

# Restoring All Things In Christ

Walter Hampel

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## **Dedication**

To my dear wife Julie who knows my passion for writing and has given up countless Thursday evenings to allow this book to take shape.

## **Acknowledgements**

There are a number of people to thank for helping get this book to the state of a finished product. Several people acted as proofreaders. The proofreaders were my wife Julie, Dr. David Hodge, Michelle Hodge, Dorothy Riley, as well as the senior pastor of my home church, Troy Christian Chapel, Pastor Dan Lewis.

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## **About the Author**

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# Soli Deo Gloria “For the Glory of God Alone”

## Introduction

In troubled times throughout history, there has been a degree of longing for the life and things of the past. In America, interest in the past has fueled nostalgia as a big business and has done so for a number of decades. In looking back to the past, many see times which were simpler, more stable, and, quite simply, more fun. In light of the financial crisis which gripped the globe in 2008, the “good old days” for millions of people were only as far back as 2007.

The tendency for looking longingly at the past is not only a phenomenon of the early 21st century. Other cultures have looked back to what they would call a “golden era.” Such a golden era is thought to have been what Charles Dickens, in the first line of his *A Tale of Two Cities*, refers to as “the best of times.” Many Americans look back to the decade of the 1950s as a golden age for the United States. There is an appeal to many for the simplicity of a world in which we seemed to get along well with our neighbors, when material prosperity kicked into high gear as part of the post World War II recovery and quaint fashions such as poodle skirts and duck-tails were popular. It was a world of no cell phones, no Internet, no personal computers. A blackberry in the 1950s was a fruit, not a high-tech mobile communications device.

During the 1950s in Detroit, it was not uncommon for teens to “cruise Woodward” (the main street which divides the west and east sides of Detroit, extending from downtown Detroit well into its northern suburbs). This practice is remembered in the annual Woodward Dream Cruise. Held since 1995, the Dream Cruise takes place along a 16 mile route on Woodward from Ferndale to Pontiac. People are encouraged to drive their old cars along that route during the third weekend in August and remember what it was like to drive their old roadsters along that same route during the 1950s. Dream Cruise weekend serves as a reminder of a

time when life was simpler. It even holds fond memories, oddly, for many who never lived in that time as the majority of those in the Dream Cruise crowds aren't old enough to have a living memory of the 1950s.

Christians are not immune from a desire to look back wistfully to a past golden age. For many in the American church, the decade of the 1950s is regarded also as a type of golden age. It was the decade before the turbulent, social revolution which rocked America in the 1960s. It's often thought of as the ideal time for the church. Sunday church attendance was high (by the standards of the early 21st century). There is the perception that people were more pious and holy. In the same way, the time of the first generation of Christians in the first century has long been regarded by many as the church's golden age to which all efforts at reform must aim and all "getting back to basics" plans must copy.

What is often not realized in looking back to "better times" or a "golden age" is that one group's "golden age" was most often a time of intense struggle and trouble for another. While much of white America can look at the 1950s nostalgically, black America was entering into a battle for civil rights. Even those in the church who look back to a golden age of the 1950s do not fully understand the history of that time. The very ideas which brought about the turbulence of the 1960s were being taught in universities and seminaries during the 1950s. Those who look to the first generation of the church don't take into account that heresies and divisions were already rising rapidly in multiple places during the very time that many of Jesus' twelve apostles were still alive. Read through the Apostle Paul's New Testament letters. You will see how heresy and divisions posed very real threats to the churches in Colossae, Galatia and Corinth.

Despite knowing that there really is not a golden age to which to return, there remains a sense within us that things are not as they should be. While other times may have been better than ours, they weren't the best. Yet, there is a longing for restoration. There is a longing to get back. It is

not necessarily to get back to exactly the way things were. Rather it is a longing to get back to the way that things ought to be.

### **Why write about restoration**

The concept of restoration has intrigued me for years. It has seemed to me to be a way of bringing the past into the present. It is a way of bringing dead things back to life. Those things which served a purpose in the past can once more be brought to active service in the present.

To be witness to the process is truly watching a birth. In my family's travels to Michigan's Upper Peninsula every summer, we would make a stop in Mackinac City to see if the promised restoration of the Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse had started. After the nearby Mackinac Bridge opened in 1957, the lighthouse was no longer needed as an aid to navigation. It was decommissioned and remained unused for a long time.

For years' worth of our family vacations, it was obvious that no restoration activity had started. This building which served ships in the Straits of Mackinac for so many decades continued to lie dormant and abandoned. But in the summer of 2003, the first phase of restoration had allowed the long-unused lighthouse to be open to the public once more. The restoration project decided to restore the lighthouse to the way it looked in 1910. Once more, a 46 star U.S. flag flew outside the lighthouse. The past was coming back into the present. Life, service and purpose were being restored to that venerable building on the south shore of the Mackinac straits.

As a student of the Bible and theology, I have seen how the theme of restoration in Scripture resonates from Genesis to Revelation. Just as a building can be restored and given renewed purpose, I believe that God's people can be restored as well. In taking up the offer of forgiveness for all our sins through the death of Christ on the cross, the process of true restoration can begin for us. As I reflected on the Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah, I understood that the impact of a godly restoration can happen within a community as well as an individual. As I

read further in the Bible, the call for us to imitate God and be restorers became so very clear.

That's why I wrote this book. It is my invitation for you to recognize the life-giving power of restoration. Just as historians had to look back to know how to restore a building such as Old Mackinac Point Light to a given era of time, we may need to look back and see how much we are in need of restoration. There are some things which have faded away with time and should stay in the past. Yet, there are other things which have gone away or been taken away, and we are diminished by their absence. Without knowledge of what has been lost, there is no way of knowing what needs to be restored.

I hope that as you read these chapters, you will recognize that in many ways, the Christian life of the early 21st century is a diminished experience compared to the life of believers centuries, or even decades ago. While it was not a "golden-age", knowing what once was should spur us on to bring those treasures out of the attic of history and into the living rooms of our present-day life. Together, I hope that we can restore these practices from the past and give them a new life in our own time. It is more than just restoring old and forgotten practices. Like those who went before us, it is reclaiming our heritage in knowing the joy of a profound life with God in Christ Jesus. What better restoration could there be?

First, we will examine our desire for restoration in light of what Scripture says about it. Specifically, we will start with God. We will see that God is a restorer who we are being called to imitate. We will see God's hand of restoration from Genesis to Revelation. We will learn that with God, our ultimate model for biblical restoration, we need to look not only to the past but to the future as well.



# Chapter 1

## *God the Restorer*

When you look at the opening chapters of the Bible, you won't have to read very far after "In the beginning" to see God's hand of restoration becoming evident. Some Christians see a restoration happening as early as Genesis 1:2. One interpretation of this verse has been that a very long period of time elapsed between verses 1 and 2. Genesis 1:2 refers to an Earth that was "without form and void." In this view, known as the Gap Theory, it is believed that God's original creation had somehow become a wasteland and was in need of restoration on a cosmic level. While this theory is not held by most Christians, it could be agreed that the need for restoration quickly becomes evident with the conduct of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

God's creation, including that of those first two humans, is described as "very good" (Genesis 1:31). We know the account of what happens soon after. First Eve, then Adam, believed Satan's lie and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sin and its inevitable consequences of separation from God, including death, put Adam and Eve out of close relationship to God. That sin also put every one of their descendants, the Lord Jesus Christ being the only exception, into a condition which theologians have called "original sin." It speaks of our being affected by that first sin. It results in our having a built-in tendency toward sinning. This state of original sin also places each human in history (Christ being the only exception) into the state of being a spiritual "still-born." Though our physical body lives, spiritually, we are born dead and need the regenerating power of the Word of God and His Holy Spirit to give us true spiritual life in Christ (see Ephesians 2:1-5).

Clearly, God's work of restoration starts early. It becomes more evident as the biblical account and human history progress through time. In Genesis 3:15, we find what theologians have called the "Protoevangelium"

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(Greek for “first gospel”). In speaking to the serpent that tempted Adam and Eve, God said that He would

put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

This is the earliest promise of a deliverer who would successfully conquer the serpent (the devil). It has been understood from the very beginnings of Christianity that the offspring being referred to here is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

In the next few chapters of Genesis, we find Adam and Eve being ejected from their garden paradise. The chapters which follow narrate how sin began its spread through humanity. We witness, in the account of Cain and Abel, the first murder (Genesis 4:8). We meet Tubal-Cain, a man who is willing to cruelly exert his power over others, including his own wives (Genesis 4:23-24). His vengeance is clearly out of proportion to the wrong done against him. This condition of fallen humanity degenerated to the point that

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).

Eight individuals were spared God’s universal judgment on humanity. Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives played a role very similar to that of Adam & Eve. For a period of time, each group was the only set of humans living on Earth. Yet, there is a contrast. In the case of Adam and Eve, the Earth had yet to be inhabited by humans. The extent of human sin had been limited to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were expelled. Once they left, sin went with them, bringing catastrophe in its wake. In the case of Noah and his family, the Earth was once more without other humans. Yet, this is not a new Earth but a renewed Earth. The places where Noah and his family would now walk had already been

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walked upon, prior to the flood, by the feet of a corrupt humanity, who brought the ghastly effects of their sin with them.

The ongoing narrative of the Bible shows us how God is a restorer. Note that God's work of restoration was set in motion by the very existence of human sin. In the same way that a crisis will often bring out otherwise unknown features of a person's character, without the Fall of Adam and Eve, many of God's attributes would have remained completely hidden from us. His mercy, grace, forgiveness, and His wrath against sin would be unknown to us if the Fall had not taken place. Another of those characteristics which would have remained unknown to us and unexercised by God is that of being a restorer.

Restoration is a pre-dominant theme as the book of Genesis continues. The theme is woven into the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons. In humanly impossible circumstances, God brought about a restoration for Abraham. The hope of a future posterity was fully met in Isaac, the child of promise (Galatians 4:23). Yet, in the account of God's promise to Abraham of a son, decades before Isaac was born, God made the promise of a return to the land by his numerous yet-to-be-born descendants. Later during his pilgrimage through the land, Isaac restored to active use the wells which his father had previously dug (Genesis 26:18). Not only was their use restored but also the names which were given them by Isaac's father, Abraham. They were significant as reminders of his father's travels throughout the land a generation earlier.

The theme of restoration continues with Jacob. He was restored to the land of his birth after twenty years of tending the flocks of his uncle Laban. Decades later, the relationship of father and son is restored between Jacob and his son Joseph. Joseph had been parted from his father for over twenty years while serving as a slave and then, after 13 years of imprisonment, as the second-in-command over all of Egypt. After all those years, Joseph met his father again face to face. Jacob thought Joseph had died years earlier. Yet, Joseph is restored to Jacob (and, of course, the reverse as well). This restoration of relationship includes the

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preservation of Jacob's family by Joseph's storing up of grain prior to a devastating seven year famine.

We find restoration themes in the life of Moses. He returned to Egypt after a forty year absence to lead his enslaved fellow Hebrews on the route to the land which God promised to the descendants of Abraham. We find restoration in the life of David after his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the cover-up operation which included the murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite. The cover-up was so terrible that it involved using the Israelite military as the means of killing Uriah. David had even sent the orders for Uriah's death, in a sealed scroll, delivered by the hand of Uriah himself. Eventually, David was confronted with his sin by the Prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-15). He was told: "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house." (2 Samuel 2:10). Such was the price that David and his descendants had to pay. It was a punishment which came, one thousand years later, upon the greatest descendant of David, the Lord Jesus Christ. We know this from a prophecy given by Simeon when the 40-day old Jesus was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. Simeon told Mary, Jesus' mother, that a sword would pierce her soul also (Luke 2:35). We understand this to be a prophecy of a sword-piercing which would happen to Christ. We see the fulfillment on the day of Christ's crucifixion. After His death on the cross, the Lord Jesus' body was pierced with a spear (John 19:34).

It is worthwhile to note that a restoration from sin may, as was the case with David, carry an enduring price-tag here on Earth. In the case of a husband and wife who reconcile after one of them has been caught in an extra-marital affair, ongoing suspicions of the offended spouse might take a very long time to subside. In many cases, the suspicions might never end.

God has sometimes brought about restoration through unlikely sources. Cyrus, the king of Persia, was moved upon by the Spirit of the Lord to allow the people of Israel to return to their homeland following a seventy year exile. Cyrus was not a follower of the God of the Bible. Yet, God

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used him for His purposes. Cyrus was even called a shepherd of God, by name, centuries before he was born (Isaiah 44:28). It is worthwhile to note that a restoration which God brings about may come about through people and/or circumstances which seem to be most unlikely. Our God is one who seems to delight in surprising His people.

The theme of restoration is also found in the writings of the prophets of the Old Testament. They delivered the words from God to the people of Israel. These words were literally called “burdens” (Nahum 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1) as they bore a sense of weightiness due to their importance. In all of those admonitions and warnings, one theme which continually came through was that of restoration in the aftermath of God’s righteous wrath upon His covenant people for their disobedience. God through Moses predicted the scattering of a future generation of Israelites due to their disobedience to the covenant which God made with them. Ironically, one of the earliest warnings came in the words of a song which Moses himself taught the people (known as the Song of Moses; Deuteronomy 31:19-21 & 32:1-44) Yet, God also tempered His warning with a wonderful and comforting promise. Speaking of the place of their future exile, God promised

but from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 4:29).

The theme of restoration continues throughout the Old Testament. The Psalmist cries out: “Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!” (Psalm 85:4). We see the first hints that God has called us to follow His pattern of restoration in our actions as well. Through Isaiah the prophet, God calls us and encourages us with the following:

Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called

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the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the streets in  
which to dwell. (Isaiah 58:12)

Just as the opening chapters of the Old Testament reflect God's restoration, the closing verses of the Old Testament do as well. In the prophetic writings of Malachi, we find the prediction of the return of the prophet Elijah. The Lord Jesus interpreted this verse as referring to the ministry of John the Baptist, whose clothing and message projected a clear parallel to those of Elijah (see Malachi 4:5-6 with Matthew 11:14). The very last verse of this book (and of the Old Testament) shows us that this Elijah-like figure would carry out a ministry of restoration by reconciling fathers and their children (Malachi 4:6).

In this chapter, we have seen how God is, by His very nature, a restorer. The Bible gives strong testimony to God's gracious project of restoring the human race for His own purposes. As we will see, restoration is a theme which runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It will take on a variety of names and embody a number of facets to reveal how God restores us. We find this godly work described in terms and ideas such as reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), regeneration (Titus 3:5), redemption (Romans 3:24) and return (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Psalm 126:1).

