation - He creates man. Then, and only then, did He rest; once He had brought forth His image and likeness in the earth. So guess what? We will only stop having the evenings of life followed by mornings when His image and likeness is truly seen in our lives. There is still much to be taken away in order for His will to be established.

Turn now to Luke 5:33-39. *"And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is **taken away** from them, and then they will fast in those days." He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put*

into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

We see a resistance to change spoken of by Jesus. But He too emphasizes that if we do allow the taking away to occur, we then move into something better.

Jesus even talks about this in relation to Himself in John 16:7 where He says

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you".

Jesus could not be everywhere at all times as a flesh and blood man but the Holy Spirit could. So He had to go away in order for the Holy Spirit to come - taking away in order to establish.

The wine skins spoken of here were animal skins sewn together to make a watertight bag into which wine was put. When the wineskin got old and brittle the fermenting wine would cause it to burst and the wine would be wasted. Hence the statement that you can't put new wine into old wineskins. So if we are to embrace the new we will have to discard

the old wineskin; the old way of doing things; the old way of thinking. Something has to be taken away in order to establish the new.

Whenever the Christian church has experienced a new move of God there have been those who have wanted to hang on to the old wineskin, to stick with old traditions and habits, and they have resisted the new and criticized it. Therefore they missed out on the new wine of what God was doing.

Faith is all about letting go of the old even before you have a firm grasp on the new. It is about welcoming and embracing change that God initiates and then letting go of the old that is no longer needed nor relevant. Faith says "I trust you God even though I don't understand the change. I know Your plans for me are good and the future will be better".

The new comes out of the old; morning follows evening. Often when we are going through an evening season in our lives we may not understand why and feel confused or angry and we could be tempted to go back to the old. But if we persevere and come

through we will look back and realise that it was best for us to go through it rather than stay stuck in the old. The new is much better. Hindsight often brings understanding.

Ok, lets turn to 1Cor 15:35-36 *"But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"*

You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies".

You cannot have a resurrection without a death, a morning without an evening, the new without the old. Look at verse 42-49 now *"So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the*

man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven".

We see the old and the new contrasted here. The old has to be taken away in order to establish the much better new. We were all once in the old man but because of Christ the old has gone and the new has come - we are a new creation in Christ.

But before we can have a morning we have to have an evening. God first takes away, then He establishes. The next stage in our life personally and in our lives corporately will not be established without something of the former being taken away.

Old Elijah experienced this when he was living by the river in the Kerith Ravine and God sent water in the river and the ravens brought food for him - in fact he had room service and he was loving it. Why would anyone want to move when they seemingly have it all? But God had a better plan for

Elijah and in order for that to be established in Elijah's life he had to move and the only way to get him moving was to take away. God stopped the river flowing and He stopped the ravens bringing food. Elijah had to move, or die. Elijah could have felt that God was against him, but God knows what is best for us and Elijah went to a whole new level in God after this. We too may find ourselves at a place in our lives that we don't understand. But take heart God is at work and as we submit to Him we will be able to look back and see exactly what He was doing all along. God is so committed to bringing about the likeness of Christ in us that He allows evenings and mornings in our lives. Whatever we are going through or have been through is actually a rehearsal for where we are going to. God is building character in us and He is taking us from one degree of glory to the next. There will be a taking away at times in order for Him to establish the new that He has for us. It may not always be comfortable or easy, but it will always be better in the long run.

On the 23rd of this month we will be getting together to talk about what God has done in Urban Springs, what He is going to do, and what our part to play in this is.

Against the backdrop of today's talk I feel that Prov 29:18 has an important message for us. *"Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law"* or as another translation puts it *"people without a vision perish"*.

Vision brings us under restraint or discipline. For example an athlete who wants to compete in the next Olympic Games in four years time has to hold that vision before him or herself and eat correctly, train appropriately and not do all the things they used to do that could possibly undermine what they want to achieve. There has to be a taking away in order to establish. Without the vision before them there would be no restraint to stay focused and there would not be the necessary discipline to accomplish the vision.

Only when the vision is clear and compelling will we be able to persevere through the

evening times of life, and exercise the necessary restraint and be disciplined to stay on track and then enter the morning season that God has for us.