

God's Removals

"He takes away the first in order to establish the second."

(Hebrews 10:9)

God removes in order to establish something better. The context of this great principle is the covenants. The first covenant was wholly of God yet removed by Him in order to establish a better covenant based on a better promise. That better covenant was brought into being by His death on the Cross because Jesus rose as High Priest of a new covenant. It would no longer be curse and what not to do, but blessing and what Christ can and will do. No longer a striving to keep the Ten Commandments, but the law of agape love written in the heart and mind by the Holy Spirit (compare Hebrews 8:7-13 and 2 Corinthians 3:3).

The New Covenant was to be written on the softest thing, a human heart, rather than the hard stones of the Law. God through the redemption obtained by His Son would dwell in His people by the Holy Spirit. The tabernacle and temple would no longer be His home, but the hearts of His children, who through repentance and faith enter a new agreement.

Imagine two warring tribes who continue to murder, steal, and plunder one another. The two chiefs come together and made a blood agreement, a pact to ratify the cessation of conflict. They slit the little bunch of blue veins at their wrists, exchange blood, and live in harmony. God's new covenant is a blood agreement with rebellious man. God took the initiative by sending His Son in likeness of human flesh to die as an offering for sin (Romans 8:3). He died once and for all....a full, sufficient and perfect sacrifice. Man is brought together with God only through the holy blood of Jesus Christ.

The law of the Old covenant is impotent to bring man to God. The law cannot set you free from condemnation, and keeps you under Satan's dominion. (Romans 8:1, Colossians 2:14 -16). The **law** stirs up sin and strengthens sin (Romans 7:17; 1 Corinthians 15:56). Under law sin strengthens its dominion over you. (Romans 6:14.). Law produces transgression (Romans 4:15), bringing about God's wrath.

The Law brings a curse (Galatians 3:13), and produces a double enmity (Ephesians 2:14-16). Praise God that His Son brought in a new covenant of grace and was the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (See Romans 10:4). Belief is always repentance and faith....the change of thinking at the Cross and the change of living because of the resurrection. We must remember we are not saved by His death, but by His life (Romans 5:10).

Right standing with Father is only because of the blood of the Lamb.....God sees the blood covering the believer, and the power of the holy blood purges our sin so that God cannot remember them. Our sins are destroyed. What a redemption! What a release from the handwriting of ordinances written against us (Colossians 2:14). This is the greatest removal man can experience....that he is no longer under the curse of law, but a partaker of the blessing of the Abraham. Jesus is our burden-bearer and burden-remover in order that He may establish through us His eternal life, love and light.

We can only experience this by the new birth. Something very radical must happen to man for him to forsake his system of trying to please God and live in a new atmosphere of faith. He has to be delivered out from the kingdom of darkness and death and pass into the kingdom of the Son's life (contrast John 5:24, Colossians 1:13).

The context of the principle of God removing then establishing is the matter of two covenants and the glorious improvement of the new covenant which every born again child of God can enjoy. However, in this study I would like to show this principle is at work in our Christian experience in special relation to God's will.

Old Testament examples

The place of removal, separation and death, is the Cross. Old Testament saints knew this. God moulds His servants by a work of removal. The attitude of "we've arrived" in a saint or an organization is certain death. God shakes and removes those things that can be shaken (Hebrews 12:27).

Consider Abraham living in Ur, a developed civilization with central heating, education to university level, but God told him to get out and trust Him for a mystery tour. He was removed from his pagan country and family (Genesis 12:1). Although he took Lot with him there came separation, (Genesis 13:11) and then God re-affirmed His promise of possession.

Part of the blessing of Abraham is material prosperity and God had to test Abraham concerning his greatest possession, the miracle son, Isaac. Scripture's first mention of "love" is found in Genesis 22:2.....yet God wanted no rival for His affections so had to wean Abraham's emotions away from his only son.

In his heart he went through with it. Here is a tremendous type of the Cross - where God exposed His love to the flames of hell. After the "sacrifice", Abraham unbound the cords that held Isaac down and saw something of the resurrection. God removes in order to establish something better.

By exposing Isaac to the knife, by jettisoning Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham experienced the process of removal in relationships. Removal was the constant feature of the pilgrim character.....geographically he kept moving on because he knew he was not here to stay - heaven was his home. He didn't think of going back to Ur, but pressed on to the better country. (Hebrews 11:15,16). If our thoughts do linger concerning a previous place or mode of existence we get the opportunity to return. The temptation will surely come to go back and pick up the pieces. God removes the first to establish something better, may we recognize this principle in the pilgrim pathways.