God's work of restoration finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. In that act, we find a restoration of what theologians have referred to as the "Imago Dei" (Latin for the "Image of God"). It is a restoration of what we were created as (Genesis 1:26-27). This is a restoration which takes us from God's wrath to God's friendship. Please recognize that a principle of biblical restoration is that it is not a mere "break-even." If that were the case, when Christ reconciled us to God, He merely would have made us neutral in God's sight. How many people do you know who regard you neither as an enemy nor a friend? Christ's work on our behalf took us from being enemies to being friends of God. In Scripture, restoration is quite often an act which makes things better than they were before.

## God the Restorer

In the next chapter, we will see how God has called His people to be active in the work of restoration. We have seen, in the Old Testament, how God is a restorer and has given indications that He has called us to be restorers as well. First and foremost, we will examine the work of restoration which was set in motion by the most unique being in history, the One who is both God and human, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 2

### *Restoring the Images of God*

Genesis 1:27 tells us: “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” What is the image of God spoken of in this verse? Theologians have debated this topic for centuries. What does it mean to be made in the image of God? According to Millard Erickson, Christian theology has developed three views concerning what it means for humans to be made in the image of God.<sup>1</sup>

1. Relationship - This view understands the image of God as residing in our human capacity to engage in relationship with God or with other humans.
2. Functional - This view understands the image of God as something which humans do. According to those who hold this view, the first and foremost thing which humanity does is to have dominion over God’s creation.
3. Substantive - This view understands the “Imago Dei” as something which is a part of every human being.

While the theological debate about this continues, two points are widely acknowledged. The first is that the sin of Adam and Eve somehow marred and disfigured the Image of God not only in them but also in their descendants. The second point is that if anyone reflected the “Image of God” perfectly, it is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We find in the New Testament, the Greek word used for image (“eikon”) is applied to Christ. In Colossians 1:15, He is referred to as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Colossians 1:15)

It will remain a matter of theological debate as to whether or not our capacity for relationship is the image of God within us. Without



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argument, it can be said that being able to have relationship with God and with others is at least the result of bearing the image of God. The Bible shows us that relationship bears a special importance to God. Love is also extremely important to God. The Bible so links Him with love that it states: “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 4:16). There is a special link between relationship and love, especially the love of God for us. Erickson believes that God’s love for us is based on the likeness of Himself which He placed within us.<sup>2</sup>

This is clear as the linkage of relationship and love, and its priority to God, can be seen in the teaching of Christ. In His summary of the most important of the 613 laws which God gave to His people in Old Testament times, Jesus focused on two:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40).

Love dominates in both of those commands. Love is the essence of relationship. Obedience is important. Yet, while obedience to God is of crucial importance, obedience is what results when one trusts God (Romans 1:5) and loves Him (John 14:21,23). Biblically, obedience is an effect of loving God and not a cause. If obedience is seen as a cause for God to love us, such an approach is simply wrong. The order of events would be out of place. To use an old proverb, it puts “the cart before the horse.”

### **Love – The driving force behind restoration**

The New Testament paints a picture of love which makes clear that it is the superior Christian virtue. God is so strongly associated with love that John, in writing what we know as his first epistle, could state so simply and

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beautifully what we have just read earlier: “God is love.” God’s love is the driving force behind His kind work of restoration toward us.

### A God of Relationships

For time-bound creatures like us, it is difficult to imagine what was happening with God before the start of time. How does one imagine the concept before time when it matches nothing in our experience? The Bible does speak of God loving us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). In this case, we need to adopt the mindset of a theologian and attempt to deduce what happened with God before time as we know it, began.

We know that God is one and yet exists as three persons, namely, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Such is the essence of the classical doctrine of the Holy Trinity. In some way, before time and the creation began, God was already in relationship. In the reality of things “before” the “In the beginning” of Genesis 1:1, the Father was in relationship with the Son. The Son was in relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was in relationship with the Father. Thus, the Lord Jesus could properly pray on the night of His arrest:

Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, *for You loved Me before the foundation of the world* (John 17:24 - Emphasis added).

Among those things by which we understand the image of God, the ability to have relationship to God must be seen as a consequence of the “Imago Dei”. It is in the sin of Adam and Eve by eating fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that not only Adam and Eve but ALL of their physical descendants would together suffer from what has been called “The Fall.” In classical Protestant theology, the Fall did not destroy the image of God in humanity but marred it so that no part remained

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unaffected by it. Thus, no part of our thought, emotion or will escaped the effects of that first sin.

Human relationship to God was broken with that first sin of our first parents. The ultimate restoration for that relationship would be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is unique in that He is both God by His very nature and the Image of God (in His humanity). He is the “overlap” between the divinity of God and our humanity.<sup>3</sup>

The Gospel, the core message of the Christian faith, is the message of restoration of human relationship with God. The death and rising from the dead of Jesus Christ is the undoing of the sin of Adam. Paul the Apostle instructed us that our eternal destiny has to do with two Adams. The first, of course, is the very first human. However, Paul makes the case for Jesus Christ being the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45). In this verse, he sets up contrasts in line with this thinking. Adam was a living being. Christ, the last Adam, is a life-giving spirit. Those who remain “in Adam” will face death, namely, eternal death due to Adam’s first act of sin. Those “in Christ” have eternal life because of Christ’s one act of righteousness by dying for us on the cross and rising from the dead. That is the heart of the Gospel. We not only have a way of escaping the fate of those who remain in Adam but we also have a restoration of relationship with our Creator due to the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Those who believe this (namely, those who know this, agree with it and are relying completely on Christ to do this) are those who have heard and accepted the Gospel, “the Good News”. The work of Christ on the cross and rising from the dead is the core of God’s work of restoration. Those who know this say “Yes” to it and rely on God that His promise is true. They have been transferred from being in the first Adam to being in the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Humans can experience no greater restoration. It places us squarely on the path to have the Image of God in us, marred by sin, being restored and “conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29).

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### Imitation of Christ

In the early 1400s, a monk named Thomas a Kempis wrote a book which he intended to be a training manual for his fellow monks. This book eventually became a masterpiece of classic Christian devotional literature. To this day, it continues to be the world's best-selling work of Christian literature after the Bible. Thomas a Kempis' main theme in the book comes from its title, namely *Imitation of Christ*. In the very opening words of the book, Thomas wrote:

‘He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness’, says Our Lord. In these words, Christ counsels us to follow His life and way if we desire true enlightenment and freedom from all blindness of heart.<sup>4</sup>

We are called to imitate God. We see that Thomas understood God to be a restorer in bringing us enlightenment and freedom from blindness of heart. Just as God has restored, we too are called to restore.

That God is a restorer was clearly demonstrated in Chapter 1. Yet, saying that God is a restorer has a great amount of impact on how we view our role as restorers. At this point, we need to examine a bit of theology. Theologians have referred to God's characteristics by the term “attributes”. We can understand the attributes of God as being either “incommunicable” or “communicable.” We have likely heard the term “communicable.” It was probably in connection with some type of disease. A communicable disease is one which can be transmitted from one person to another. In the same way, a communicable attribute of God is one which He can “transmit” to us. God's omniscience (His ability of knowing all things) is an example of an “incommunicable” attribute. (Sorry, but the people you've met who are “know-it-all” are not really imitating God). However, God's love and holiness are attributes which are communicable to us. Though we will practice these imperfectly in this life, we can still love. We can live a life of holiness.

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The apostle Paul tells us: “Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Ephesians 5:1). Just as we are called to love because God loves us and to be holy because He is holy, we are called to the holy task of restoration because God is a restorer.

Let’s return to how this theme of restoration is a key element in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Christian church in the city of Corinth. In this context, restoration took the form of reconciliation to God. Paul wrote:

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

In the next chapter, we will examine how restoration follows a pattern. Using the teaching of the Bible as our pattern for restoration, we will discuss the need to recognize and distinguish two things. The first is that of principle, a truth which does not change over time. The second is practice, the way in which a biblical principle should be applied to a particular time, place and circumstance.

## Chapter 3

### *Pattern, Principle and Practice*

During a trip to north central Ohio, I had the opportunity to visit the home and Presidential library of Rutherford Hayes (1822-1893), the 19<sup>th</sup> President of the United States (1877-1881). My visit to this historic site in Fremont, Ohio, happened on a Friday afternoon in February. My visit during the tourist off-season allowed me the unintended but very welcome privilege of being the only person in a guided tour of a President's house.

Being a presidential history buff, having the chance to have sole access to a tour guide in a president's house was an utter thrill. As the docent took me from room to room, she mentioned on several occasions that parts of the house were under restoration. She pointed out that certain rooms were being restored to look the way they did when President Hayes lived there in the late 1800s. Photographs of the rooms taken during Hayes life provide a pattern for how to restore those rooms in the early 21st century.

Upon later reflection, it occurred to me that the patterns contained in those 19th century photographs were a type of bridge in time. They allow 21st century museum workers to restore, with contemporary materials and effort, these things to the way they looked in the 19th century. What a wonderful link between one time period and another. In a very real way, in the Hayes house, the 19th century comes alive in the 21st.

A number of things can act as patterns. As already mentioned, photographs can store patterns. An architectural drawing stores the pattern of a building. Such a drawing allows us not only to know how a building once looked but would allow us, with the right amount of time and materials, to create another building just like it at a later time and in another place. Recipes serve a similar purpose. A list of ingredients, along with the amount and instructions about how to put them together is more than mere chemistry. Following a recipe allows us to re-create food items

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once made at an earlier time. Such an activity often restores memories through the smells and flavors of cooking done by beloved members of family and friends, perhaps of those already long departed. Using materials and effort from today, a bridge in time is effectively created.

The Bible speaks of patterns as well. In some cases, the references are direct while others are less direct. One such direct example can be found in the construction of the Tent of Meeting. This special tent was made following the departure of the people of Israel out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. When Moses was with God on the top of Mount Sinai, the Scriptures indicate that God showed Moses a pattern which he should follow in building the Tent of Meeting (Hebrews 8:5). The language of the text indicates that Moses saw something up on the mountain which needed to be copied and would serve as the pattern for God's portable sanctuary. In a similar way, King David received a pattern from God about how the first Temple in Jerusalem should be built (1 Chronicles 28:11-19).

A pattern provides information. Yet, it also has two other important aspects behind it. The pattern contains information which was stored *before* we got hold of it. The word "pattern" in Latin reflects the idea of something which comes before. It derives its meaning from the word "pater" meaning "father." Just as a human father, by definition, must precede his children in time, a pattern provides us information which precedes us in time as well as a type of authority to be honored in the use of copying the pattern.

While biblically-based restoration emphasizes and gives priority to the restoration of relationship, there is a sense in which "information-based" restoration is necessary. Such information can take the form of words, images or even memories. The ritual of Passover became the means for Israel to share the corporate memory of God's deliverance. In that ritual, the Israelites remembered their slavery in Egypt and the liberation brought about miraculously by God.

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The prophets of the Old Testament exemplify this kind of “information-based” call to restoration. The prophets used words in both oral and written form. We can see where their call to restoration also used images. Hosea demonstrates this by marrying an unfaithful wife (Hosea 1:2), Ezekiel shows this by dressing for and going through the motions of one who is about to go into exile (Ezekiel 12:1-7). Jeremiah put an image to his works by placing on himself a yoke to symbolize the soon-to-come captivity of his fellow Israelites in Babylon (Jeremiah 27:1-11).

Even the use of memory plays a role in Jeremiah’s ministry of prophecy as he was spared from death while prophesying against the Temple. The people remembered hearing a similar prophecy from Micah of Moresheth who, a century earlier, predicted the same fate for the Jerusalem Temple (Jeremiah 26:18; Micah 3:12) and who was not killed for making his prophecy.

In the New Testament era, the Apostle Paul instructed the Christians in the city of Philippi to “join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us” (Philippians 3:17). Such activity required the use of words (Paul’s letter) and images (the visible example of those who followed the pattern of Paul’s teaching). In appealing to the use of their memory, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews taught his readers to “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7)

It is important to remember that biblical principles are enduring and timeless. The application of those principles into a practice might be very limited by time and circumstance. That Christians should gather together for worship is a principle which transcends time and culture. The means used to gather together is a practice which will vary with time and place. In the early church times, some Christians gathered to worship at the Temple. As time went by, those gathering places included homes and later, buildings constructed for the specific purpose of gathering a local group of believers into one place.



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One way of examining this is by looking at how Christians got to the place of assembly over the years. In the earliest eras, believers would have walked to the place of gathering (i.e. a house or much later a building used as a church). Later, others may have used horses. During the 20th century, a number of ways could have been used (i.e. bicycle, automobile, streetcar). It would be a mistake to combine a timeless principle (gathering together for worship) with an ever-changing practice of how to get there. It would be misguided to treat the way you get to church as if it were timeless. To worship God (principle) is infinitely more important than the means you use to get yourself to the place of worship (practice). If, for example, my great-grandparents walked to church or rode a horse, does this mean I need to follow the practice of walking or riding a horse to follow the principle of Christians gathering for worship and to hear the Word of God preached? Is the way of getting to church the pattern to be followed?

The answer to that question would obviously be no. In church history, two problems have arisen in this regard. The first has been when a practice which should pass away with time is regarded as timeless. The second problem is when a principle is considered to be a relic of a past era and is treated as something to be done away with.

An example of the first problem (disposable practice regarded as an eternal principle) is the historic use of the Latin language in the church. In the medieval church, Latin was still being used for prayers and preaching long after Latin fell out of use as a language of the people. The use of Latin was regarded as if no other language could or should ever be used for prayer and preaching. In the western church, this situation persisted for centuries until the rise of the Reformation in the early 16th century.

An example of the second problem (timeless principle regarded as disposable) is the treatment of the authority of the Bible. From the beginning of church history, the Bible has been seen as being the only

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authority over Christian believers which has no error and is not able to fail. However, in our time and culture, many who call themselves Christian question the authority of the Bible as being God's Word. To them, the Church's traditional principle of treating the Bible as authoritative is regarded merely as the practice of ages past but does not apply today.

Biblical principle gives us a timeless pattern to follow in doing the work of restoration. How we apply that principle to our own circumstances and time is the application of that principle (the practice).

The mind is needed to correctly recognize patterns, principles and practices. For true restoration based on those patterns, principles and practices to happen in our everyday world (the outer world), a renewal must happen in the inner world. The mind must be renewed to think about these things and follow a godly pattern. In our next chapter, we will examine the role of a renewed mind in making real-world restoration happen.

## Chapter 4

### *Renewing the Mind*

Our world is driven by ideas. This is true in such fields as art, science, politics, and any other area of human activity. Impressive buildings, such as the CN Tower in Toronto, started as an idea in the mind of an architect. What is perhaps the most famous painting in the world, the Mona Lisa, began as an idea in the mind of its painter Leonardo Da Vinci.

