

"The Restoration Plea"

Going back to the Bible is necessary for true Christianity. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's way." And if we're to find the Lord's Way, we will have to go back to the beginning in God's Word.

Welcome to In Search of The Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. We search the Bible, because we know it's God's Holy Word. It teaches us to please God. God's Word provides us a pattern that teaches us His will today. We do well to know and to follow that pattern that He set for us. That's what we strive to do on this program, and we're so grateful you joined us today. We want to be a part of your life each week. We want to hear from you.

Have you broken a favorite dish or dropped a treasured book into the water or mud? You probably groaned and wished you could bring back your prized possession to its pure and original state. You wanted to restore it, because it was ruined. Spiritually speaking, the restoration plea calls us to restore the pure and unbroken church as God meant for it to be by returning to the truth found in the New Testament.

Christianity has changed dramatically through the centuries. And many changes are departures from the written word of God found in the New Testament. Some changes came as innovations that were never imagined in Scripture; some changes came from the desire to make the church more popular with culture, and some changes caused Christianity to be blended with other religions. And in the end, the pure Christianity of the New Testament, as God willed it to be, was corrupted. It needed desperately to be rid of the human things and brought back to its original condition, to be what God desired. The original, God-given church can be seen in the New Testament.

And if we wear the name of Jesus Christ, we should faithfully follow Him! Shouldn't we abandon every belief or practice that leads us away from the truth in the New Testament? Shouldn't we seek God's teaching in everything we do? Let's restore the God's way.

Now if you want to think a little more about the restoration plea, we offer the information on this program free. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, and then we'll read from Ephesians 4:1 through 6.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4 verses 1 to 6. And there he encourages them to remain true to the one way.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

That's a reading from God's holy word that encourages us to turn to Jesus and Him alone. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have given us Your word and that we know that there is one right way to go and to live. Help us to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

In the early 1800s many church leaders grew weary of the strife found in the denominational world of their day. They believed the Lord wanted His people to be united, because division caused shame to the name of the Lord. Their divisive ways caused people to fall away from Christ in disbelief. They also

objected to all that was of human origin that led them away from the pure New Testament Christianity.

The Lord Jesus prayed in John 17:20 to 21, “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” The Lord wanted His followers to remain united. The whole concept of denominationalism is foreign to the New Testament.

They believed, and we believe, that the acceptance of human opinions, and human creeds, and councils, and human practices, and names, a human names, caused this divisive and hostile condition. We want something better—a pure and true Christianity that goes back to the Bible and remains free from human traditions. We know that if we abandoned the human and concentrated on what was divine and is divine, that we can find the basis for unity. We can have unity only through following the truth of God’s Word found in the Scriptures. And this mean we have to cast off everything human and denominational and return to the Christianity that God proposes in the New Testament.

We must reject human traditions, human opinions and innovations, since these things cannot be found in God’s word. We can’t ask or require people to believe a doctrine not that’s not taught in the New Testament. “We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent.” We want unity in essentials, freedom in matters of opinion, and love in all things.

We also recognize the New Testament predicts that Christians would fall away from the truth and they would fall into error. God knew the hearts of men that they often follow their own paths. The apostle Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:29 to 30, “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” Paul knew some would fall away from the truth.

The apostle Peter also predicted in 2 Peter 2:1 to 3, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:1 to 4, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” Oh, we can see this in many religious groups today!

Early church history confirms that Christians began teaching and practicing things that were never taught or authorized by the New Testament. Within 500 years after the apostles died, many new practices and doctrines developed unknown to Scripture. For instance, the New Testament says nothing about holy water, lent, penance, infant baptism, intercession of the saints, sprinkling for baptism, sacrifice of mass, celibacy of priests, purgatory, confession to priests, archbishops, popes, instrumental music in worship, salvation by faith only, “once saved always saved,” and many other

things like these. The Bible condemns the inventing of new doctrines that differ from or contradict the teaching found in the New Testament.

Century by century groups that called themselves Christian moved farther from the simplicity of the New Testament Christianity. They no longer followed God's pattern for the church in the New Testament but became something different. God's way was corrupted by the will of man. And if we are to please God, we must return to what God willed in the New Testament. Restoration to the Lord's way is necessary, because repentance from error is necessary.

No one can remain in error and still please God. James 5:19 to 20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." You see, straying from the truth can put our souls in peril with a multitude of sins. By casting off these sinful, manmade doctrines and practices, we can restore the doctrine, the worship and the organization of the New Testament church.

Our intent is not to start a new denomination, but to restore the church to God's will in the New Testament. Jesus built His church before any denomination ever existed. The Lord's church is not denominational, not inter-denominational, and not even non-denominational. The church that Jesus built was undenominational. It's also "pre-denominational." And the idea of denominationalism is foreign to the New Testament. The Lord Jesus would never approve of unifying the truth with error.

The New Testament never entertained the idea of so many groups with different names, and creeds, organizations, and forms of worship. The Bible condemns the creation of new doctrines that differ from the teaching found in the New Testament. So, churches of Christ strive to "do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names." We believe that we must discard from our faith and our practice everything that's not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior, and to believe and practice whatever is instructed there.

