

## "The Restoration Plea"

Going back to the Bible is essential to true Christianity. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's way." Now if we're to find the Lord's Way, we'll have to go back to God's Word. Won't you join us in our study today!

Welcome, we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. We search the Bible, because we know that it is God's Holy Word and teaches us what God wants us to know to please God. God's Word provides for us a standard, an example that teaches us His will for our lives. We do well to know and to follow that pattern that He set for us. That's why we strive every week to do this, to study the word of God on this program, and we're so grateful that you joined us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Have you ever broken a favorite dish or dropped a treasured book into the 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. Well spiritually speaking, the restoration plea calls us to bring back the pure and unbroken church as God meant for it to be by returning to the truth that's found in the New Testament.

Christianity has changed dramatically through the centuries. Many changes were departures from the stated will of God in the New Testament. Now 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 culture, and then still other changes caused Christianity to be blended with other religions. Well in the end, the pure Christianity of the New Testament, as God willed it to be, was corrupted. It needed desperately to be brought back to its original condition, to be what God desired it to be.

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

Now if you want to think a little more about this topic, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or you can send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto: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](http://www.searchtv.org).

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

Our reading today comes Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4 verses 1 through 6. "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 in the book of Ephesians. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful that You have made us one, and we pray that You'll help us to work toward unity by serving You and being obedient to Your will. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

In the early 1800's, many church leaders grew weary of the strife and fussing that was found in the denominations of their day. They believed the Lord wanted His people to be united, to all be together, and all of the bad-mouthing and exclusiveness of the denominations shamed 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 pure Christianity.

Well the Lord Jesus prayed in John 17 verses 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 Jesus wanted His followers to remain united. And the whole concept of denominationalism is really foreign to the New Testament.

They believed that the acceptance of human opinions, human creeds, and councils, human practices, and names caused this divisive and hostile condition. They wanted something better—a pure and true Christianity that went back to the Bible and remained free from human traditions. They knew that if they abandoned the human and they concentrated on what was from God, they could find a basis for unity. They could have unity only through following the truth of God's Word that was found in the Scriptures. And this meant that they had to cast off everything human and denominational and return to the Christianity that was proposed in the New Testament.

They rejected human traditions, human opinions and innovations, since these things cannot be found in God's word. They believed that they could not require 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 love in all things.

They also recognized the New Testament predictions that Christians would fall away from the truth into error. God knew that the hearts of men often follow their own paths. And you'll remember the apostle Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20 verses 29 to 30, "I know that after my departure that 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 that some would fall away from the truth.

The apostle Peter also predicted in 2 Peter 2 verses 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."

Now Paul was serious about staying with the truth. He told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4 verses 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 (that is God's 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."

Now 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, a holy new vocabulary 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 mass, or celibacy of priests, or purgatory, or confession to priests, or

archbishops, or popes, instrumental music in worship, or salvation by faith only, and “once saved, always saved.”

You know it never conceived the idea of so many groups with different names, and creeds, and organizations, and forms of worship. And the Bible condemns the perpetuation of new doctrines that differ from the teaching that is found in the New Testament.

Century by century the church moved 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 different. God's way was corrupted by the will of man. And if the church is to please 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.

Now no one can remain in error and still please God. The Bible says in James 5 verses 19 to 20, “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, worship and organization of the New Testament church.

Our intent is not to start a new denomination, but to restore the church according to the ideals of the New Testament. Jesus built His church before any denomination existed. The Lord's church is not denominational, not inter-denominational, and not even non-denominational. The church Jesus built was undenominational and “pre-denominational.” The idea of denominationalism is actually 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, and organizations, and forms of worship. The Bible condemns the perpetuation of new doctrines that differ 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 discard from their faith and their practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and they are to believe and to practice whatever is instructed there.

The concept of “restoration” grew out of a conviction that the Bible is a complete and final authority. 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: that the seed is the word of God.” As long as you keep a pure seed, 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.

Now the Bible is complete and gives us all of God's revealed will for our lives and our godliness. Jesus promised His apostles in John 16 verses 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.” 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 to know.

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

Now when people go beyond the Scriptures to teach other doctrines, they produce something other than the church that Jesus built. They're making a church in their own image rather than honoring 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 purpose. 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 to 23, he first prayed for his followers to be sanctified or "set apart" in the truth. Jesus wanted all His followers to know and to practice the truth. Now Christ didn't pray for a unity that sacrifices or compromises the truth. No, it's our faith in the truth that unites us. Christian unity is not ecumenism, where groups unite but maintain conflicting and contradictory beliefs and practices. No. Christian unity means being faithful to the truth and refusing error.

The Lord Jesus said in John 8 verses 31 to 32, that "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." You see, Jesus 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 respond to His grace, how we should come to Him in faith and obedience, how we worship, how we should live, and how we should organize ourselves, and how we should treat one another. 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 verses 17 and 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 the slaves of righteousness." Again, 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 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." Again, 2 Timothy 1 and verse 13 says, "Follow the pattern of 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 that is alike, 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 in the New Testament also have commands, instructions, and examples for us to follow. The Lord Jesus said in John 14 verse 15, "If you love Me, you'll keep My commandments." And He demonstrates how this will affect our relationship with God in John 15 verses 8 to 10. You remember the Lord said, "My Father is glorified by this, that if you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me (Jesus said), I've also loved you; abide in My love. And 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; obedience from the heart is how we love God. And if we wish to abide in the love of God, we must be obedient to His commands. Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful that Your Word teaches us how You want us to be. Father help us to

be united in our commitment to serving You, and You alone. And may Your will be done on earth as it is heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

God requires people to repent of their sins when they learn the truth. Now repentance means that we leave error and we embrace the Lord's will. Repentance is how we are restored to the Lord. My friend, 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? Now if you aren't, let me tell you, you need to repent and restore your faith.

Restoration leads the lost out of the sinful error and into eternal life. Now if this is true for individuals, it's also true for groups and churches. You know even churches can fall from God's grace, when they abandon the truth. Jesus anticipated disciplining whole churches in the book of Revelation chapter 2 and 3, if they didn't repent, he was going to come and remove their candlestick. My friend, we must remain faithful to God and His word. We must hold to the truth at all costs. And if we unite with error, we will corrupt ourselves. We'd rather speak the truth with the Lord than to fall 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 false hope that destroys. Love demands that we tell the whole truth of God, because it's the truth that saves.

Now the truth is there's only one gospel, one body, one church, one baptism. And in order to enter the Lord's church, believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And out of faith and love, repent of sin, confess the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized. Now the one baptism of Jesus Christ is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. And when you're baptized, the Lord will add you to His church. Why not be baptized today?

We hope you've been challenged to think about the things that we've studied today. If you want a free printed copy or a CD 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](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org).

Or you can call the Search office. The number is 1-800-321-8633. Now our programs also appear on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can access them in many different formats. We offer Bible Correspondence courses, and if you want one just let us know, there's also free study sheets. Now you can download them or call and request them. We're not here, out to exploit you, or to put you on a list, or beg you for money, we're here to help you get to heaven.

So we ask that you worship with one of the churches of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well as always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.