Ideas depend on two factors. They depend not only on what we think about but how we think about what we think about. One significant example of this is found in the work of the 20th century physicist Albert Einstein. Einstein looked at the same universe as his fellow scientists. The “what” (the content) being observed was the same. What made Einstein unique was how he thought about the universe. He viewed the universe as a fabric of space and time. Gravity, from his perspective, was a bending of that fabric just as a heavy ball would bend a rubber sheet if placed on it. His genius was to arrive at this position and actually have it shown to be correct by numerous experiments which followed years later.

The Bible has much to say about our thinking. In it, we are instructed on what to think and how to think about it. How and what humans thought about actually was the trigger for God’s first universal judgment against humanity. The renewal of the Earth during the time of Noah was the result of a cleansing of the Earth from an almost universal corruption of human thinking. We read

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that *every intent* of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5 - Emphasis added)

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The importance of rightly-ordered thinking to growth in holiness and godliness can be found throughout the Bible. One example can be found in the fifth book of the Bible, Deuteronomy.<sup>5</sup> This book records the sayings of Moses given to a new generation of Israelites to as a reminder of God's good hand of guidance and preservation during the people's forty year wanderings between Egypt and the Promised Land. Moses instructed the people:

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

The people of Israel were to have the teaching about God in the forefront of their thinking continually. Any occasion of everyday life was to be a teachable moment about the things of God. In this way, God and the things of God would dominate the thinking of the people in each and every circumstance of daily life.

The New Testament is equally instructive about our thinking. Paul instructs us that

whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, *dwell on these things* (Philippians 4:8 - Emphasis added).

In his correspondence to the church in the city of Corinth, Paul tells the Christians of that city:

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We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:5 - Emphasis added).

The first front of a Christian's struggle is not with the outside world or even the devil. Truly, our battle to live a life pleasing to God is fought on the battlefield of the mind.

So far, we have looked at the content of what to think upon biblically. Biblical content should be the content of our thinking. It is thinking which glorifies God in what and how we think. It is a mind which is filled with the knowledge of and attention to godly virtue. It is a mind which understands the need to be ever-ready to teach these things to our children.

Our minds should be like a walled city of old at which a gatekeeper would serve as the means of keeping out those who would come inside the city to destroy it. Similarly, the effects of an unhindered poisonous thought in our mind can turn out to be even more deadly, in the long run, than a poisonous snake attacking our body. We would have no problem trying to shake off a snake which had attached itself and was in the process of trying to poison us. While we would do this quickly, how fast are we to shake off and send away a poisonous thought which has entered our mind? Do we recognize how poisonous our thoughts can be? How often do we hold onto such a thought and rather than casting it away from, we give it a safe place to stay in our mind?<sup>6</sup>

### **Why we are called to do this**

Why should we be prepared to think about these things? They should not be mere packets of information residing in our brains like data files on a computer. We know these things so that we will be transformed by them. These things equip us to live in a way which pleases God. Note well what the Apostle Paul told the church that lived in Rome:

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Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

The content of what we continually think upon will and does transform us. It happens whether the pattern of that thinking is uplifting or destructive. If we think that there is no eternal destiny for us but only a material life lived here and now, it will shape how we think about the world around us. If we think that the world is a dark, foreboding place with no ultimate hope or purpose, it will influence the attitude with which we approach life. Unfortunately, it makes sense that someone thinking along such lines, would, in a very difficult situation, seriously contemplate suicide as an effective means of escape. Such a way of looking at the world cannot help but create an embittered and cynical attitude toward life.

In just the opposite way, if we think that the world is a place with hope and an ultimate purpose, it too will influence our attitudes in a positive way. When we think in biblical patterns, we are not simply being uplifted. We are also being transformed. The Apostle Paul says that this transformation is by the renewal of our minds. The words of God found in the Bible do indeed have a renewing effect upon our minds. With our minds renewed in the things of God, transformation happens. We must be willing to be transformed by being “re-programmed”, not by our culture or circumstances, but rather, by our Creator.

### **An example found in outer space**

Our transformation by the renewal of our minds in Christ can be compared to an event in the realm of space exploration in the late 20th century. In August, 1977, the United States launched two spacecraft which were aimed at planets in the outer solar system. The two

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spacecraft, named *Voyager 1 & Voyager 2*, would do a “fly-by” of Jupiter two years after launch and travel past Saturn two years after that.

The path on which *Voyager 2* traveled was purposely designed to take advantage of the near-alignment of Jupiter and Saturn with the even more distant planets Uranus and Neptune. It was a rare alignment which takes place only once every 175 years.<sup>7</sup> Scientists knew that if *Voyager 2* were aimed in just the right way as it passed a given planet, the spacecraft would actually pick up speed and be re-directed to the next planet using a gravitational “slingshot” technique. Due to this technique, *Voyager 2* arrived at Saturn much faster than could have been done with a direct launch from Earth.

After the successful encounter of Saturn by *Voyager 2*, the spacecraft picked up speed and was re-directed to perform a fly-by of Uranus five years later. During that five year journey, the scientists back on Earth came to the conclusion that *Voyager 2*, without further modifications, would not be able to successfully carry out a mission to Uranus and Neptune. One obstacle would be to get the onboard cameras to work properly. The problem was not the mechanics of the camera but the laws of physics. The intensity of light would drop off due to how far the spacecraft was from the Sun. Uranus was twice the distance from the Sun as Saturn. At double the distance from the Sun, sunlight at Uranus would be only one-fourth as bright as at Saturn. The cameras had to be programmed to take longer exposure pictures and at the same time, compensate for a spacecraft in motion.

With *Voyager 2* being billions of miles from Earth, changes to the actual hardware were impossible. To compensate, *Voyager’s* onboard computer was re-programmed with entirely new software. This would allow an extended mission to be accomplished. With its new software, *Voyager 2* became like a new machine. The “renewal” of the onboard computer worked. *Voyager 2* went on to successfully gather, for the first time in human history, close-up scientific measurements and video images of Uranus and Neptune.

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### **The renewed mind and restoration**

Our creator must re-program us as well for our extended mission. Without that “re-programming”, a successful life mission for Christ is impossible. It is only with a renewed mind that a Christian can act to bring about restoration. Like the re-programming of Voyager 2, the transforming and renewing effects of God’s Word, in essence, re-programs us. (Unlike Voyager 2, our re-programming continues throughout our lifetime. Even then, it is not quite complete).

The effects of this transformation become more and more evident to the renewed mind in Christ. This goes beyond merely saying happy things and thinking happy thoughts. The mind which is transformed in Christ dwells within the person who has truly been restored in Christ. It plainly means arriving at faith in Christ. It is not merely holding onto the knowledge that Jesus lived as a teacher in Israel in the 1st century A.D. The 17th century Puritans summarized this to mean three things:

1. Knowing what the Bible says about Jesus (i.e. fully God & fully human).
2. Believing that those things are true
3. Relying (trusting) that what Jesus says about Himself and His promises are true and will come true.

One way of viewing restoration is the bringing back to life of something dead. When one comes to faith in Christ, it is indeed a bringing back to life. Spiritually, it is nothing less than life from death. It is regeneration by God’s action to give us eternal life in Christ. Only a regenerated mind can be a truly transformed mind. Once the mind has been regenerated, you are now in the place to work out God’s restorative purposes through your ideas and the actions which follow.



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### **Ideas have implications**

Ideas do have implications. In 1849, *The Communist Manifesto* was merely a book of political theory. Yet, within 70 years of being written, the philosophy of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels became the basis for government in Russia in the early 20th century. Other nations followed this lead. As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, Communism is still a political system to be reckoned with. Truly, mere ideas in one generation have the potential to become life-changing in another.

We have seen how a destructive idea can have deadly implications. However, godly and biblical ideas have implications too. History shows that when times of large-scale revival have come, it can be found that they were birthed in much prayer (both group and individual). The need for those prayers and the belief that God would answer them were conceived by those whose minds had been transformed by being renewed in Christ.

How do we generate the ideas which flow from a renewed and regenerated mind? What are the things we use as the foundation of this thinking? In our next chapter, we will learn how we are to do this, by using the Bible, meditation and prayer.

## Chapter 5

### *Renewing the Mind - Building the Foundation*

What pattern of thinking should the mind renewed in Christ follow? What kind of foundation should be laid down first? We are called to do this through use of the Bible and prayer. Think of these elements as the two sides of a conversation. In the Bible, God speaks to us in His written Word. In prayer, we speak to God. The importance of this pairing of Word and prayer can be seen in the sixth chapter of the book of Acts. In this account, we find that a dispute had arisen along ethnic lines concerning the distribution of food to widows. Regarding this dispute, the apostles understood a dual need. First, the situation required quick resolution. To do this, seven holy men were named as deacons (from the Greek “servant”) to oversee a fair distribution. Second, the apostles understood that their roles must not be altered by this newly-discovered need. They must not become middle-managers overseeing a “feed the hungry” project. They needed to maintain the ministry which had been entrusted to them by Christ. What were the components of that ministry? Luke tells us that the Apostles firmly resolved to continue to “... devote [themselves] to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Chapter 9 will explore the restorative role of prayer in the life of the modern-day Christian.

#### **Using the Bible**

The Bible is not a mere “user’s manual” for the Christian life. It is the written revelation of God to humanity. In its pages, we find Christ, from Genesis to Revelation (see Luke 24:27). It instructs us how to live in light of what Christ has done for us in His death and resurrection. Take a look at the end chapters of Paul’s writings such as Romans, Colossians, Ephesians, and others. After doctrines of Christ were clearly laid out, Paul drew clear implications of how we are to live as a result of being in Christ.

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The words of Scriptures provide us the “what” to think about. However, the “how” to think about this can be found in meditating upon the “what”. The Christian use of the word “meditation” is often overshadowed by its current use in our culture. That use has a strong link to meditation as done in eastern religions. In Buddhism, for example, meditation is an exercise of emptying one’s mind and clearing it of conscious thought. In Christian usage, meditation involves filling the mind with content and actively using one’s thought processes to reflect on Scripture.

Biblical meditation does seem to be a lost art in the world of the early 21st century. In a lecture about the spiritual disciplines practiced by the 18th century American pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), Donald Whitney spoke of what he believed was the greatest need of our time among Christian believers: “The greatest need in our time ... meditation upon the word of God.”<sup>8</sup> An old saying about reading says: “Reading without reflection is like eating without digesting.” The 17th century British minister Thomas Watson wrote:

Many come away cold from the reading of the Bible since they do not warm themselves at the fire of meditation.<sup>9</sup>

### **How does one meditate?**

There is no one specific technique. You may wish to concentrate on how a certain word in the passage applies to you as you reflect upon it. Let’s say that you’re reading the 21st chapter of Revelation. You choose to meditate on the fifth verse: “Behold, I am making all things new.” Your meditation could go in a number of directions. You might note that the verb “making” is in the present tense. It is not “made” (past tense) or “will make” (future tense). Ask yourself about what the one seated on the throne is making new today. Could it be a broken relationship in which you’re involved? You wouldn’t have to read much further in the text to discover that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is seated on the throne. You might reflect on the fact that the Lord Jesus is still making things new

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today. Your thoughts may take you to pondering on how great people of the past were halted from continuing their work due to the limitations of their body as they aged and eventually died. As you contrast that with the Lord Jesus you might be moved to praise God that Jesus is still alive today and that He is just as mighty and active today as ever. These are only a handful of ways in which you might meditate upon a passage of the Bible after you've finished reading it.

In meditating, ask yourself how the text applies to you. In some instances, there are passages which will never directly apply to you personally. For example, the last chapter (31) of the Book of Proverbs describes the characteristics of a godly woman. While I pray to be godly, I will never pray to be a godly woman. However, I can ask myself how to apply this knowledge. I can reflect on my biblical role as a father to counsel my sons to look for "Proverbs 31" qualities in a future wife.

However, most of the Bible is directly applicable to us. Consider the passage found in Romans 4:4-5:

Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

Assuming that you would know what "justifies" means (i.e. a legal declaration by God that you are regarded just in His sight because of Christ), you might ask yourself some of the following questions: Am I one who really approaches God as one who works for His favor? How do I show a lost family member that working and believing are polar opposites? Do I really believe God justified me before I became godly? Do I really believe God justified me while I was still ungodly?

In addition to questions, look for insights and observations. A passage in Mark 2 holds some interesting insights. In this passage, a paralyzed man was lowered through a roof so that he could get near Jesus to be healed. Jesus' first words to the man are surprising to our contemporary ears. The Lord does not say "be healed of your paralysis" but rather "Son, your sins

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are forgiven” (Mark 2:5). In reflecting on this text, we find that Jesus’ priorities are not necessarily our own. Those who are physically disabled (and those of us who are not) suffer from a greater problem, namely, the sins we have committed. Upon reflection, we might ask ourselves if we have prayed to change our priorities to line up with those of Christ.

### **Cross-Reference**

When someone reads and remembers larger and larger amounts of the Bible, an ability to do “cross-referencing” meditation will begin to occur. The structure of the Scriptures can be likened to a lattice, whose parts interconnect with one another. In this way, one area of the Word connects to another. Cross-referencing meditation can provide a level of insight that might not be available by reading and meditating on a portion of Scripture if one has a more limited knowledge of the overall content of the Bible.

One example is found in the text of the fourth chapter of 1 Kings. The chapter describes the splendor of Solomon’s kingdom as he is finally established upon the throne of his father David. Without knowledge of other portions of the Bible, this chapter might be read as a rejoicing in the prosperity of Israel. Yet, verse 26 belies a problem which would grow in magnitude and spread into utter disobedience of God’s commands over the coming generations of royalty. In verse 26, we read: “Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.” To the otherwise unknowing, this verse may seem to be one of many speaking of Solomon’s success. However, if we know the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy, we remember that God through Moses commands to each and every future king of Israel:

Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' "He shall not multiply wives for himself, or

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else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. (Deut 17:16-17)

Rather than being a sign of Solomon's success, we have an indication that one area of God's Law was beginning to be systematically disobeyed at the highest levels. The disobedience grew like a cancer during Solomon's reign as can be witnessed as one reads further in the book of 1 Kings. The passage from Deuteronomy 17 concerning what a king must not do seemed to become Solomon's "things to do" list. By the time we read the narrative in chapter 10, Solomon was accumulating gold and importing chariots and horses from Egypt. In chapter 11, we find that Solomon accumulated wives and concubines. He did precisely what Deuteronomy 17 forbade him to do. The Deuteronomy passage warned about the danger of the king's heart being turned away from God due to having multiple wives. The turning away of Solomon's heart makes tragic sense. We know that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (see 1 Kings 11:1-4). Having an increasing knowledge of the Bible will make such a "cross-reference" meditation more and more possible.

### **Customize**

Biblical meditation involves taking God's unchanging Word and reflecting upon it to customize how to apply it to our lives. When we read and reflect upon the Bible, we are building a pattern for how to think and act in life. This pattern causes us to look at the world around us and see those areas in need of restoration and renewing. The words of the Bible give us the principles of the pattern. Our meditation upon it provides the means of creating the corresponding practices, suited to our time, place and circumstances.

