

## The Restoration Plea Ephesians 4:1-6

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Going back to the Bible is essential to \_\_\_\_\_ Christianity. We search the Bible because we know that it is God's Holy Word and that it teaches us what God wants us to know to \_\_\_\_\_ Him. God's Word provides for us a \_\_\_\_\_, an example that teaches us His will for our lives. We do well to know and to follow that \_\_\_\_\_ that He set for us.

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

Christianity has \_\_\_\_\_ dramatically through the centuries. Many changes were departures from the stated \_\_\_\_\_ of God in the New Testament. Some changes came as innovations that were never considered in Scripture; and other changes came as edits to make the church more up-to-date with \_\_\_\_\_; and then still other changes caused Christianity to be \_\_\_\_\_ with other religions. In the end, the \_\_\_\_\_ Christianity of the New Testament, as God willed it to be, was corrupted. It needed desperately to be brought back to its \_\_\_\_\_ condition, to be what God desired it to be.

If we wear the name of Jesus Christ, shouldn't we seek to truly \_\_\_\_\_ Him? Shouldn't we \_\_\_\_\_ every belief or practice that gets us away from His will as declared in the New Testament? Should we not seek God's \_\_\_\_\_ in everything we do? Let's restore the Lord's way in our lives.

### **Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians 4:1-6.**

In the early 1800's, many church leaders grew \_\_\_\_\_ of the strife and fussing that was found in the denominations of their day. They believed the Lord wanted His people to be \_\_\_\_\_, to all be together. All of the bad-mouthing and exclusiveness of the denominations shamed the name of the Lord. Their divisive ways caused people to \_\_\_\_\_ from Christ in disbelief. They also objected to all that was of \_\_\_\_\_ origin that led them away from pure Christianity.

**Read what the Lord Jesus prayed, John 17:20-21.** The Lord Jesus wanted His \_\_\_\_\_ to remain united. The whole concept of denominationalism is really foreign to the New Testament.

These early church leaders believed that the acceptance of human opinions, human creeds, councils, human practices, and names \_\_\_\_\_ this divisive and hostile condition. They wanted something better—a pure and true Christianity that went back to the Bible and remained \_\_\_\_\_ from human traditions. They knew that if they abandoned what was human and they

concentrated on what was from God, they could find a \_\_\_\_\_ for unity. They could have unity only through following the \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word that was found in the Scriptures. This meant that they had to cast off everything human and denominational, and \_\_\_\_\_ to the Christianity that was proposed in the New Testament.

These leaders \_\_\_\_\_ human traditions, human opinions, and innovations since these things cannot be found in God's Word. They believed that they could not \_\_\_\_\_ members to believe a doctrine that was not expressly taught in the New Testament. They said, "We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent." They wanted unity in essentials, freedom in matters of opinion, and \_\_\_\_\_ in all things.

They also recognized the New Testament \_\_\_\_\_ that Christians would fall away from the truth into error. God knew that the hearts of men often follow their \_\_\_\_\_ paths.

**Read what the apostle Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:29-30.** Paul knew that some would fall away from the truth.

**Read what the apostle Peter also predicted in 2 Peter 2:1-3.**

Paul was serious about staying with the truth. **Read what he told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-4.**

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

Century by century, the church \_\_\_\_\_ farther away from the simplicity of New Testament Christianity. After a while, it no longer followed God's pattern for the church in the New Testament, but became something very \_\_\_\_\_. God's way was corrupted by the will of \_\_\_\_\_. If the church is to \_\_\_\_\_ God, it 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 \_\_\_\_\_ and still please God. **Read what the Bible says in James 5:19-20.** Straying from the truth can put our \_\_\_\_\_ in peril with a multitude of sins. By casting off these sinful, manmade doctrines and practices, we can \_\_\_\_\_ the doctrine, worship, and organization of the New Testament church.

Our intent is not to \_\_\_\_\_ a new denomination, but to restore the church according to the ideals of the New Testament. Jesus built His church \_\_\_\_\_ any denomination existed. The Lord's church is not denominational, not inter-denominational, and not even non-denominational. The church Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ was undenominational and "pre-denominational."

The New Testament never entertained the idea of so \_\_\_\_\_ groups with different names, and creeds, and organizations, and forms of worship. The Bible condemns the perpetuation of new doctrines that \_\_\_\_\_ from the teaching that's found in the New Testament. So, churches of

Christ strive to "*do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names.*" They believe they must \_\_\_\_\_ from their faith and their practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and that they are to believe and to practice whatever is instructed there.

