



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

Volume XXVI

March 2006

Number 8

RESTORATION VERSUS GROWTH

Brian R. Kenyon

When speaking of restoration, it is not uncommon to hear the statement, "Since restoration is an ongoing process, it is arrogant for us to say that we have completely restored New Testament Christianity." While we do not question the sincerity of those who would make such a statement, the statement does reflect a misunderstanding between restoration and growth. It is, therefore, necessary to know the difference between these two principles and to see how they relate. To make this article as practical as possible, we will apply our discussion of restoration and growth to the area of worship. However, the same principles would apply to other areas of New Testament Christianity.

RESTORATION NEEDED

"Restoration" means to bring something back to its original condition. As it pertains to Biblical matters in general, whenever there is a departure from God's plan, there stands a need for restoration. When we talk about worship with our non-Christian acquaintances, chances are what they have in mind is not what we have in mind. What we have in mind is singing without the accompaniment of a mechanical instrument (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); they are thinking of choirs, pianos,

and in some cases full-fledged bands. What we have in mind is partaking of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7); they are thinking of communion once a month, quarterly, or only on "special occasions." What we have in mind is giving of our means every first day of the week as we have prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2); they are thinking of tithing. What we have in mind is the preacher preaching the Gospel of Christ with relevant applications (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18); they are often thinking of drama groups, a watered down message of sentimentalism, female "pastors," etc. What has happened? Why are we not all thinking the same when it comes to worship?

The answer is easy: centuries of denominationalism have distorted and confused the simple New Testament pattern of worship. Everything we do, worship included, must be done by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17). Although mechanical instruments of music met furious opposition by many denominational founders, these instruments were eventually brought into their worship services and accepted as if worship with them was the Gospel truth. However, where in the New

Testament do we find authority for the use of mechanical instruments in worship? Answer: we do not! There stands a need to restore singing in New Testament worship.

Where did denominations get the idea that communion is only to be taken once a month, quarterly, or on "special occasions"? It certainly did not come from the New Testament. We find in Scripture that Christ's church partook of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. Acts 20:7 says, "And upon the first day of the week, ... the disciples came together to break bread." To see that this means every first day of the week, consider First Corinthians 16:2: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store..." Paul was letting the Corinthians know when they were to give their financial contribution. Since they were already meeting on every first day of the week, Paul instructed them also to "lay by in store" on that day. Some translations even read, "On the first day of every week" (NAS, ESV, et al.). For whatever reason (perhaps convenience) denominations quit partaking of the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week, and their habit of partaking of it at various times has become the

accepted practice. The New Testament, however, does not support their frequency of partaking the Lord's Supper. There stands a need to restore the Lord's Supper.

IS RESTORING ARROGANT?

Consider the two areas of worship mentioned above that stand in need of restoration. First, can a person study his Bible and see that mechanical instruments of music in worship are not authorized by the New Testament and, therefore, sinful? Yes one can! Many people over the centuries have come to that truth (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Assuming everything else is Scriptural, if a congregation throws away all use of mechanical instruments of music in worship and only sings, have they restored singing in worship? The obvious answer is yes. Does this necessarily mean that the members of this congregation are arrogant? Of course not.

Second, can a person study his Bible and learn that the New Testament authorizes Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week? Again, certainly one can (Acts 20:7). Assuming everything else is Scriptural, if a congregation turns from partaking of the Lord's Supper quarterly and begins partaking of it every first day of the week, have they restored the Lord's Supper? Again, the obvious answer is yes. Does this necessarily mean that the members of this congregation are arrogant? Of course not.

While it is true that knowledge can lead to arrogance (1 Cor. 8:1), it does not follow that because one knows the truth and applies it that he is arrogant. If that were the case, then a premium

would be placed on ignorance. Would we say that it is being humble to remain in ignorance? I think not! To say we have restored singing in worship and the Lord's Supper is not to say that we are perfect in our singing and in our partaking of the Lord's Supper. This is confusing restoration and growth.

GROWTH NEEDED

Restoration in singing is complete when we sing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). However, there will always be a need to grow in our singing. We must grow by getting better at the songs we sing, by learning new songs, and by learning more of what the Scriptures teach concerning our worship in song. Truly, we cannot say we have arrived to perfect singing and a perfect understanding of worshiping God in song, but that is not to say that we have not restored singing.

The Lord's Supper is restored when we partake of the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine every first day of the week as a memorial of the body and blood of the Lord (Mt. 26:26-29; Acts 20:7). However, there will always be a need to grow in our communion with Him (1 Cor. 10:16-17). We must continue to learn of Jesus' great sacrifice for us (Isa. 53:1-12; Mt. 27:1-56) and our remembrance of it. We must continue to grow in our self-examination, making sure that we are "discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:23-28). Truly, we cannot say we have arrived in a perfect understanding of the sacrifice of Christ and a perfect remembrance of it every first day of the week, but that is not to say

that we have not restored the Lord's Supper.

Growth and restoration are related in that restoration involves the understanding that we will always need to be growing (2 Thes. 1:3; 1 Pet. 2:2). We must continually "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Mt. 5:6), and we must always "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Mt. 6:33).

CONCLUSION

Let us not think that we have to be perfect before we can restore God's original pattern, nor that we have to be arrogant to claim that we have restored God's plan. Rather, let us "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein" (Jer. 6:16).