Let's examine an example which would use some of the methods already discussed. In reading Isaiah 6, a chapter in which the prophet Isaiah has a vision of the Lord God in His temple, we might reflect on a few things. God in His holiness was overwhelming to Isaiah. We might think of others in the Bible who had a similar encounter (i.e. Peter with Christ

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after a miraculous catch of fish mentioned in Luke 5:8). We might ask ourselves if we are too easy-going with our attitudes toward God in which we might overlook His holiness. Numerous other approaches could be taken as well.

### **The meditations of others**

Reading the writings of those who have gone before us can be a useful supplement to our reading of Scripture. The reading of sermons and books show us how our spiritual ancestors in the faith created a biblical pattern in their teaching. By reading their biographies, they can show us how they created patterns of thought and life which honored Christ and His Word in their time and place. Even reading books or sermons by others on biblical meditation can be quite helpful. I've benefited from short works by two English Puritans and recommend them highly. The first is *How We May Read the Scriptures with the Most Spiritual Profit* by Thomas Watson (c. 1620 - 1686). The second is Thomas Manton's (1620-1677) First Sermon on Genesis 24:63. (He actually preached ten sermons on this one verse!). Both were quite instructive and plainly spoke of the need to reflect/meditate upon Gods' Word.

### **Applying the pattern to theology**

In this chapter, we have looked at the importance of biblically-based, godly thinking. The Christian, in order to have truly godly ideas, thoughts and a firm foundation for doing the work of renewing and restoring, must have a mind renewed by faith in Christ. We have seen how the Bible is the source for our ideas (both for what to ponder and how to ponder it). Armed with this knowledge, we are prepared to explore an area in which the early 21st century western church has a deep need. That need is to restore our study, knowledge and understanding of theology. We will examine that need in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### *Restoring Theology in the Life of the Church*

Theology is simply the study of God. Our English word “theology” derives from the Greek words for God (“theou”) and study (“logos”). Every world religion and system of belief has developed some form of theology. It reflects what a group or individual thinks about a god or gods. In the case of atheism and agnosticism, it states a denial that God exists (atheism) or a denial that God, IF He exists, is in any way knowable (agnosticism).

In that sense, Christian theology is no different. It too is the study of God. What makes Christian theology unique among the theologies of the world religions are the claims it makes about a God who reaches humanity by becoming one of them. In making this and the other claims of classical Christian theology, the Bible has been and continues to be its foundational source of information. David Wells writes about the nature of this classic approach to Christian theology:

The nature of evangelical theology is determined for it by the nature of that Word [the Bible] of which it is the exposition and application. The Word of God is the unique, written disclosure of God's character, will, acts, and plans. It is given so that men and women who have come to faith through its teaching might learn to live in God's world on his terms, loving and honoring him in all that they do and seeking to make known to the world his law and gospel. That is the purpose of God's revelation and the task of theology is to facilitate this.<sup>10</sup>

Proper Christian theology is the study of God in Christ. It must include a study of what that God says in the writings of His inspired collection of letters and books known as the Bible. Theology, correctly done, lays the foundation for what we do know about God. It draws necessary



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conclusions from the pattern of the Bible in its principles. It is a study in which we try to “connect the dots” supplied to us in the Bible. Theology works through and recognizes how those principles were applied in the past and looks to find how to apply those principles in practice in our own time, place, and culture.

In Western culture, a holdover from the influence of Greek and Roman philosophy of centuries past is our desire to systematize things. This applies to our desire to put the Bible’s truths concerning a variety of topics such as Christology (the study of Christ), justification (being in right standing with God), sanctification (growing in holiness), and events at the end of time (known more formally as eschatology) into neat and tidy categories. However, the Bible is not written in the form of a systematic theology. If, for example, you were looking for all that the Bible has to say about the uniqueness and sufficiency of Christ and Christ alone as Our Savior from sin, you could go to passages in the books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews and still not locate all of the passages which touch on this subject. To know about one topic of the faith, you must go through many others which speak on other topics as well.

From the Bible, logical implications are drawn from statements made in the text. In the world of logic, this is known as a syllogism. A set of premises leads to a necessary conclusion. For example,

Premise 1 - All residents of the State of Michigan live in the United States

Premise 2 - Bob is a resident of the State of Michigan

Conclusion - Therefore, Bob lives in the United States

The doctrine of God as Trinity (classically stated as the existence of one God as three persons, The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit) derives from this very way of doing theology. It has often been pointed out, correctly, that the Bible nowhere uses the word “Trinity” explicitly within its pages. Yet, the earliest Christians drew conclusions from biblical passages which speak of “one God” (Deuteronomy 6:4). In a syllogism,

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they combined texts which speak of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as personally distinct from one another (Matthew 3:16-17) with texts which speak of each of these persons as being God (1 Corinthians 1:3; Hebrews 1:8; Acts 5:3-4). A doctrine is no less biblical and no less true if it is the direct *implication* of Scriptural truths.

There are instances in which the conclusions to be drawn from Scripture do not need finely crafted logical arguments which go from a set of premises to a conclusion. They are, instead, very straight-forward. The belief that Jesus Christ is fully human and fully God is clearly seen from the many New Testament passages which address the issue. Jesus never states: "I am God" in only those three words within the Gospels. His method for telling us this is more forceful than a simple identification with a three-word sentence. Consider how Jesus identifies who He is in the same way that a President of the United States might identify himself saying: "I sit in the Oval Office and command Air Force One."

Jesus showed His ability to forgive sins on His own authority and used His healing of a paralyzed man as His credentials (Mark 2:5). On another occasion, He performed an action which the Psalmist describes as a work of God Himself. Centuries before Jesus' ministry on Earth, the Psalmist wrote: "Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses. He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed." (Psalm 107:28-29) During a sudden storm on the Sea of Galilee, Christ's panicked disciples awoke their sleeping master. One might imagine that in the voice of a half yawn we often have while waking up, the Lord Jesus simple spoke to the turbulence around them and told the winds and waves to be still. To His disciples' amazement, the winds and waters actually obeyed. (Mark 4:35-41). Jesus didn't have to use the words "I am God" to show us that He is. His words and actions demonstrated that fact so very clearly.

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### **The Treasure in the attic**

There are times when a visit to a parents' or grandparents' house may result in a trip to the attic or store room. It is often surprising what turns up in searching an old attic. Family treasures, forgotten for years, make a re-appearance. Old photographs, diaries, and newspaper clippings are among the treasures re-discovered by those of a later generation. These items can give us a new found appreciation for the life led by our ancestors and the legacy which they have passed onto us.

Discovering the writings of those who have gone before us in the faith can be like a trip to the family attic. Theirs is a legacy left to us about the lives they led in Christ. We find these spiritual ancestors not to be super-humans or some type of "super-saint" who achieved a level of holiness unimaginable to us. We do find them to be real flesh and blood people who were filled with the same Holy Spirit as believers of today. Their words, experiences and examples are a treasure for us.

Over the centuries, theological study has generated much in the form of books and articles. Still existing Christian theological works (other than the Bible) date as far back as the second century. (That date may go back as far as the first century if an early church manual called *The Didache* (The Teaching) was written as early as the late first century.)

Having these books, articles, sermons, biographies and treatises available to us is a tremendous blessing. In them, we find the thoughts and reflections held by those who have gone before us in the faith. In a very real way, we can be taught by these men and women who faced the trials and circumstances of their time and place in living out their life in Christ. Their outlooks and perspectives may be very different from ours. Yet, there is the common thread of being a Christian, indwelt by the same Holy Spirit as Christians have been in every age, including our own.

There are so many members of this "hall of fame" who have left their words behind to bless later generations. A new mother in early 3rd

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century North Africa about to face martyrdom (Perpetua) can teach us the importance of being willing to lay aside this life for eternal life in Christ. An 8th century British monk (Bede) can show us the importance and joy of writing, learning and teaching about Christ. A 13th century monk and teacher can show us that true faith and reason work well together (Thomas Aquinas). A 17th century English Puritan minister, jailed briefly for his fidelity to the Gospel, (Thomas Watson) can show us how to incorporate prayer into all we do. A 19th century lay missionary from New York City (Jeremiah Lanphier) can show us how prayer and simple faith in God can launch a worldwide revival. A 20th century pastor stationed in Chicago and later in Toronto (A.W. Tozer) can teach us through his writings and audio recordings the need for holiness in a style of preaching which sounds remarkably as if it were a prophecy for today.

### Theology - The Work of the Church

Unfortunately, this area of study can devolve into a pursuit for its own sake. St. Paul warns us of the danger involved in pursuing knowledge apart from love as a knowledge that "makes [one] arrogant" (1 Corinthians 8:1). It is unfortunate that, for many, the pursuit of the knowledge of theology has become more important than the pursuit of the One on whom theology rightly centers, namely, Christ in God Himself.

In his article, "The Nature and Function of Theology", David Wells refers to the danger of isolating theology from a life in Christ, especially in the area of prayer. Wells writes:

Being God-centered in one's life is essential to being God-centered in one's thoughts. This God centeredness is the *sine qua non* [an essential condition] of good theology, for, without it, it is impossible to think our thoughts after God, which is what defines good theology. Prayer and theology, therefore, require the total orientation of the person-of heart, mind, and will -- to God. Theology without trusting,

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submissive prayer is no longer good theology; it is merely an academic exercise which may itself pose as a substitute for the process of knowing God. Where this happens, the means has become the end in a kind of perverse idolatry.<sup>11</sup>

### Expected Growth

After a baby is born, there is the expectation of growth. The same can be said of Christ's church in history. While the foundations remain the same, there is a natural growth in the church over time. Particularly in the area of theology, it makes sense that growth and development will occur. A theologian in, for example, the 10th century, had access to the wisdom and reflection of 900 years of preceding theologians. They also had opportunity to take that wisdom and develop it further. A theologian in the early 21st century will have almost 2000 years of Christian writings, biographies and other works on which to reflect and further develop.

As a result, each generation of believers should recognize the wisdom of those who went before them in the faith. In showing respect to them, the Apostle Paul's counsel serves us well here: "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Perhaps those predecessors did not get everything right. We can still honor and cling to what they got right. Yet we must be careful. It would be a mistake to accept a teaching merely because it is old. There are heresies in the church which go all the way back in church history. Antiquity does not always equal reliable authority.

The reverse danger must be guarded against as well. We can develop the thinking that everything that has gone before us is of no worth simply because it is old. While it is good for each generation of Christians to carefully reflect upon the state of theological knowledge in their time, it is not good to re-invent the wheel of theology in every generation. There can be what C.S. Lewis referred to as "temporal snobbery" in which we believe ourselves superior to those who have gone before us merely

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because we live today. This is not done in other fields of human endeavor.

Medicine, for example, does not re-invent itself every generation. It is true that certain errors have been corrected over time (i.e. the practice of bleeding a sick patient). There will also be new discoveries (such as the existence of DNA was in the mid-20th century). There will be refinements to existing knowledge. However, there is a core of medical knowledge which new advances will not overturn. We know that the heart serves as a pump of blood to our circulatory systems. New discoveries will not overturn that fact. Medical knowledge gained systematically over centuries of observation and experimentation is not thrown out merely because it was not discovered today. The same must hold true for the advance of theological knowledge as well. The ongoing and enduring core of Christian theology holds just as true today as in the past. No legitimate work in theology will try to overturn that in the same way that no legitimate medical advance will ever state that it is the kidneys, and not the heart, which acts as the blood pump of the circulatory system.

### **Applying Theology in Our Everyday Lives**

Some points about actually learning theology will be made in Chapter 8. It's one thing to learn. It is another to apply what has been learned. There are two primary ways of applying what we learned in theology. One is in the area of ethics. The other is in the area of spirituality.

Ethics is defined as “a set of moral principles; a theory or system of moral values”<sup>12</sup> Everyone has a set of ethics. What is up for discussion and discovery is the basis for how those ethics are constructed. A completely self-centered person has ethics. However, those ethics are built around that person as the highest good, not around God or anyone else.

It is true that our beliefs direct our behavior. However, we must be quick to be honest with ourselves in assessing this. It is one thing for us to say to the world that we believe something to be true. It is another to know

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within us what we really believe. Our real ethics will eventually be determined by what we really believe in our hearts and minds, when no one but God is looking at us.

The second major area in which to apply our theology is in the realm of spirituality. It can be said that spirituality is applied theology. Our practices in spiritual matters, like ethics, are driven by what we truly believe. It should be noted that in our turn of the millennium era in the western world, Christian spirituality faces both a peril and a promise.

The peril is that our theology is so deficiently formed that we cannot recognize elements within our personal theology which are inconsistent with each other. For example, there are some people who name the Name of Christ as Christians who claim a belief in reincarnation. Reincarnation, as held by a number of non-Christian religions, holds that the spirit of a person can pass along from one body to the next in succeeding generations. If true, this would mean that a person would leave behind a number of bodies over the centuries. Yet, Biblical Christianity holds to the personal resurrection of all who have ever lived, both believer and non-believer (Daniel 12:2-3; John 5:25-29). A string of bodies left behind by a single soul over human history cannot be reconciled with a resurrection of “*all* who are in the tombs will hear His voice” (John 5:28 – emphasis added).

The promise, as in a situation with a hopeful outlook, is that access to theological books, texts, recordings, sermons has never been greater than it is today. It is unfortunately true that many churches in the United States have de-emphasized biblical preaching and teaching to the point that dedicated believers in Christ personally suffer from the curse of the famine of hearing the Words of God. This curse, spoken of by the Prophet Amos (Amos 8:11), can happen, ironically, while sitting in church. Fortunately, those desiring to grow in their walk in and knowledge of Christ do not need to be held back by misguided pastors who mistake the timeless principle of biblical preaching as a time bound practice to be discarded as a relic of the past.

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While the pastors of many American churches have created their own famine of the Word, “houses of bread” do exist in great abundance. For those hungry to grow in biblical and theological knowledge, be willing to investigate bookstores and Internet websites which are chock full of great Christian material. While being such a “self-feeder” is not ideal, there are plenty of resources to grow in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 3:18).

### **Conclusion**

Along the path to restore theology as a facet of the life of the everyday Christian, there are some possible roadblocks which must be recognized and addressed. For many, theology is considered a subject to be avoided or even looked down upon. It is considered divisive and thus serves no good purpose. For others, a belief that the supernatural does not exist erodes the power of biblical theology. For yet others, experience trumps “head knowledge.” What is important to them is “deeds not creeds.” In the next chapter, we will examine these roadblocks and see how to overcome them.



## Chapter 7

### *Avoiding Roadblocks on the Path to Restoring Theology*

During the Middle Ages in Europe, one expression of the people's devotion to God came in the form of building cathedrals. In the same way that America's race to safely land humans on the Moon in the 1960s led to a boon in new technology, the numerous cathedral building projects in medieval Europe spurred the advance of architectural knowledge and building techniques. An offshoot of this cathedral building was the development of the cathedral school which became a predecessor of the modern-day university.