Moses is a classic case of the principle. Forty years of training to be somebody, forty years of unlearning and becoming a nobody, then forty years of learning what God could do with a nobody. God removed the Egyptian education and taught him much more through his mother-in-law and countless sheep! The period of solitude preceded the time of service - loneliness before leadership. Life is a series of links and stages - God removing our first service for him which like Moses, was in the flesh; then establishing the something better.....serving Him in the power of the Spirit. Moses had glanced this way and that, furtively murdering the Egyptian. After the Midian wilderness, he was ready to use the staff of God and deliver the chosen people from the house of bondage. In our ministry let us recognize the point of failure, experience

the period of relearning, take up the challenge of deliverance in the wisdom of His timing. After the removal of the first, the teaching Spirit will come to us and reveal why we failed and how to succeed.

The excuses of Moses reveal what had been going on. He now had no confidence (Exodus 3:11), no faith (Exodus 4:1) and no speech (Exodus 4:10). He was conscious of the bankruptcy his natural life and that his only sufficiency would be of God. God removes the reliance we have upon our abilities and talents and establishes a dependence upon the Holy Spirit. The tragedy with most Christians is that we begin in the Spirit and try to perfect that in the flesh. This is because the work of removal by the Cross has not been radical and devastating in the dealing with our satanically inspired self-nature. (See Romans 8:13). Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth, his strength broken-in and harnessed for work. He was ready to bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt because he learnt of God in the solitude, out of the public eye.

Job is perhaps unique in this principle of removing the first in order to establish the second. Drastic removals crashed on the upright, perfect man who went through an astonishing pregnancy of sanctification. (There was a nine month time-gap between chapters 2 and 40). Removal of family, property, health, livelihood put him in a spiritual spin of circumstances few could endure. By chapter 9 Job tries to rescue the situation by talking theory. But head knowledge could not deal with this and the downward drift from complaint (10:1) to presumption (13:1), from deception (19:6) to arrogance (31:37) forces Job into a war of words. He didn't know God had allowed Satan to make a battleground for his soul. God couldn't get through, but was waiting. The removal of our tenacious creed of who God is and how He works, in order for God to establish the revelation of a new aspect of Jesus, is much needed truth today. God always has to raise new voices and ministries because denominations and organizations stop in yesterday's counsel.

David served the purpose of God in his generation (Acts 13:36) by going beyond the tradition of the day. He saw beyond the system of offerings to the opened ear, attentive to the Holy Spirit (Psalm 40:6). Job had to get beyond his view of God. After chapter 38, a sense of majesty, awe and glory shine into Job, imparting humility. We only grow in maturity as God makes us see the cancer cells of consecrated self. We cannot bring the proud man low if we have pride. (Job 40:11-14). This book is the story form of death to self doctrines taught by Paul (Romans 6, 2 Corinthians 4, Philippians 3). Removal of ego must occur if God is to establish the Spirit-filled personality. See **Galatians 2:20**: "*yet no longer I (ego), but Christ lives in me (personality)*".

For David, the caves Adullam were a place of removal. God could not establish him as king until he had learnt to see the kingdom in higher terms. Removed from the palace, the music, Jonathan, the prosperity and the esteem, David was brought low, down; and out with a bunch of worthless marauders. The distressed, the discontented, those in debt gathered round the future king. 1 Samuel 25:1 tells us that Samuel, the intercessor dies. The removal is complete, so God teaches David concerning the things of the Kingdom. The teaching Spirit is at work in this great chapter (1 Sam. 25).

- (1) The Kingdom of God is not based on compulsion but affection. Notice v. 8 “please give”;
- (2) The Kingdom of God is not based on revenge but mercy. Notice v.13 “Each gird on his own sword.” Vengeance is the Lord’s and but for Abigail’s wise interception, David would have had a massacre on his conscience, which would not be the Lord’s anointed.
- (3) The Kingdom of God is not based on pride but humility. Notice v.21, David full of hurt pride.
- (4) The Kingdom of God is not based on folly but wisdom (v.24-31). The folly of Saul was to fight his own battles and here David was going to do the same. Abigail’s wisdom was immediately acknowledged by David (v.32-35).

After removal, the Lord will teach us, will meet that part of us that has caused failure. The valley between removal and establishment of the something better is a precious time. God desires to remove the old nature in us and establish the new. The Holy Spirit leads to the Cross, that death sentence of the old man, and leads us also to the word of God that by faith and patience we may inherit the promises, being partakers of the divine nature.

The prophets knew this principle of removal and establishment. Ezekiel lost his wife and was not allowed tears, but after chapter 24 the glory returns. Removals may be in the sphere of tenderest relationships. The Cross can cut our sweetest ties. The discipleship demanded of Jesus is emphatic:

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father, mother, wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”
(Luke 14:26).

That means “hate by comparison of our love for Him.” Love for Jesus must be dominant. If we profess discipleship He is able to remove in the area of relationship. Our love for Him is not based in the emotions, but the will, we must keep His commandments to prove our love. (John 14:15,21). We must be doers of the Word.

