

“Under Construction”

Beach Devotional for G.U.L.F. (Orange Beach, AL) *by Ray Reynolds*

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Look down at the sand beneath your feet. What do you see? How would you describe the sand? Would you consider it to be worth much or very little? Believe it or not, the sand you are standing on (behind the Island House) is worth over \$16 million dollars more than it was last year when you stood on it! That's right! How is that possible? Let me explain...

On April 20, 2010 the Deep Water Horizon (operated by Transocean and under contract of British Petroleum) blew up in the Gulf of Mexico. The rig that went to a depth of 5,000 feet below the ocean's surface had 146 workers and 11 of them perished in the blast. The fireball lit up the sky and was visible from 35 miles away. It took two days to burn up and then fall to the ocean floor. Before the spill could be capped it dumped 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf, covering 68,000 square miles. The spill affected all of the Gulf states in the US and Mexico and even down to the tip of Argentina, South America. It became the largest offshore oil spill in US history. That is part of the reason why you see the hopper “Bayport” dredging the ocean behind us off this coastline.

Another reason you see this hopper in the Gulf is because of recent Hurricane Isaac that hit in 2012, Ida in 2009, as well as Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008. Between the aforementioned disasters, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is paying 75% of the \$16 million price tag, while the Alabama Emergency Management Agency is paying 12.5% and the two cities (Gulf Shores and Orange Beach) and Gulf State Park are covering the rest. It will restore “roughly 2.2 million cubic yards of sand, the equivalent of about 688 Olympic-size pools” (http://blog.al.com/live/2013/01/16_million_beach_restoration_p.html).

What we often forget, here on the Gulf Coast, is that this is a normal thing. Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina in recent memory are a reminder that our beaches are prone to erosion and corruption. Therefore, it is in constant need of attention. Restoration is an on-going process. This is not the first time this beach has been restored....and it most certainly will not be the last time. We spend millions of dollars on these beaches.

I mention these things to you today because the theme of G.U.L.F. this year is “Under Construction.” Paul encourages us in **Philippians 1:3-6** by saying that we are work in progress. We are currently under construction. It is not that uncommon to read about restoration in the Scriptures. Jesus talked about restoring the heart of man in **Matthew 15:16-17**, Solomon talks about it in **Proverbs 4:20-27, 27:19**, David begs for a clean heart in **Psalms 51**, and we also have the stories of Josiah, Hezekiah, and Isaiah. We know that it is necessary and that it is an ongoing battle.

Here is the dilemma....If I hadn't pointed out the value of the sand you're standing on, would you have known its value? What good is this sand? Is it any better than the sand you saw here last year, or the year before? People pass by this sand, and walk all over it every day, but they rarely appreciate its value or the process by which it came to be here. In fact, when the sand is first placed out here it is dark but it will eventually turn white. Why does that happen? It takes some time, but the sun will bleach it! And, then when the sun reflects off of it the sand becomes so bright you need shades!

As you all leave here this weekend I want you to think about these things.... *First*, you are a work in progress. That is why you came here to learn, grow, and get strength. However, you shouldn't spend your money, sing, pray, study, shed tears, and then leave looking the same. People need to know that you have been restored! They need to see that you are under construction. Someone shouldn't have to point it out to them! *Second*, remember that people pass by you every day. You have an opportunity to make a difference, but people need to see Jesus in you. *Finally*, when you come up out of the watery grave of baptism, just like this sand brought up from the depths of the sea, you are given an opportunity to get clean! The Son will bleach away all of your impurities and cause you to be as white as snow. But, if you get buried back into the ground, and stay out of the presence of the Son, you will become darker and hidden from view.

I want to encourage you to take note of what God has done and is doing in your life. Know that He loves you. He wants to make you clean. He wants His glory, and the glory of the Son, to reflect in you. He wants to fill you with His Holy Spirit so that others can see a change in you. Make it your goal for 2013 to become more dedicated to the Lord, to His cause, to His church, to His people, and to His word! When we meet again for G.U.L.F. next year we want to hear about what God is doing in your life!