In these cathedral schools and later in the universities which developed from them, advanced learning (on the master and doctorate levels) centered around three subjects. Those subjects were law, medicine and theology. Among those three, theology was the most highly esteemed. It eventually became the case that theology was regarded as the queen of the sciences.

In the early 21st century, it can be safely said that in the minds of the people, even within the church itself, the medieval queen of the sciences has been dethroned. Not only has theology been dethroned, there are many even in the church who believe that the study of theology is at best useless and at worst a danger to living an authentic Christian life. What has happened to turn this situation to where we find it today?

#### **The Erosion of the Value Placed Upon Theology**

David Wells has been one of the foremost theologians pointing out how theology is being held in less and less regard within the evangelical church. His 1993 book *No Place For Truth: Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology*, has had the effect of sounding an alarm in the church about a serious trend in which this great treasure of the church is

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treated as having little or no positive value. Wells writes of the true importance of this classic understanding of Christian theology:

The nature of evangelical theology is determined for it by the nature of that Word [the Bible] of which it is the exposition and application. The Word of God is the unique, written disclosure of God's character, will, acts, and plans. It is given so that men and women who have come to faith through its teaching might learn to live in God's world on his terms, loving and honoring him in all that they do and seeking to make known to the world his law and gospel. That is the purpose of God's revelation and the task of theology is to facilitate this.<sup>13</sup>

Somehow, too many in the church have not understood this. There has been an odd disconnect, even among theologically conservative Christians, who highly value the Bible (even if it largely remains unread) and sees little to no value or even danger in pursuing a study of Christian theology.

While there are, no doubt, a large number of factors which could be discussed and explored, this chapter will limit itself to dealing with four of them. In these four common arguments, we will explore the advice of those who think theology should be avoided since, according to them:

1. It will end up in destroying your faith.
2. You really don't need it.
3. It is so divisive
- 4 We should emphasize "deeds not creeds".

### **Argument 1 - "Avoid theology; It will destroy your faith in Christ"**

As with all four of these arguments, we will see that there is a kernel of truth in it. The apostle Paul correctly observed that "knowledge makes arrogant" (2 Cor 8:1). The New International Version of the Bible

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colorfully translates this as “knowledge puffs up.” It is unfortunate that, for many, the pursuit of the study of theology has become more important than the pursuit of the One on whom theology rightly centers, namely, God Himself.

There is also the danger of pursuing theology outside of the classic Biblical framework of Christianity. This is the case with many institutions of higher Christian education which, over time, have “gone liberal.” The problem, in most cases, is that in those seminaries and institutions of higher learning, there is a desire to hold onto the outer framework of biblical belief and at the same time explicitly deny a supernatural aspect to the Christian faith. For example, it would pose no problems in such schools to teach that Jesus died on a cross. It would, however, pose insurmountable problems for them to teach and really believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead. When one accepts learning theology under such conditions, it is no wonder that learning “theology” could destroy your faith.

Hopefully, we can recognize that the theology being taught in these institutions is a distortion of true biblical theology. It is an abuse. Good things are often abused (i.e. prescription pain killers). Yet, there is a rightful use of such things as well. In recognizing an abuse, one must not prevent the right use.

The supernatural aspects of Christianity are essential to the faith. Of all of the miracles recorded in the Bible, the central and most important is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is a core element of the Gospel (see 1 Corinthians 15:4). Just how crucial it is can be seen in the Apostle Paul’s analysis of it.

While instructing the church in Corinth on these matters, Paul wrote:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are

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even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:13-19).

Therefore, if the resurrection of Christ from the dead did not happen, our faith is worthless and we should simply abandon it. To be candid, those who have abandoned this and the other supernatural aspects of Christianity should logically walk away from the faith rather than trying to hold onto a part of it and still claim to be Christian.

### **Argument 2 - “Avoid theology; You simply don’t need it”**

The kernel of truth in this argument is that it does pose a valid question. Does someone need to have advanced theological training to be a good Christian? The answer, of course, is no. Unfortunately, many people in the church view the study of theology as something to be pursued by an elite few. Too often, it is seen as the pursuit of the intellectual.

However, the Bible itself informs us that we must not agree with this approach. According to the apostle Peter, Christians are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18 - Emphasis added). That is a command of Scripture, not an option. It is a command for all Christians, not a few.

It is ironic that those who believe that you don’t need to study theology are actually making a theological statement. All of us will default to a system of theology, whether it is taught to us or one which we have self-developed. The question is not whether we have a theological view. The question, rather, is how well informed that view is.

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An abuse that has occurred with a study of theology is that there are some who have turned the pursuit into an end in itself. As mentioned earlier, knowledge can puff up. An animal which “puffs up” uses this technique as a defensive mechanism. It is trying to convince a possible adversary it is bigger than it really is. Unfortunately, some students of theology try to do exactly the same thing with others. It may involve such things as using terms which may sound impressive but are unknown to the average Christian. Using terms like “infralapsarian” (i.e. defined as stating that God decreed election to salvation after the fall of Adam and Eve and not before), without definition or context, will sound like another language to the average Christian. If used without definition or context, the opportunity to teach a fellow Christian about the wonderful pursuit of theology falls flat. A more knowledgeable believer should be careful to help “raise the bar” of Christian knowledge with others in a patient and charitable way to teach others.

There is also a flip-side to this kind of abuse. So far, we’ve discussed the abuse of learning theology which results in intellectual snobbery because of the high amount of information which one possesses. The opposite abuse is an intellectual snobbery which glories in how little they really know about the faith. There can be some overlap with our first point, namely that studying theology will destroy your faith. With this type of abuse, there may be a tendency to not want to be burdened with biblical and theological knowledge which can be obtained from others. There is a self-made theology. It might not be based on biblical reading and reflection or the proper study of theology. This type of theology will be based on personal insights, experiences, opinions, and a smattering of knowledge, some of which isn’t really true. Perhaps you have met a pious sounding individual who counseled you with the advice: “Well, you know, as the Good Book says: ‘God helps those who help themselves’”. Assuming that what is meant by the “Good Book” is actually the Bible, the “Good Book” says no such thing. That saying cannot be traced back to biblical times but only as recently as the 1600s. It is credited to a man named Algernon Sydney<sup>14</sup>. The Bible, rather, teaches the exact opposite.

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God alone is the only One who can help those who cannot help themselves.

Without a commitment to growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, a “folksy-wisdom” approach to theology is deceptive to the person who holds it and those who will actually listen. The “intellectual snob” withholds knowledge from those who need it. The danger of the “folksy-wisdom” theologian is that they are quite often willing to share their theology with others. It might even sound wise and holy. However, it might be an ill-informed version of Christianity that believes things which really aren’t so. It can be more of a distortion rather than “nuggets of wisdom.”

In both cases, withholding of biblical and theological knowledge takes place. The intellectual snob will withhold valuable knowledge from others. The folksy-wisdom theologian will withhold valuable knowledge from themselves. Both of these cases are an abuse and must be avoided.

### **Argument 3 - “Avoid theology; All it does is divide”**

It can be accurately pointed out that theology has been abused when it has been used to create divisions among Christian believers in matters when a loving and polite disagreement should have been allowed to exist. Unfortunately, there are plenty of people who could point out real life examples of this abuse in their own lives.

Once again, we need to remind ourselves that an abuse of something is really its “abnormal use.” Theology does indeed bring division. However, we must consider and explore the idea that not every instance of division is automatically evil. If we think about some terms similar to divide, (i.e. distinguish, determine, diagnose, classify, etc.) we can see that without division, an ordered life cannot exist for an individual, family, community or nation.

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What would happen if a doctor failed to distinguish cancerous tissue from healthy tissue in a patient? To carry this further, no one would make the case that the cancerous tissue should not be removed from the patient's body because dividing the cancerous tissue from the healthy tissue would be wrong. We know that the surgeon's scalpel brings about a division and that division (cancerous tissue from healthy tissue) is necessary for the life and health of the patient. Obviously, this kind of division is beneficial and necessary.

Theology bringing division should ideally work in the same fashion. Students of theology should be and must be willing to make discernments. They need to openly and honestly state that when it comes to Christian belief in a world full of other religions, philosophies, and ideologies that Christianity is "one of these things [which] is not like the others."

Three factors must guide this. The first is the virtue which pervades the entire Bible. It is the virtue of love. Specifically, love for God and love for your neighbor (your fellow human being) as yourself. According to the Lord Jesus, these are the two greatest commandments in God's Law (see Matthew 22:34-40). When discernment must be done by a Christian, it must not be done with a motive of using the factual truths of Scripture or the Christian faith as some sort of weapon against those with whom you disagree. A truly loving concern for others must be the motive for what you must do that might be regarded as divisive.

The second factor pertains to actions which Christians must take among themselves. It is the motive of preserving the unity of the Spirit among believers (Ephesians 4:3). There may be times in which Christian groups will find themselves on different sides of an issue. Any form of separation or division must be a last resort since keeping the unity of the Holy Spirit among believers is of utmost importance.

The third factor ties into the second. If Christians find themselves on different sides of an issue, true searching of motives and the nature of the

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dispute must be weighed with great prayer, wisdom and biblical guidance. The Apostle Paul, in presenting the key points of the Gospel, made mention that these things he delivered to the church in Corinth are “of first importance” (1 Corinthians 15:3). There are some things in the Christian faith which are of first importance. The Gospel is one of those things. However, remember that not every point is of first importance. Paul reminds us in Romans 14 about not passing judgment on other Christians whose faith (and implicitly practices) a stronger Christian might be tempted to dispute or criticize. Save the occasions of division for when there is absolutely no other option in staying true to Christ.

### **Argument 4 - “Avoid theology; It’s deeds, not creeds, that are important”**

Many within Christian circles are adopting a view which is easily summarized as a “deeds not creeds” approach. Once more, there are reasons this has developed. Many who have studied the Bible and theology have used them merely as a source of information, not transformation. Knowledge of God’s Word has implications. Those implications are works which flow from faith in Christ. It recognizes that we are called, by God, to perform them (see Ephesians 2:8-10). Remember, an abuse should not be regarded as the way that things are supposed to happen.

Consider though the danger of adopting a “deeds not creeds” attitude. One reason for this might be the belief that Christians already know all the things they need to know. Thus, we should get on with the work of doing them. Statistics bear out that this is hardly the case. The repeated horror stories of biblical illiteracy within the Christian church, especially its’ evangelical wing, are one indicator. We might own many Bibles but possess scant knowledge of what is in those Bibles.<sup>15</sup> Historically, it seems that when knowledge of the Gospel is presumed in a church, it is the first step to its’ being abandoned.



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A second problem with a “deeds not creeds” approach is it can send a very unclear message to the world. Non-Christians do many works which serve a need in their families, communities and nations. When Christians do good works which look just like those of the non-Christians around us, what distinguishes us as a “Christian” if we keep silent about (or remain ignorant of) our creeds and beliefs as we live out what they teach?

For example, a great service which a healthy person can do for his/her community is to donate blood to an organization such as the American Red Cross. (I have done this since my college days and I highly recommend this to all who are healthy enough to give. The ongoing need for blood is quite real). What distinguishes us as Christian and being motivated by the two great commandments mentioned earlier when we donate that pint of much needed blood? Imagine someone walking into the room where a blood drive is taking place and seeing all those donors (including you) on the tables, giving a pint of blood. What could they make of the situation? Are all the donors being equally noble because of their donating blood? Let’s narrow the example a bit further. If the blood drive is happening in a work environment, some of the donors may have given with the motive of getting out of an hour of work. During the first time I gave blood while in college, I overheard two of the donors talking about how they believed that giving blood would reduce their body’s blood volume enough to make it easier for them to get drunk later that night. In light of these real world scenarios of people doing a noble deed, what would distinguish us as Christians if no words accompany our action? What happens when we neglect or ignore the motivations for why we do what we do? Are our beliefs irrelevant because our good deed looks similar to the ones done by the non-Christians around us?

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### **Heroes who give us a pattern to copy**

The study of theology by those who are not pastors or professional theologians has faced a lot of resistance in the early 21st century evangelical church. Abuses in studying theology are treated as if they are the norm. We have seen they are not the norm. If a study of theology will be restored to its proper place among lay people, are there examples we can pattern ourselves after? In this next chapter, we will look at advice about how to begin this study. We will meet an astronomer, a pastor's wife, a medical doctor and a church janitor who can show us how the study of theology by the everyday Christian can have profound and unexpected effects on the world around them.

## Chapter 8

### *Restoring Theology in the Life of the Everyday Believer*

This book is not intended as a treatise for academics in the “ivory tower.” (However, I’ll gladly welcome their reading it). The book is intended for all believers in Christ. With this in mind, how should the everyday Christian look to restore theology to its proper place in her or his life?

**Know the Bible** - The heart of Christian theology is the Bible. Throughout church history, it has been understood that the Bible is the source of our beliefs about the faith. While it does not replace other authorities in the church, such as a pastor or teacher, the Bible functions for the church in a way similar to how the Supreme Court functions for the legal system of the United States. Just as all of America’s lower courts are subject to the rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court, all Christian authorities are subject to the Bible. As James White states with simple eloquence concerning the doctrine of Sola Scriptura:

The Christian church looks to the Scriptures as the only infallible and sufficient rule of faith, and the church is always subject to the Word, and is constantly reformed thereby.<sup>16</sup>

The best way to start knowing the Bible is to actually read it. Though the reported percentages vary, it appears that no better than 10% of Christians have read through the entire Bible at least once.<sup>17</sup> The remedy is rather simple (the follow through is not). Pick up your copy of the Bible and read it. If you are committed to doing this, you can actually read through the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, by reading for only 12 minutes per day for a full year. There are numerous Bible reading plans available through publications such as the One Year Bible or the Discipleship Journal Bible Reading Plan. In following through with the discipline to do this, the Bible will make far more sense to you. What appear to be disconnected passages heard in sermons or Sunday School lessons will begin to make more sense.

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In your reading of the Bible, keep in mind that the letters, narratives and poetry of the Scriptures had an original audience. You, of course, were not a member of that original audience. Yet, God has inspired the text of the Bible so that it is written to you as well. We find the Lord Jesus making this point in a theological debate with the Sadducees, one of the religious groups of first century Israel. Among their distinctive beliefs, the Sadducees did not believe that God's people would undergo a future resurrection from the dead. They also believed that only the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) were really Scripture. The Lord Jesus refuted the Sadducees concerning the resurrection by using a passage from Exodus. He showed that even the five books of the Bible recognized by the Sadducees taught the resurrection of the dead. The Lord Jesus said: "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God" (Matthew 22:31) [Emphasis added]. The point is subtle but very powerful. God's Words were, and in a very real sense, are, spoken to us. This wonderful knowledge was summarized by the English Puritan minister Thomas Watson (1620-1686) when he wrote concerning the Bible: "Take every word as written to yourself."<sup>18</sup>

As you read through the Bible, take the time to reflect upon what you've read. This topic was discussed in more detail back in Chapter 5. Yet, as a simple reminder of that discussion, remember that such reflection permits you to think through the implications of what you have read and how to apply the unchanging Word to the ever-changing circumstances of your life.