Jeremiah constantly kept faith with the revealed Word of the Lord. It cost him his leisure, bank balance, chances of friendship, and even his sanity at times (see Jeremiah 20:14-18). The something better, the glorious second for him was the glimpse of the New Covenant and the reality of a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35). The prophetic office brings corrective teaching to the body of Christ, and persecution remains the mark of the prophetic succession. Prophets invariably have to take the misunderstandings and insults of other believers. All esteem was removed from Jeremiah, but one man with God is a majority. Only men of God who have been through the Cross escape the snare of receiving glory from one another. Jeremiah’s commendation came from God only.

Prophets pay the price of removal so that the establishment of “well done you good and faithful servant” may usher in rewards of eternity. Trace removal in the lives of

Isaiah and Daniel or the minor prophets.....God surely removes the first in order to establish the second.

In The New Testament

The principle is seen with force concerning the disciples, who had enjoyed three years of mobile bible college with the greatest teacher the world has ever known. He was going to leave them (see John 16:5-7); the one thing they didn't want to happen was declared to them.

Yet this removal would trigger off a new relationship with Him. They would begin to know Him after the Holy Spirit, rather than after the flesh. If He didn't go, the Holy Spirit would not come, the New Covenant would not become functional. He had to die, rise, ascend and be the High Priest of the New Covenant. He had to be removed from His friends. They had to let Him go in order to enter into the blood bought realities of eternal redemption. Greater works would be done when Jesus went to Father and poured out the Holy Spirit on the church (John 14:12). What are these greater works? Works done in the spirit realm.....during His earth walk Jesus did works in the physical realm.....He spoke gracious words, raised the dead, healed lepers etc.

The Church is to be responsible for the manifold wisdom of God in the heavenly places against evil powers (Ephesians 3:10). Setting our minds on things above is not dreaming of heaven, but active wrestling in the good fight of faith. May God remove the materialistic vision amongst us in order to establish the something better.....the fight of prevailing prayer (Ephesians 6:18). The taunt "you are so heavenly minded you are no earthly good" should be dismissed. The evangelical church today is so earthly minded it's no heavenly use. Life in the heavenlies dictate what we are here.

The Apostle Paul had the radical reality of removal in his experience:

"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ....."

(Philippians 3:7,8).

Removal is the first part of sanctification, of gaining Christ. Every forward move to know God more is marked by losing something. Gain in the natural area (wealth, nobility, education, culture) must be counted as loss. More than that, all things must be counted as loss. There is a time to lose our grip on things that pull us down into the world. See I John 2:15 -17. The only way these verses can be real in us is that we know:

"But may it never be that I should boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14)

The Cross is the devastating death sentence to worldly allurements. It's a good day when the young believer removes his rock music collection, enters the discipline of

tithing, says no to cinema and dubious novels, begins to remove his thoughts from career so that the Lord may establish the cardinal ethic of christianity: self-renunciation. We have to take up our cross (Luke 9:23), a path of self denial, a counting of all things lost so that we may gain Christ. We are Christ's, under the same anointing as Jesus. That anointing only breaks forth from our spirits as the Cross is applied, to our self-life. In the life of Jesus we can see this self-emptying process, the desire to make Himself of no reputation, the constant process of removal. His birth was in a manger for animals (Lk.2:12), after amazing the teachers in the temple he became subject to Mary and Joseph (Lk. 2:51).

At the Baptism He submitted to John (Matthew 3:13), during ministry He allowed His family to call Him insane (Mark 3:21). He counted all things loss and endured the Cross for the joy that was set before Him. Jesus lost everything at the Cross, even fellowship with Father. But through the drastic removals there came the establishment of the second, the exaltation:

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name”
(Philippians 2:8, 9).

What a glorious, triumphant second! Jesus made His name the greatest name over things in heaven, earth and under the earth by going through with the Cross. The removal was followed by the establishment of all things put in subjection under His feet (Ephesians 1:22).

In the life of Paul this principle is clearly at work. As a servant of God he faced the perpetual crisis of removal (2 Corinthians 6:4-10) of health, liberty, sleep, food, comfort, companion-ship. Through the Cross there is a profitable sequel, a prosperous succession. Paul knew purity, kindness, genuine love, the word of truth, weapons of righteousness. In the affliction he knew the comfort of God. He could encourage believers that experience of removal and loss was not primarily for them, but for others. Ministry is proving God in our adversity, going through, and being a blessing to those similarly afflicted. (2 Corinthians 1: 4-7).

In this letter we get Paul on Paul - an expose of the Cross in ministry. The vital principle of death in us and life in you is the basis of ministry (2 Corinthians 4:12). The more marked the Cross-life is in the pastor's experience, the greater will be the flow of unfettered blessing from his ministry.