The concept of "restoration" arises from the teaching the Bible is the complete and it is the eternal authority. What was true in the first century is still true today. And just as a seed will produce only after its own kind, so the seed of God's word will produce the same Christianity today that it did in the first century. Luke 8 and verse 11 says, "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God." As long as you keep a pure seed, you will have a pure Christianity. If you corrupt the seed, the teaching of the Word of God, you will have a corrupt Christianity.

The Bible is complete in that it gives us all of God's revealed will for life and godliness. Jesus promised His apostles that they will be inspired in John 16:12 to 13. He said, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." I tell you the Bible is all-sufficient and contains every spiritual truth that we need to have eternal life and to live the Christian life. We aren't lacking anything that God wanted for us.

But many people are not content with pure teaching, the pure teaching of the gospel, so they say we must change. Well we must ask, "Change to what?" If they call for change that leads us back to the doctrine of Christ, then we can rejoice in that. But if they call for change that leads us away from God's will to fit popular thinking, let's not be fooled.

When people go beyond the Scriptures to teach other doctrines, they produce something other than the church that Jesus built. And they're making a church in their own image rather than honoring God's will. To add to the Scriptures, to take away from the Scriptures, to edit the Scriptures to fit

today's culture is to corrupt the pure message or seed and to substitute for it something that will not accomplish God's intended purpose. And rather than fall for a substitute, let's demand pure Christianity.

The Lord Jesus desires unity in His followers; but before He prayed for unity in John 17:20 to 23, he first prayed for his followers to be sanctified that is to be "set apart" in the truth (John 17:17). Jesus wanted all His followers to know and to practice the truth. Christ didn't pray for a unity that sacrifices or compromises the truth. No, it's our faith in the truth that unifies us and unites us. Christian unity is not ecumenism, where groups unite but maintain conflicting and contradictory beliefs and practices, no. To be faithful and true, Christians must hold to the truth and refuse error.

The Lord Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Jesus himself, distinguished true disciples from others by their willingness to abide in His word. What we believe may not matter to today's culture, but what we believe and practice matters to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Testament provides for us examples and patterns showing how God wishes for us to respond to His grace, how should we come to Him in faith and obedience, how should we worship, how we should live, how we should organize ourselves, and how we should treat one another. You can find all those things in the bible. Now some object to the concept of patterns in the New Testament, but the Scriptures are clear about the need to follow the apostles' doctrine and example. God expects us to believe and obey His instructions found in the New Testament.

For instance, Romans 6:17 to 18 says, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form (or pattern) of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:15 says, "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." The apostle Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

Now if the sun, the planets, and the moon in our universe follow a pattern, if every cell in our body has a DNA pattern, and if every leaf on every tree follows a pattern, why would we suppose that the Lord's church has no pattern? If there is no pattern to the church, then it's the only thing that God ever produced that didn't have a pattern.

The New Testament speaks of the love and grace of God, but these 27 books also have commands, instructions, and examples for us to follow. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." He demonstrates how this affect our relationship with God in John 15:8 to 10. The Lord Jesus said, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, (Jesus says) I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

Now obedience to the Lord is not some kind of legalism, no; obedience from the heart is how we love God. If we wish to abide in the love of God, we must be obedient to His commands.

Let's pray together. Oh Father we pray that our love for You will lead us always to keep Your commandments. And to follow You and You alone. Help us to resist the influences of the world. And always to listen to You. In Jesus name, Amen.

God always requires people to repent of their sins when they learn the truth. Repentance means we leave error and embrace the Lord's will. Repentance is how we are restored to the Lord. Do you need to repent? Do you attend a church that goes beyond the teaching of the New Testament? Are

you a true disciple that abides in the words of Christ? If you aren't, repent and restore your faith. Attend a New Testament church!

Restoration leads the lost out of sinful error into eternal life. If this is true for an individual, it's also true for groups and churches. Even churches can fall from God's grace, when they abandon the truth. Jesus anticipated disciplining whole churches in Revelation 2 and 3, if they did not repent. When a church falls away, the Lord will remove its candlestick. We must remain faithful to God and His word. We must hold to the truth and do it at all costs. If we unite with error, we have corrupted ourselves. We'd rather speak the truth with the Lord than to fall for the devil's popular lies. We'd rather lovingly teach the truth that gives—even if it first offends— that gives the truth, than spread false hope that destroys. Love demands that we tell the whole truth of God, because it is the truth that saves and sets us free.

The truth is there and it's only in one gospel, one body or church, and one baptism. And in order to enter the Lord's church, and believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Out of faith, repent of sin, confess the Lord Jesus, and be baptized. Now the one baptism of Jesus Christ is not sprinkling but an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins according to Acts 2:38. When you're baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins and add you to His church. When you're baptized God will make you His child according to Galatians 3:26 and 7. Oh, why not be baptized today?

We hope that you've been challenged to think by today's study on the restoration plea. And if you want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or, you can call the Search office. That number is 1-800-321-8633. You can see programs on Search and you can also see them on You Tube.

As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.