If we get off of God's "path," may we have the courage to bring ourselves back to the original way of God, and to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Ω

The Harvesters

Published Monthly
Florida School of Preaching
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33803
(863) 683-4043

Editor: Jackie M. Stearsman, Director
Brian R. Kenyon, Associate Director
Gene Burgett, Public Relations Director

Board of Directors

Gordon Methvin, Chairman	Scott Gerhardt
John D. Smitherman, Vice Chairman	E. Robert McAnally
J.H. Blackman, Jr., Secretary	Bill Norton
Brian R. Kenyon, Associate Secretary	Jackie M. Stearsman
Greg Littleton, Treasurer	
Steve Atinip	
Glenn Burgess	
Gene Burgett	
George K. French	
	Ted Wheeler

TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

WORKING FOR A GIFT

By
Gaylon West

If salvation is a GIFT OF GOD, does one really have to do anything to be saved? “And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of God” (Eccl. 3:13).

Three points to consider in this passage are: (1) There is a “good” from labor. (2) There is a “gift” of God. (3) They are the same. Together, we have “good of one’s labor equals God’s gift.”

GOOD FROM LABOR

The definition of the word *labor* is “toil, wearing effort, worry, grief, sorrow, trouble” (*Strong’s*). Work is not a curse. Labor is. But not work.

God designed man to work (“to till the soil” and “care for the garden” [Gen.2]). And woman was to help in this work. She is not created to work for him, but to work with him.

But the ground is cursed because of man’s sins. Same procedures as before; just troubles and labor in producing the results.

THE GOOD IS THE GIFT

Now the good of labor (its “fruit”) is the gift of God. Man plants and waters but God gives the increase in both physical and spiritual realms (I Cor. 3.6). God created the seed, the soil, and the wherewithal but man must labor (work) to get God’s results.

There is a story of the scientist who is pictured talking with God. “God, I don’t need you anymore. I can clone and now I will surely make an original man without you.”

God says, “Oh? How?”

“Well, I will take this dirt and...”

“Whoa!,” God interrupts, “What dirt?”

“Why this dirt from the yard.”

God replies, “Oh, no. That’s my dirt. You will have to get your own.”

IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD

Everything we have is from God. And what we work with is from God. The result of our work is totally dependent on the grace of God. That’s the lesson. Now let’s apply it to the gospel.

Ephesians 2:8-10 “By grace are you saved...it is the gift of God.”

Philippians 2:12 “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

How do we harmonize these two statements? Man has to work. Labor in most cases. But the result is still the gift of God. God has provided the seed, His word (Jesus Christ, the foundation), and the “wherewithal” in the gospel.

James 1:21-22 “...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...”

“Receive” the Word and be a DOER of the Word. The word “doer” requires a “performer,” i.e. “one who acts,” hence, “worker.” Be ye “workers” of the word.

Second Timothy 2:15: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a *workman* that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (KJV).

So we have “work” (or labor) and then the “gift of God” just like in Ecclesiastes. We do what “grace” teaches us to do (Titus 2:9-11). The fruit is the gift of God. [Gaylon is an elder of the Orange Street church of Christ, Auburndale, Florida.]

Gene Burgett Report

January is a very busy month at the Florida School of Preaching with our annual lectureship beginning on Martin Luther King Day. Having barely recovered from our own lectureship, Brain Kenyon and I (along with Brian's wife, Amber) took the school's display to Henderson, Tennessee, and the Freed-Hardeman Lectures. Amber very diligently attended to the school's display for the entire week. As has been the case in past years, the CD of our lectureship books sold briskly. It is not difficult to learn why this is so. For \$35.00 one can purchase a CD that contains all of the lectureship books produced by the Florida School of Preaching since 1994. Furthermore, next year that CD can be upgraded for a modest fee.

Brian also spoke at the FHU lectures and did a great job addressing a subject crucial to the church today: The argument from silence in Hebrews.

Before coming to the Florida School of Preaching, Brian preached for the church in Friendship, Tennessee. While on this trip we spoke during their Sunday morning assemblies: Brian preached during the worship assembly and I told the brethren about the work of FSOP during the Bible class.

Also, I want to thank Amber Kenyon's parents, Jim and Karen Davis, for providing me a place to stay while we were in Tennessee.

I will be closing out February with a gospel meeting in Sebastian, Florida. Al Woodard, a recent FSOP graduate, preaches for the Sebastian church. I preached in Sebastian one Sunday about twenty years ago. I am sure much has changed over the years and I look forward to being with them.

The second Sunday in March I will be preaching in Live Oak, Florida. The church in Live Oak has recently begun supporting the school in a very generous way. It will be an opportunity for me to tell them a bit about the Florida School of Preaching and to thank them in person for their support.

I urge any men who are considering preaching to contact me that I may acquaint you with our work. Also, we are still very much in need of financial support.

-Gene Burgett
352-339-3195
burgett@atlantic.net

Return Service Requested

WEB SITE: www.fsop.net/
E-MAIL: fsop@gte.net

FAX: 863-683-0750
PHONE (863) 683-4043 (800) 320-9780
LAKELAND, FLORIDA 33803-2653

1807 SOUTH FLORIDA AVENUE
FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lakeland, FL
PERMIT #235