**Read theology** - This may sound daunting. It doesn't need to be. Theology is simply the study of God. Throughout church history, there are those who have strived and studied to better understand the things of God in Christ. Many of them have left behind writings. As technology broadens over time, there have been those who have left behind audio and video recordings. All of these let us know their mind about the topics of which they wrote or spoke. In a very real sense, they still teach us,

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though most are long dead. Be encouraged that many of them were not professional theologians (more on that later).

As hinted at earlier, when you're doing any theological reading, use discernment. Not all theological writings are equally good or beneficial. An older work is not necessarily better than something newly written just because it is old. Some writers of the past have had some very bad ideas. The fifth century British monk Pelagius left behind writings which described his belief that the sin of Adam and Eve had no spiritual effect on their descendants (the belief that there was a spiritual effect on all humanity is the doctrine we know today as "original sin"). According to Pelagius, we could achieve a right relationship with God under our own power. Christian theologians from that time forward condemned Pelagius' views.

There are less extreme examples which also serve to make the point. Theologians from Christian traditions other than yours may write about topics which you find very helpful and uplifting. However, their theology will be influenced by their distinctive beliefs. If you are, for example, a Protestant in the Reformed tradition, you might find the writings of a Roman Catholic such as the 15th century monk Thomas a Kempis to be very helpful. Yet, in the places where a Kempis wrote from a distinctly Roman Catholic view of the Eucharist (i.e. the bread and wine literally becoming the body and blood of Christ at the Mass), a knowledgeable Protestant would disagree with that understanding of the Lord's Table.

Keep in mind that every theologian, past, present and future, works within a particular culture and particular era. They will have biases in favor of certain theological ideas and biases against others. They often address issues which arose during their time. Often, those issues are not fully known or understood in later generations, including our own. We, like them, are children of our times.

Lay people (i.e. those who are not ordained as clergy) have made great contributions to theology. Quite a few of these individuals are not best

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remembered for their theological work. They were not professional theologians. Yet, diligent study and reflection upon the Bible resulted in some seemingly unlikely theologians.

### **Astronomer, Mathematician, Theologian**

Galileo Galilei, the 17th century Italian mathematician and astronomer, wrote a wonderful theological defense of his astronomical discoveries. Galileo had peered into the night skies with his telescope and beheld wonders that no human eye had ever seen. He saw four moons which orbited the planet Jupiter. He observed rings around Saturn and saw the planet Venus go through phases just like the Moon's. None of these things should have been the case according to the theology of the Roman Catholic Church of the time. Rome had created a theological system which attempted to merge the philosophy of Aristotle with existing Catholic theology.

Galileo believed that he needed to defend his findings and did so, theologically. In a 1615 letter to Madame Christina of Lorraine, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Galileo ably pointed out "the Holy Bible can never speak untruth -- whenever its true meaning is understood."<sup>19</sup> Galileo believed that there were places in the Bible where its language was phenomenological. This means that it describes phenomena as we see it and not with a literal concreteness. Thus, a sunrise could be described as "sun rise" rather than the earth rotating away from a line between the observer's horizon and the Sun. This is clear in the way that poetry is used in the Bible. Reading it with a wooden literalness is obviously not a correct approach when references are made to God's hands, feet, or even His wings (see Psalm 91:4). Galileo pointed out that the Bible uses such terms "to accommodate them to the capacities of the common people, rude and unlearned as they are."<sup>20</sup> Galileo pointed out that this principle of interpretation was nothing new. It was well known to the theologians of his time.

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### Practicing Medicine and Theology

Something similar happened in England two hundred years later. Safer forms of anesthesia were being developed as pain killers during surgery. The use of anesthesia in childbirth was becoming common. The medical doctor who developed this form of anesthesia, James Young Simpson (1811-1870), wrote a theological defense for his development and use of anesthesia. Why did a doctor of medicine have to defend his invention and do so *theologically*?

Many Christian ministers of the era looked to Genesis 3:16 as the grounds for their opposition to anesthesia being used in childbirth. In Genesis 3:16, God speaks of the pain which Eve (and implicitly all women who would bear children after her) would have in childbirth. Those pastors understood this passage as being prescriptive, not descriptive. In other words, they thought that pain **MUST** accompany childbirth. The pain mentioned in the text was seen as not descriptive of the process but a prescription (i.e. command) for how childbirth must occur. Those English ministers saw Simpson's invention as a means of circumventing of God's will for a woman giving birth. Simpson ably defended his invention, pointing out that the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 3:16 for childbirth was also used in Genesis 3:17 when God predicted the painful toil which would accompany working the soil in farming. If anesthesia wasn't allowed for theological reasons, the labor-saving farm machinery of the time was just as much a circumventing of God's will.

### Advising the leading lights of the time

Anne Dutton (1692-1765) was the wife of British pastor Benjamin Dutton. She was highly regarded during her own lifetime as a lay theologian. She corresponded with many well-known Christians of her time such as John Wesley and George Whitefield. Both men sought her advice. Her writings survive to this time. A student of Scripture from early on in her life, she wrote about Christ:

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Be assured ... that that work of God upon the heart which brings the soul to an entire dependence on Christ, a whole Christ, is no illusion, but shall end in a full and eternal salvation.<sup>21</sup>

These are wise and profound words from an unlikely lay theologian of 18th century England.

### **An unlikely theological advisor**

Doctor F.F. Bruce (1910-1990) was a leading biblical scholar of the 20th century. He was recognized for his world class New Testament scholarship during his lifetime. In the decades following his death, Bruce's books on New Testament studies are still regarded highly by biblical scholars.

At Bruce's funeral in 1990, the account was told of a curious feature of his classes. When presented with a particularly difficult question during class, F.F. Bruce said that he would have an answer the following Monday. It did not matter if the question was asked on a Monday, Friday or whichever day of the week it was. True to his word, he brought an answer the next Monday.

It was revealed that when presented with a particularly difficult question in biblical studies, F.F. Bruce would consult with the janitor of his local church on Sunday. This man was diligent in his self-taught studies of the Scripture as well as being a man of great prayer. How humbling to know that a world-class biblical scholar looked to the advice of a janitor who devoutly loved God and His Word. Truly this church janitor was a theologian who earned his "degree" on his knees in prayer and devoted attention to the Scriptures.



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### **The right path and proper foundation**

Correct theology puts you on the right path. It is a foundation on which the Christian life must be built. In construction, the building of the foundation is the start, not the end, of a construction project. In the same way, our theology must be built on a proper foundation, namely upon Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11) and His Word, the Bible. What we then do in our Christian lives must build upon this good foundation. Good theology is a great start, but it is not the goal. Theology teaches us about God. It informs us as we mature into greater likeness to the image of Christ (see Colossians 3:10). Prayer and intercession put us and keep us in deep personal relationship with Him. We will discuss this in our next chapter.

## Chapter 9

### *Prayer, Intercession and Restoration*

Prayer is the one of the oldest expressions of relationship with God and devotion to God found in the Bible. Though not containing the word “pray”, we find prayer mentioned in a passage in the early chapters of Genesis. There, it is mentioned that during the time of Enosh, a grandson of Adam and Eve, “men began to call upon the name of the LORD” (Genesis 4:26).

In Genesis 24, we find the first biblical text of an actual prayer. In this chapter, we see that Abraham’s servant has bound himself to Abraham by oath to bring back a bride for Isaac from Abraham’s relatives living in Ur of the Chaldees (the area of modern-day Iraq). Although not explicitly stated in the text, the prayer reflects several aspects of the nature of God. The first is that He is personal and can be addressed. If we think God is an impersonal force, like gravity, spoken prayer to such a force to intercede and act on our behalf makes no sense. We may seek to manipulate a force, like magnetism, and use the right techniques and technology to produce electricity. Such is not the case with the God of the Bible.

There is also an understanding of the scope of the power and influence of this God. In the ancient Near East, it was common to think of a god as a regional deity. The god’s power was regarded as mighty in his homeland but was ineffective away from the region he ruled. Yet, Abraham’s servant is far away from the land of his master. The power of Abraham’s god was not limited in scope. In fact, many prayers addressed to the God of the Bible point out that He is not just a local God but He is the God Who made Heaven and Earth. One New Testament example can be found in the early chapters of the book of Acts. Members of the early church prayed to face a persecution with holy boldness:

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They lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and sea, and all that is in them (Acts 4:24).

There is also a sense of faith which the servant shows in his prayer to God. Abraham was back in Palestine when this happens. If his God is only a local god, this prayer would make no sense as Abraham's God would be "out of range" at that point.

The servant also prays with a trusting faith in the God of his master. The servant is bold enough in faith to pray that God will show him clearly that his mission was a success. He set up a condition by which he would know that God has granted him favor:

now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'--may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master (Genesis 24:14).

God kindly answered and caused Rebekah to leave her homeland and return with the servant to become Isaac's wife.

References to prayer are found throughout the Old Testament. In fact, each book of the Old Testament, other than the book of Esther, makes some type of a reference to prayer. Even in the book of Esther, the fasting done on behalf of Queen Esther's mission of seeking King Artaxerxes' favor for the Jewish people could be understood as a type of prayer. It should be noted that throughout the Bible, references to fasting are often accompanied by some type of action to seek the Lord God, implicitly a form of prayer (2 Chronicles 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23; Matthew 6:1-18).

In reading about the circumstances in which these prayers were offered, we learn more about prayer. We learn of God's power made visible to

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the entire world in the Exodus passages about the plagues which God brought against Egypt (Exodus 8:12, 30). We learn of compassion as Moses' sister Miriam improperly spoke against her brother and was temporarily afflicted by God with leprosy (Numbers 12:1-15). We learn of seeking God's protection in the midst of a long and dangerous journey (Ezra 8:21-23). We learn of seeking God to find favor with leaders during difficult or deadly circumstances (Nehemiah 1:1-2, Nehemiah 8; Daniel 2).

### **The Correct Form of Prayer - Spontaneous or pre-written?**

Should prayer be spontaneous or something read from a prayer book? There are those who will line up on one side or the other of this question. In both the Bible and in church history, there appears to be a valid place for both. If that is true, it means that on some occasions, a spontaneous prayer would be better to use than something pre-written. On other occasions, the words of another will capture one's thoughts and feelings with words that the reader simply could not know how to put into his own words.

Using our example of the first written text of a prayer found in the Bible, it is safe to assume that Abraham's servant was not reading from a pre-written prayer text. Such a prayer was spontaneous. There are other biblical examples in which a pre-written text was used. Those who sang the praises of God in the Temple at Jerusalem were using pre-written texts.

We know from the history of Israel that certain of the Psalms were used as a combination of song and prayer of praise. There were a set of seven Psalms used one each day over a cycle of a week by those who were appointed as temple singers. (Sunday - Psalm 24; Monday - Psalm 48; Tuesday - Psalm 82; Wednesday - Psalm 94; Thursday - Psalm 81; Friday - Psalm 93; Saturday/Sabbath - Psalm 92) <sup>22</sup> In addition, other psalms known as "Songs of Ascent" (Psalm 120-134) were sung by pilgrims going to Jerusalem during the three annual feasts (Unleavened

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Bread [Passover], Harvest [Pentecost] and Ingathering [Feast of Booths]). The use of the Psalms as pre-written prayers thus had a widespread use.

As one learns to pray, they learn to discern where and when to pray spontaneously or to use a pre-written prayer. An informal gathering with others might lend itself to a spontaneous prayer. A long prayer or one in which you can plan out what to say may lend itself to being written ahead of time. When our church celebrates the Lord's Table, two people who are communion servers are typically asked to pray a blessing for either the bread or the wine. There are some who have pre-written their prayers. Either due to possible nervousness while speaking in public or a fear of not saying the right thing at the moment, many of our communion prayers of blessing are written ahead of time and then read by those servers.

There are benefits and roadblocks to each approach. The continual use of pre-written prayers might reflect a mindset in which God is "talked at" rather than being spoken to. Using nothing but spontaneous prayers can occasionally cause the one praying to ramble on without focus. With a right use of spontaneous prayer, we should remember that the God "who made Heaven and Earth" does indeed hear us when we pray. It is conversation. With a right use of pre-written prayers, the inability to find just the right words at the moment can be overcome.

In the history of the church, pre-written prayers have played a large role which is often neglected or unknown due to an often short view of history. The Old Testament book of Psalms continues to this day to be the core of the sung prayers of the church. Their use in sung worship ranges from services in monasteries to our Reformed brethren who use the Psalms as their exclusive content of praising the Lord by singing. Perhaps the best known prayer book outside of the Bible is the Book of Common Prayer. Compiled by the Church of England in the 16th century, it contains the texts of prayers which date back to the earliest times of the church. The wording often reflects insight, wisdom and reverence that seems missing from much of the church today.

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### **A Theology of Prayer?**

Unlike other doctrines taught in Scripture, there is no formal theological presentation on prayer in the same way that sanctification or justification by faith alone are laid out so clearly in the New Testament book of Romans. We learn about prayer in the accounts in which it is described. As Donald Whitney observes:

If you've ever learned a foreign language you know that you learn it best when you actually have to speak it. The same is true with the "foreign language" of prayer. There are many good resources for learning how to pray, but the best way to learn how to pray is to pray.<sup>23</sup>

When it comes to the New Testament, one example of a praying person stands out clearly. Namely, it is prayer as practiced by the Lord Jesus Christ. At first, this may seem strange. Isn't Jesus God? Yes. Of course, He is. Yet, He is also human. It is in this aspect of Jesus being human that we find Him praying. We find Him praying at His baptism in the Jordan River (Luke 3:21). He would customarily find a solitary place to get alone to pray to His Heavenly Father (Luke 5:16). He prays at the time that His glory is revealed to three of His disciples. This event, known as the Transfiguration, is described in Luke 9:28-29. He prays when He performed miracles, such as the multiplication of food (Matthew 14:15-21; Matthew 15:32-38) and at the raising of His friend Lazarus from the dead (John 11:35-45). He prays before His arrest (John 17) and prays for His executioners in the midst of the unimaginable agony of being crucified (Luke 23:34).

### **Priorities learned from Jesus' earthly prayer life**

One cannot read the Gospels without seeing that prayer was a priority for the Lord Jesus during the time of His ministry on Earth. After a busy night of healing, the Lord woke up before sunrise to ensure that He would have time with His Father in Heaven (Mark 1:35). Jesus would

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often seek out solitary places to pray (Luke 5:16). Prayer was so very important to Him. If the very Son of God regarded prayer as a top priority, how much more must we?

