

whatever remained beyond it (Genesis 13). Abraham may have wondered if in doing that, he'd given away the store. But the Lord appears to him and says, I still have the land for you, and I want you to pace it out and see its dimensions. As a result of that, Abraham built an altar.

Have you ever wondered if, because of something that has taken place, what you thought your life was going to be will never be realized to the degree it might have?

I believe it's a very clear statement from God's heart saying that ultimately, you don't need to worry about the things that seem to encroach on the realization of God's purpose in your life. There are some things that are irrecoverable; you can't go back and scrape up all the pieces of everything. But our life is not constituted only of those pieces. There are issues over which the Lord promises to bring about the fulfillment of His purpose in you, notwithstanding the thing that's happened. That's what redemption is about (Joel 2). The Lord is telling Abraham that the loss is not irrevocable as far as His purpose in him is concerned. And to that, Abraham built an altar.

There are some who need to come today and say, Lord, I'm going to decide that You have not called me to lead a second-rate life because I allowed second-rate things to cut in on what was Your first-rate plan. And let the Lord work His redemption fully and thoroughly as you come to the altar.

### **The price of altering**

What it takes to build an altar are rocks, broken things. The geological application is relevant: there are volcanic explosions in our lives, seismic events, the grinding of life. You can take hard things and arrange them before the Lord or you can drag the rocks around and be burdened by them. Or when you're frustrated at lugging them around, you get mad and throw them at somebody else. The way you build an altar is to bring those hard, broken things before the Lord and put them there.

The price of altering is that you have to pour your life out over it: Lord I come and present myself to You.

At the altar, the price was paid for renewal when we've been at a distance, for securing hope that we may have thought was lost, and for receiving promise even if it's in an unpleasant environment. As we come to the Table, we come to the ultimate altar, where the ultimate promise and provision is incarnate in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

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## *Mostly Personal...*

Loved Ones,

The following article from Jack Hayford is a great reminder of why our time in the altars are so important!

### **A Time of Altars** by Jack Hayford

*Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.* Genesis 12:6-9

*...to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord... Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.* Genesis 13:4, 18

### **Altars are a memorial to the place where God meets us.**

Altars represent the occasion and place where we have had a personal encounter with God. We may not always be able to make a physical altar, but there can be one established in our hearts. When we celebrate communion, we are celebrating the grandest altar of all--the Cross of Calvary upon which the Son of God was laid forth as the sacrifice: To reconcile all humankind to God; and to make possible the infusion of our lives with meaning, the forgiveness of all sins and the promise of eternal life.

Altars appear throughout the Bible in many different forms. They are:

- **A place of encounter** – The Lord met Jacob in a crisis and the next day he built an altar at that place (Genesis 28).
- **A place of forgiveness** – The brazen altar of the tabernacle sacrifice was offered as an advance testimony that there would be a once-for-all sacrifice in God's Son.
- **A place of worship** – The most common altar built by people to acknowledge their praise to God was the altar of incense, the holy

place where priests would offer worship to the Lord on behalf of the people and themselves.

- **A place of covenant** – An altar was built where the covenant was made between the Lord and Abraham, and the land was sealed as a timeless promise to Abraham and his offspring (Genesis 15).
- **A place of intercession** – The prophet Joel called for intercession by leaders\* on behalf of the people and their devastated economy. (\*If you know Jesus, you're a leader!)

### **God has a place of “altaring” for us.**

There is a place of “altaring” and a price of altering. Altars have a price--God intends that something be “altered” in us when we come to altars. To receive the promise means we make way for the transformation.

Have you ever felt that the Lord put in your heart an expectation of promise? Such aspirations come from the Lord (Psalm 62:5). You sense anticipation of something God has put in your heart and underwritten by promises in His Word. You look at the promise and begin to picture in your mind what it's going to be like. The fact is, we often visualize things that have nothing whatsoever to do with what God wants to do with us.

Abraham knew there was a place for him, and God has a “place” for you. There is a longing in every human heart for where we are meant to be, but we get caught up in our notion of how it's going to be fulfilled. When Abraham was told by the Lord he had a place, he probably imagined a verdant valley, flowing stream, lovely mountains. But the Scripture says he came into the place and there were Canaanites in the land. The Canaanites were the most perverted, corrupt culture in human history. They were the Satanists of that time.

Abraham's building of the altar represents his saying: “I'm accepting a promise, understanding that this is different than what I thought it was going to be, but it's also something that I believe God can bring to pass. I trust You, Lord, that You will make it work.”

Be encouraged to let your heart receive the promise and embrace wherever you are right now, even if it seems much different than what you hope for. If the Lord is there with you, He can make it work, but it will require the building of an altar on your part to say, I'm willing, as well as your trust that God is greater than your preconception of how it's supposed to be.

### **Abraham calls on the Name of the Lord.**

When the Bible says that Abraham called on the Name of the Lord, it was more than prayer. The word “name” contains the concept of character.

Our perspective of God is on this side of the completion of the Old and New Testaments. But in Abraham's time, God was just beginning to rework His communication with fallen humanity. Abraham answered a call because he believed in God and sensed Him drawing his heart to a promise of something that he could not be in himself.

Abraham believed that there was a true and living God in the midst of the pagan culture around him. Now the Lord says to him: I want to teach you about Me. Abraham was coming to know the Lord and he called on the name—and character—of the Lord.

### **Abraham leaves and then returns to where God met him.**

When a famine strikes, Abraham decides to take matters into his own hands and moves his family to Egypt (Genesis 12:1-12). That only creates a bigger problem than if he'd stayed and remembered the promise the Lord gave him. The Lord met him in Egypt anyway, helped him through, and Abraham returned to altar he'd made and called on the name of the Lord (Genesis 13:4).

We all fall for that. God's really busy and He may not notice what I need right now. But if God has a place for you and He's showing you Himself in that place, provision will never ultimately be your problem unless you try to figure out how to make it for yourself.

There are people who have launched out on your own and distanced yourself from the place the Lord says He has for you. And the Lord says, You know Me differently from the way you are acting right now. Just as surely as He met Abraham and brought him back to the place of the altar, He wants to meet you today. But you've got to decide to come to that altar.

That altar, the Cross of Jesus ultimately is what the Table and the Elements represent. Whatever may be your sense of having violated trust with God (and that usually constitutes having violated trust with other people or a compromise you knew was not worthy) the Lord calls you to come back. Abraham wanted to move on in knowing God, so he came back to the altar he had built, calling on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13; Zechariah 13:9).

### **Redemption means fulfillment of God's purpose in you.**

Following the episode of stress between he and Lot over territory, Abraham graciously offers Lot his choice of the land, saying he will take