The concept of "restoration" grew out of a \_\_\_\_\_ that the Bible is a complete and final authority. Just as a seed will produce only after its own \_\_\_\_\_, so the seed of God's Word will produce the same Christianity today that it did in the first century. Luke 8:11 says, "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God." As long as you keep a pure \_\_\_\_\_ you will have a pure Christianity. But if you corrupt the seed, the teaching of the Word of God, then you'll also have a corrupt Christianity.

The Bible is complete and gives us \_\_\_\_\_ of God's revealed will for our lives and our godliness. **Read what Jesus promised His apostles in John 16:12-13.** The Bible is all-sufficient and contains every \_\_\_\_\_ truth that we need to have eternal life and to live the Christian life. We aren't \_\_\_\_\_ anything that God wanted us to know.

But many people aren't \_\_\_\_\_ with the pure teaching of the Word, so they say we must change. We ask, "Change to what?" If they call for change that leads us \_\_\_\_\_ to the doctrine of Christ in the New Testament, we can rejoice in that. But if they call for a change that leads us \_\_\_\_\_ from God's revealed will, let's not be fooled.

When people go beyond the Scriptures to teach other doctrines, they \_\_\_\_\_ something other than the church that Jesus built. They're making a church in their own image rather than \_\_\_\_\_ God's will. To add to the Scriptures or 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 \_\_\_\_\_. Rather than fall for a substitute, let's demand pure Christianity.

The Lord Jesus desires unity among His followers; but before He prayed for unity in John 17:20-23, he first prayed for his followers to be sanctified or "set apart" in the truth. Jesus wanted all His followers to \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_ the truth. Christ didn't pray for a unity that sacrifices or compromises the truth. No, it's our \_\_\_\_\_ in the truth that unites us. Christian unity is not ecumenism, where groups unite but maintain conflicting and contradictory beliefs and practices. Christian unity means being \_\_\_\_\_ to the truth, and refusing error.

The Lord Jesus said, "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" (John 8:31-32). Jesus distinguished true disciples from others by their willingness to \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_ to His grace, how we should come to Him in faith and obedience, how we worship, how we should live, how we should organize ourselves, and how we should treat one another. Some \_\_\_\_\_ to the concept of patterns in the New Testament, but the Scriptures are clear

about the \_\_\_\_\_ to follow the apostles' doctrine and example. God expects us to believe and obey His instructions found in the New Testament.

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

If the sun, the planets, and the moon in our universe follow a pattern; if every cell in our body has a DNA pattern that is alike; and if every leaf on every tree follows a pattern, why would we suppose that the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_ has no pattern? If there is no pattern to the church, then it's the \_\_\_\_\_ 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 in the New Testament \_\_\_\_\_ have commands, instructions, and examples for us to follow. The Lord Jesus said, "If you love Me, you'll \_\_\_\_\_ My commandments" (John 14:15). He demonstrates how this will affect our relationship with God. **Read John 15:8-10.** Obedience to the Lord is not some kind of legalism; obedience from the heart is how we \_\_\_\_\_ God. If we wish to abide in the love of God, we must be obedient to His \_\_\_\_\_. God requires people to \_\_\_\_\_ of their sins when they learn the truth. Repentance means that we \_\_\_\_\_ error and we embrace the Lord's will. Repentance is how we are \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord. My friend, do you need to repent? Do you attend a church that goes \_\_\_\_\_ the teaching of the New Testament? Are you a true disciple that \_\_\_\_\_ in the Words of Christ? If you aren't, you need to repent and restore your faith.

Restoration leads the \_\_\_\_\_ out of sinful error and into eternal life. If this is true for individuals, it's \_\_\_\_\_ true for groups and churches. Even \_\_\_\_\_ can fall from God's grace when they abandon the truth. Jesus anticipated disciplining whole churches in the book of Revelation chapters 2 and 3; if they didn't repent, he was going to come and \_\_\_\_\_ their candlestick. We must \_\_\_\_\_ faithful to God and His Word. We must hold to the truth at all costs. If we unite with error, we will \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves. We'd rather speak the truth with the Lord than to \_\_\_\_\_ for the devil's lies. We'd rather lovingly teach the truth that gives—maybe a little offense at first, but heals—than to spread \_\_\_\_\_ hope that destroys. Love demands that we \_\_\_\_\_ the whole truth of God because it's the truth that saves.

The truth is there's only one gospel, one body, one church, one baptism. In order to enter the Lord's church, \_\_\_\_\_ with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Out of faith and love, \_\_\_\_\_ of sin, \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord Jesus Christ, and be \_\_\_\_\_. The one baptism of Jesus Christ is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of \_\_\_\_\_. When you're baptized, the Lord will add you to His church. Why not be baptized today?