The Lord Jesus' words reflect His priorities about how to approach God in prayer. In the sixth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, the Lord Jesus stated:

"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. (Matthew 6:5-8)

There are several points which become very clear to us. One point is that prayer is not intended to be done for impressing others with how pious we appear to be. Prayer is intended to be a reflection of our relationship to God. While there are certainly times in which we should pray in the presence of others, it must never be done with the motive of impressing one's human audience.

A second point is that prayer is not a form of manipulation of God. It was not uncommon for pagan religious practice to treat prayer to their gods as a means of manipulating and forcing them to give in to what the pagan wanted. In this scheme of things, the gods were required to "deliver" for those who prayed in "just the right way." On the other hand, Jesus tells His followers that they are not to use these same techniques with their Father in Heaven. God already knows what is needed. What is intended here is a call, once more, to relationship with God in prayer. Prayer is not intended for us to force God into doing something for us. It must be

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done with a heart and mind which speaks as Jesus did on the night of His arrest: “Not my will but Yours’ be done” (Luke 22:42)

### **The Present Day Prayer Ministry of the Lord Jesus for His people**

Sometimes, it is easy to think of Jesus in terms of His life on Earth during the first century. We can relate to him as one who lived a life like us on Earth but did so 2,000 years ago. We are at a point when historical sources outside the New Testament agree that Jesus of Nazareth really lived and did so in Israel in the first century. There aren't too many scholars left who think that Jesus was only a legend. Yet, we know that He is God and was present “in the beginning” since He is the Creator (John 1:1-3). While He was not always human, He has always been divine. The Lord Jesus tells us as much. On the night of His arrest, Jesus prayed to the Father:”Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5)

Theologians who wish to be precise have a special way of referring to instances in which Christ was present in the activity of God prior to the human birth of Jesus. These appearances are said to be of the pre-incarnate Christ. The word “incarnate” simply means to take on flesh, in other words, to be human. Thus, references to the pre-incarnate Christ are references to Jesus prior to His becoming human.

When we read of God doing something in Old Testament, the pre-incarnate Christ was doing that thing. When God walked in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, it was the pre-incarnate Christ who was walking with them. When God was in the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, the pre-incarnate Christ was in that pillar.

Just as it may be hard to think of Jesus as existing (as God) before He became human, we might also have a hard time thinking about what He has been doing since He left Earth back in the first century. Have you ever asked yourself: “What is Jesus doing *right now*?” The answer to that question is what separates Christian believers from those who are not.



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Jesus died in the first century (a point which virtually no one disputes). It is what happened to Him afterward that is the point of dispute. If Jesus stayed dead, Christianity is based on a lie. The Apostle Paul tells us that if Christ did not rise from the dead, our faith in Christ is worthless (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). Logically, we should abandon Christianity if that were true. However, if Jesus did not stay dead, we find that Christianity is based on a set of actual, historical events which happened in Israel at a point in time between 30 - 33 A.D.

So, back to the question which we raised a few moments ago: What is Jesus doing *right now*? If He stayed dead, His body is in its grave and has long since decayed. If He remained dead, looking to Him for eternal life would be not only a waste of time but a cruel joke on His believers. However, if He did not stay dead, He is alive right now and His living body is in Heaven and not a grave somewhere in Israel. If He did not stay dead, those who have rejected Jesus and His claims are in great danger by rejecting Christ's authority over their lives and rejecting His offer of eternal life. ("He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36)

A ministry which Jesus started in His life on Earth, He continues (present-tense) in His life in Heaven. What is Jesus doing right now? He is praying for His people. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us:

He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

Since Jesus continues to be alive in His resurrected body, without the possibility of dying again at some point in the future, He always lives to make intercession for us before His Father. Because He lives on and prays for us, we can be kept for God *by Him* forever. Think of the wonder of this. Each generation of Christians, including our own, has had

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the Lord Jesus drawing them to God and praying for them. Such is the wonder of Jesus' ongoing, present-day ministry of prayer for His people.

### **Our call to Intercession**

The church is called to model what the Lord Jesus does for us in prayer. We are called to intercede for others before God in prayer. Shortly before His arrest, we find Jesus praying for His disciples and also for us. We are “those also who believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20). In several of his letters, the Apostle Paul informs the recipients that he asks for their prayers on his behalf (Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:3). He tells them that he is also praying for them as well (2 Corinthians 13:9; Ephesians 1:16)

Our prayers may go out for those who are unaware that we are praying for them or that they have a genuine need of prayer which they do not even recognize. When my wife took a pregnancy test in the summer of 1991, we discovered that she was indeed pregnant with our first child, Zack. From that moment forward, we began praying for our older son while he was still in the womb and seven months away from being born. We prayed for his protection, when he could not and did not know of his need for it. Similarly, we prayed for the protection of our younger son, Thomas, who was with other families, prior to our being able to bring him in our home and eventually to adopt him. He was unaware of his need. However, we were praying for him as well.

Our call to intercession is also for those who are hostile to us. The Lord Jesus instructs us to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). There was no better model of intercession for those hostile to you than was demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Himself. In the midst of the innocent One of God being crucified for no crime of His own, He prayed for His executioners: “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

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### Words and Promptings Outside Ourselves

There are occasions in which our usual way of understanding prayer takes a different direction. One difference comes when we pray, but don't know what to say. Within our hearts and minds, we know that we need to pray for someone or some condition but don't know how to put into words what we want to ask. It is at times such as this that God's Holy Spirit, living within each Christian believer, actually supplies the "text" of the prayer. The Apostle Paul tells us that

The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.  
(Romans 8:26-27)

Please do not confuse this with a gift of speaking in tongues. While I do believe that some Christians have been given that gift, I believe that the passage from Romans speaks about a level of intercession by the Holy Spirit which is available to all Christians. If this passage were referring to the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28), it would then mean that only some Christians have the Holy Spirit as an intercessor. Such cannot be the case.

There are times in which God Himself may prompt us to pray for some person or some situation. There are numerous examples of individuals having been moved to pray for others without an immediate, naturally explainable cause. Leonard Ravenhill tells of the account of a time in the life of Dr. V. Raymond Edman where an unusual call to prayer was answered. Ravenhill said

He (Edman) told us of an experience he had while he was in Ecuador as a missionary. He hadn't been there long before he was sick and dying. He was so near death that they had

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already dug his grave. He had great beads of sweat on his brow and there was a death rattle in his throat. But suddenly he sat straight up in bed and said to his wife, "Bring me my clothes!" Nobody knew what had happened.

Many years later he was retelling the story in Boston. Afterward, a little old lady with a small, dog-eared, beaten-up book, approached him and asked, "What day did you say you were dying? What time was it in Ecuador? What time would it be in Boston?" When he answered her, her wrinkled face lit up. Pointing to her book, she said, "There it is, you see? At 2 a.m. God said to get up and pray - the devil's trying to kill Raymond Edman in Ecuador." And she'd gotten up and prayed.<sup>24</sup>

While it cannot be determined how often this happens, I can testify of a number of accounts which I have personally heard from those who experienced this. God is glorified in such prayers. We might ask "Why is God prompting someone to pray since He already knows the need?"

Obviously, God already knows the need and is capable of hearing and responding. It remains a wonder and a glorious thing that God uses His people and their prayers as the means of His work on Earth, including that of prayer. God wants to be glorified (and rightly so) in prompting His people to pray. Is not God truly glorified when such accounts of promptings to prayer are circulated among His people?

It has been noted that prayer often precedes a movement of God among His people to restore vitality and focus to His church. Dr. A. T. Pierson once said:

There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer.<sup>25</sup>

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Just as individuals have been called by God to pray for individuals, the history of revival bears out that God has called His people to pray that renewal and focus be brought back to the Church.

In our next chapter, we will see how God has used prayer as an instrument to bring revival. We will look at several accounts of revival and examine key traits behind these moves of God. The history of those revivals shows clearly these were times when the Lord visited His people in times of refreshing, renewal and growth in Him.

## Chapter 10

### *Revival - Restoration of the Church's Life in Christ*

Prayer for the spiritual revival of God's people can be found as far back as biblical times. One example is found in the Book of Psalms. There, the Psalmist prays with a soul-felt cry: 'Revive us, and we will call upon your name' (Psalm 80:18). In the 1700s, Jonathan Edwards and members of the clergy in Scotland promoted the idea of 'concerts of prayer.' The purpose of these "concerts" was to organize large numbers of people to pray on pre-scheduled days for revival. The desire of these godly individuals was that God would bring a true, heaven-sent revival. Concerning this, Edwards wrote:

this prophecy [Zechariah 8:20-22] parallels many other prophecies that speak of an extraordinary spirit of prayer preceding that glorious day of revival and advancement of the Church's peace and prosperity.<sup>26</sup>

The prevailing theology at that time was that a revival was a heaven-sent, God-given gift to His church. It could not be humanly forced or manipulated. Yet, it was recognized that God might be gracious to answer the pleadings of His people and, as A. T. Pierson noted, God would actually put the desire to pray into the hearts and minds of His people. Therefore, there were organized times of prayer for the purpose of revival.

John Sutcliffe issued a call to prayer for the Calvinistic Baptist churches of England in 1784. Sutcliffe put together a schedule to have these churches pray for revival on the first Monday of each month. They would pray for one hour around the time of sunset. Dr. Michael Haykin believes that a revival which swept England after 1784 can be linked to Sutcliffe's first Monday prayer meetings.<sup>27</sup> There is a known trend in church history that prayer precedes revival.

## Revival - Restoration of the Church's Life in Christ

Prior to the 1857 Fulton Street Revival in New York City, there were calls for awakening among the Baptist and Methodist clergy in America. In mid-1857, the congregation of Anson Street Presbyterian Church of Charleston, South Carolina prayed for spiritual awakening. The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America recorded in the minutes of their 1857 General Assembly:

This longing for revivals we cannot but consider a cheering indication of the noblest life. Next to a state of actual revival is the sense of its need, and the struggle to attain it at any sacrifice of treasure, toil, or time. We trust that the period is not distant, when this state of actual, general, glorious revival shall be ours;<sup>28</sup>

The same held true for revivals in the 20th century. Jonathan Goforth, a Canadian missionary, was a witness to God's work of revival in Korea during the first decade of the 20th century. Throughout his tract about the Korean Revival entitled *When the Spirit's Fire Swept Korea*, Goforth wrote about the role which prayer played in preparing the hearts and minds of the Korean people (and the western missionaries serving there) for revival. Bonjour Bay writes:

The Great Revival in 1907 did not take place instantaneously. Its origin was the week-long prayer meeting which was held by the missionary M.C. White who came from China in 1903. Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian missionaries participated in the prayer meeting which was held from August 24th to 30th at WonSan, on the northeast coast.<sup>29</sup>

The revival which happened on the campus of Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky in February, 1970 was also preceded by prayer. There was a reporter from station WLEX on-site at the Asbury College campus during the evening of February 4, 1970, a day after the revival started. While there, the reporter interviewed an individual who indicated

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that prayer meetings for revival had already been happening in the student dormitories prior to February 3. The interviewee added that he believed that he was told by God on February 2nd that revival would break out on campus the following day.<sup>30</sup> The following day, it did!

### **Common Points of Revival**

God has been kind in bringing revival to so many different places and different times. Already mentioned was the English revival starting about 1784. Colonial America enjoyed a revival during the First Great Awakening of the 1740s. The first truly international revival started in New York City in 1857 and, within several years, spanned the English-speaking countries of the world. Revival came to Wales in 1905. Numerous other examples could be given.

In examining the accounts of these historic revivals, there are a number of similarities which gives evidence of God's hand in bringing about revival. The following list cannot contain every characteristic of historic revival. Not every revival will necessarily have every last one of these characteristics. There are traits of each revival which will be unique for the time and place it occurs. However, these are recurring features of a genuine, God-given revival.

#### **1. Unusually strong cooperation among Christian denominations and groups**

One feature of a genuine revival has been a greater level of cooperation between Christian groups. During the revival which swept England in the early 1860s, many thousands were attending prayer meetings. In London, the sheer number of people participating in these meetings caused them to be held in places such as theaters. Robert Lescelius tells us:

Great crowds gathered for prayer and evangelistic preaching in such places as St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey (100,000 aggregate in the latter). Theaters were used



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to house the crowds, such meetings being convened both by the Church of England and the Free Churches.<sup>31</sup>

The level of cooperation in running the meetings was such that the direction of the meetings in the theaters was held alternately by clergy of the Church of England and that of the Free Church Movement.

During the Korean Revival in the early 20th century, there was initially a spirit of jealousy and competition between the Methodist and Presbyterian mission outreaches in Korea. Sometimes, they operated in the same city, right down the street from each other. As time went by, the two groups understood that they were each serving the same Christ and did their work cooperatively. As in the case in England in the 1860s revival, the cooperation did not cause a wiping out of denominational differences. However, those differences were seen as secondary to the cause of Christ.

### **2. A holy envy for revival**

A second feature of a genuine revival has been what might be called a holy envy or holy jealousy when news of a revival elsewhere arrives. This can be seen particularly in the case of the revivals which took place in the English-speaking world beginning in 1857. The invention of the telegraph as well as ocean-going steamships which could cross the Atlantic Ocean in less than two weeks allowed for the spread of the news of the revival quickly. In the United States, news of the revival was being carried by telegraph between ministers in New York City and Philadelphia. Passengers travelling across the Atlantic in steamships brought fresh news of the American and Canadian revivals to Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England. As a result of hearing of the revival in America, the great British preacher Charles Spurgeon prayed for revival in his homeland. He urged others to do so also. They believed that God’s blessings of revival had not been depleted upon America and Canada and that there was still a divine blessing of revival waiting for them. Word of the revival had spread

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halfway around the globe as newspaper accounts, as well as eyewitness reports, eventually reached as far as Australia.

News of a revival often results in those who study the revival to bring back to their own churches the knowledge of what God is doing in other places. Spurgeon did this in not only asking his congregation in London to pray for revival but in going to Ireland to study the revival there before it broke out in England. It can, in more recent times, be brought to our attention through such media as television, radio and Internet. The revival which took place on the campus of Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky in February 1970 had a remarkably close tracking by local media. News cameras of WLEX took video of the revival on the Asbury campus a day after it started (the footage is still available through the Internet).

### **3. A change in the moral climate of the community**

A third feature of a genuine revival has been a very recognizable change in the moral climate of the community. During the revival in Ireland in 1858, the validity of that revival was challenged by some members of the clergy. Some thought it to be the work of the devil. One convert responded that it must then be the work of a new devil as the old devil wouldn't do anything like this. Another convert during that revival wryly observed: 'Certainly, it was not Satan who took me away from whiskey drinking.'<sup>82</sup>

A.W. Tozer (1897-1963) noted that true revival changes the moral climate of a community. One rather humorous example comes from the Welsh Revival of 1905. Animals used for farm labor in Wales needed to be re-trained in listening to the instructions of their drivers. Prior to the revival, those animals were prodded on by the cursing of their drivers. The animals were so accustomed to responding to cursing, they needed to be re-trained because their masters had stopped cursing since they had come under the conviction of their sin during the revival.

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### 4. Unusual phenomena

Revival history shows that, in many cases, unusual phenomena occur in conjunction with a revival. An examination of these occurrences often raises the question if the phenomenon is somehow linked to the revival, or is some type of excess which really doesn't belong. During the preaching of Jonathan Edwards' most-famous sermon "Sinners In the Hands of an Angry God", those hearing the sermon were said to have cried and shrieked as they heard Edwards' vivid description of hell. They heard reminders of how God could take the unregenerate (i.e. those who did not believe in Christ) into eternity in a moment. He did not work the Enfield congregation into a frenzy by his style of sermon delivery. Keep in mind that this rather untypical sermon of Edwards' (while he is best remembered for it, he did not typically preach "hellfire & brimstone") was delivered purposely in a monotone and not a loud, emotion-grabbing style which we might expect.

Unusual phenomena have been noted in the 1801 revival in Cane Ridge, Kentucky. (Some critics have stated that due to the level of unusual behavior, more souls were conceived than saved at Cane Ridge). In the last decade of the 20th century, during times of claimed revivals in Brownsville, Florida and Toronto, Ontario in the mid-1990s, there have been descriptions of what has been called "holy barking", "holy laughter", and even being "drunk in the Spirit."<sup>33</sup>

What kind of criteria should be used to determine if the unusual phenomena are part of a God-given gift of revival, or if they originate from somewhere else? Jonathan Edwards worked through this question during the revivals which were sweeping New England during the First Great Awakening. He wrote *A Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections* to answer the question. Trying to determine the origin of unusual phenomena in the revival was more than theoretical for Edwards. Keep in mind that neither Jonathan, nor his wife Sarah, was known for being fanatical. Rather, both were rather reserved. Both were noted for their holiness and had no dabbling in the world of the occult. As

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mentioned earlier, Jonathan purposely used a rather dry monotone so that no one would be influenced by how he preached but rather by what he preached. Yet, one incident of a strange phenomenon linked to the revival happened in the Edwards' house. In a 1976 sermon, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones made mention concerning Sarah Edwards that

on one occasion, [she] exhibited the phenomenon which is known as levitation. She was literally carried from one part of the room to another without making any effort or exertion herself.<sup>34</sup>

Martyn Lloyd-Jones continued about Jonathan Edwards' approach to discernment about the revival of the 1740s.

Sometimes people would swoon and become unconscious in meetings. Edwards did not teach that such phenomena were of the devil. He has some striking things to say about this. He was always warning on both sides, warning against quenching the Spirit, warning also against being carried away by the flesh and being deluded by Satan through the flesh. He warned everybody.

During a time of revival, the example and writing of Jonathan Edwards serve us well. New phenomena, by definition, will not have been seen before. It is something other than familiar and known. Edwards believed that such occurrences should not be automatically judged to be the work of the devil before further investigation and biblical reflection is applied to what is being investigated. Edwards maintained that experiencing something unusual might very well happen during true revival. Edwards took the approach which the Lord Jesus counseled. Look for "good fruit"<sup>35</sup>:

Therefore if there be no great and remarkable abiding change in persons, that think they have experienced a work of conversion, vain are all their imaginations and pretences,

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however they have been affected. Conversion (if we may give any credit to the scripture) is a great and universal change of the man, turning him from sin to God. A man may be restrained from sin, before he is converted; but when he is converted, he is not only restrained from sin, his very heart and nature is turned from it unto holiness.<sup>36</sup>

Like Tozer in the 20th century, Edwards believed that an individual who is truly converted is one whose nature is now turned toward God. Sin is not so much restrained as despised and abandoned.

### **5. Putting aside the constraints of time in everyday life**

Another feature of revival is that customary time constraints for a church service will often get obliterated. It was not always the case (the noon hour prayer meeting at the Old Dutch Church on Fulton Street in New York City back in 1857 began punctually at noon and ended punctually one hour later.) However, during the Irish revival of 1858, prayer meetings would often go on well into the night, past midnight, or even until 3 o' clock in the morning.<sup>37</sup> A minister at Ballymena recognized a great irony. Once, it had been difficult to get people into the church. The difficulty now was in getting them out.

This also happened over a century later during the Asbury College revival in 1970. When the local television news broadcast the story, it was on the evening news of the day following the start of the revival. The chapel service which started at 10:00am the prior morning was still going strong over 30 hours later. This same type of very prolonged church service also happened during the Korean revivals in the first decade of the 20th century.

The primary reason for this was evidenced in the behavior of the people in attendance. There was a genuine outpouring of grief over sin, confession of sin and the blessed assurance of sins forgiven by God in

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Christ. At a time such as this, the sense of what is important and spiritually necessary overwhelms what is customary.

We have no problem understanding this in the physical world. If a person suddenly falls victim to some life-threatening condition, such as a heart attack, all the time needed is taken to stabilize the person to preserve his life. Any appointments or business meetings which were scheduled for that time easily fall by the wayside in light of the pressing need of the emergency.

That same principle was understood implicitly by those in the revival meetings already mentioned (and many others which space does not permit). Even more dangerous than a crisis to one's physical health is a crisis to one's spiritual health. The Lord Jesus made this point so clearly when He stated that we should

not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.<sup>38</sup>

A heart attack, poisoning, or stroke are surely critical items for which our physical bodies require treatment. How much more critical is it to recognize and tend to a critical state of injury to the soul? Donald Whitney makes the point:

Maybe you have come to a crisis of faith which needs time for prayer, deep thinking and much soul-searching. There's too much at stake to neglect the matter or to deal with it superficially. If your body had an emergency you would take the necessary time to deal with it. Don't do any less for an emergency of the soul.<sup>39</sup>

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### 6. Lasting Impacts

The nature of revivals is such that every new generation may stand in need of revival. God's work among His people in one era is no guarantee that the work will be continued by His people in a following generation. Yet, revivals do have a history of imparting lasting effects to the church.

The Korean Revivals in the early 20th century have had an impact on the church which has endured for more than a century. The phenomenon of Christianity was new in Korea in the early 1900s. Yet, in the early 21st century, Korean Christians number over 15.2 million.<sup>40</sup> The revivals of the 1850s in the English-speaking world have continuing effects into the 20th and 21st centuries. Evangelist William Booth, whose church was known as "The Converting Shop" during the revival in England, went on to found The Salvation Army. A Chicago preacher whose career began during the 1850s revival in the United States continued to preach until the end of the 19th century, decades after the revival had started. His name was Dwight Lyman Moody. His legacy continues to flourish through institutions such as the Moody Broadcasting Company, Moody Bible Institute and Moody Church in Chicago. Andrew Murray, who led a congregation in South Africa when the 1850s revival arrived there, went on to be instrumental in the Keswick (pronounced KES-ICK) movement in England. His books on prayer are still teaching the body of Christ well into the 21st century.

#### Some final thoughts on revival

Church history shows that a genuine God-given revival cannot be "worked-up" by mere human effort. True revival cannot be scheduled. During a revival conference in 1989, Leonard Ravenhill pointed out:

You can't schedule it [revival]...[in the words of others:] "we're going to start a revival next Sunday night and finish there". Who gives orders to the Holy Ghost?<sup>41</sup>

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True revival is a true gift from God. Yet, God has used the prayers of His people as a means to bring about genuine revival. If you are moved to pray for a revival, you are part of the pattern for revival which God has used repeatedly throughout history.

In the same way that God calls us to pray for revival, God once called His covenant people to a spiritual and cultural revival in the 6th century B.C. The time of exile in Babylon was about to end. God desired to bring back a remnant of His people to the land from which their ancestors were taken seventy years earlier. Borrowing the words of John Denver, a singer/songwriter from the 20th century, the Israelites were being called by God to be “going home to a place [they had] never been before.”<sup>42</sup>

In this next chapter, we will look at an example of revival on a grand scale. It was not only a spiritual revival but a cultural revival as well. The example of the exiles who had returned from Babylon offers a tremendous case study of specific aspects of revival and restoration. Their example becomes ours.



## Chapter 11

### *Ezra & Nehemiah: A Case Study in Restoration - Part 1*

The Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah, originally regarded as a single book, chronicle a time of restoration for God's people. The account starts with the issuing of a decree by Cyrus the Persian in 538 B.C. The decree officially ended the Babylonian captivity of the people of Israel. The two books go on to tell of events which transpired over the next one hundred years. These historical narratives of how the people of God worked to restore their nation and their religious practice provide us with a series of principles and patterns of restoration which we can apply to our own time and place.

#### **Hearing, Learning and Applying the Bible**

According to Deuteronomy 31:11 the Law (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Torah) was to be read to the people every seven years at the time of the Feast of Booths. We find a scribe named Ezra doing just that with the Israelites who assembled in Jerusalem for the feast in the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar (Nehemiah 8:1-3). For several days, the people stood and listened attentively for about six hours, from dawn until noon. Many churches today observe the custom of standing during the reading of Scripture. The custom is based on what the Israelites did as they stood to listen to Ezra preach the Word of God.

Not only did the people listen attentively, they put it into immediate practice. They heard God's commands about how to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Nehemiah 8:14-16). That feast called to mind the forty-year wanderings of the Israelites during the time of Moses. During those forty years, the Israelites lived in tents. So that the Israelites would not forget this period of their national history and would not forget God's kind provision for them during that time, the Israelites were commanded to live in temporary shelters (booths) during the feast. We find that they obeyed and did so with great joy (Nehemiah 8:17). They actually restored

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the practices of this feast. According to Nehemiah 8:17, this feast had not been strictly observed for centuries. In fact, we are told in this verse that the feast had not been properly followed from the people's earliest times when Joshua had led the people into the land.

In this example, and that of Ezra in particular, we find a pattern which we can apply to ourselves. It was written of Ezra that he "had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). We know that Ezra was a scribe (Ezra 7:11-12). As such, he was "learned in the words of the commandments of the LORD and His statutes to Israel" (Ezra 7:11). How devoted are we to study, observe and teach, as our life circumstances permit, the contents of the Bible?

Several chapters back, we looked at the very low percentage of western-culture Christians who have read through the entire Bible at least once in their lifetime. This is so strange when we consider how in the early 21st century in western nations, there is an unprecedented availability of the text of the Bible. In the English language, there are numerous translations and paraphrases in print. There are audio versions (compact disc, mp3s, etc) and computer-based versions (i.e. software packages, Internet, etc). Christians in most of church history did not have the Bible available to them due to factors such as affordability, inability to read or having access to a text of Scripture in a language they knew, even if they could read. Readers of western languages do not share that problem. We have biblical resources of which Ezra could never have dreamt. The resources are there. So too is the responsibility to use them wisely (see the Lord Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 for a pattern of wise Christian stewardship). Remember it was noted earlier that twelve minutes spent in Bible reading every day, will, over a year's time, allow you to read the entire Bible in one year.

In our age of busyness and unending distractions, we must restore our view of the need to study, observe and teach the Bible. It was certainly a priority to Ezra and his listeners. (If you are standing and listening

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attentively for six hours at a time, you must be serious about what you're doing). It is worth the effort to prioritize your day to "ingest" God's word. It only makes sense that you can remember something only if you've encountered it before. We don't remember meeting someone on the occasion of meeting them for the first time. That can happen only, at the earliest, at a second meeting. In the same way, God will not bring to our remembrance a biblical passage which we've never read or heard before.

Keep in mind that the pattern of restoration we see in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is not only the taking in of the Bible. It is also being obedient to it. In his New Testament letter, James tells us

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves (James 1:22).

He goes on to liken one who hears the word and does not act on it to someone who looks in mirror and then forgets what he looks like when he walks away from the mirror. The act of forgetting is often seen in Scripture as being a type of disobedience (see Deuteronomy 8:11). In the Deuteronomy passage, not keeping God's commandments is seen as forgetting the Lord God

Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today;

The essence of living out the Christian faith is to hear (read) the Word of God AND to act on that knowledge. True faith is evidenced by action.

### **Restoring the language of the people**

In Nehemiah 13:23-24, we find Nehemiah noting and lamenting

In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. As for their

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children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah but the language of his own people.

This observation was made in the context of the Jewish men who married pagan women of the surrounding nations. Their children were not taught the language of their fathers. The apparent influence of those pagan mothers meant that learning the language of their fathers, even though living in Judah, was not considered a priority.

While some might wish to draw political conclusions from my use of this text, the intention is, rather, to point to a theological conclusion. Every cause, movement and generation has a vocabulary of its own. Golfers, for example, will refer to “bogies”, “eagles” and “birdies” as a part of the vocabulary of the game. What is needed in this time is a restoration of the knowledge of the vocabulary of the Christian faith. Terms such as propitiation, justification, sanctification and adoption bear a special meaning for the church. (See Appendix A in the back of the book for definitions of these terms). The lack of passing these terms along to the next generation brings about a loss of knowledge and understanding of what makes Christianity unique. Our Christian heritage is diminished by their lack of presence in our lives.

This point was strongly made during an interview of Dr. Christian Smith with Dr. Michael Horton of the White Horse Inn podcast. Smith is a sociologist who coined the term “Therapeutic Moral Deism” as a description of the working, everyday religious perspective of American teens in the early 21st century. During that interview, Smith said that the degree to which a teenager will be articulate about his or her faith is conditioned on

whether the adults in their lives had engaged them, had taught them, had formed them, had given them a vocabulary and a language of faith to use.<sup>43</sup>

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In that same interview, he emphasized that "The language of faith is like a second language." When someone sets aside the time to learn a second language, it is a sustained challenge and takes effort. This holds true also for the language of faith. Christian Smith pointed out that "The language of faith (theological vocabulary, ways of reasoning) is not the primary language of our culture." It takes the church and family to pass this along and stress its learning.

This should be a priority of Christian parents in the training of their children. The influence of a godly father and mother cannot be overestimated. Yet, even if you have never learned these special terms of the faith, it is not too late to start. You can even get help from a dictionary. Learn what these terms mean. They are a part of the Christian heritage. A good Bible Dictionary may be even more helpful. However, to understand even better what these terms mean to your life in Christ, read the texts in Scripture which actually use these terms in their original context (Romans 8:29-30 and 1 John 2:2 are texts which speak of justification, glorification and propitiation).

In doing this, I strongly recommend that you use an actual translation of the Bible rather than a paraphrase. A paraphrase will often do a good job at summarizing the meaning of a passage. It can act as an excellent bridge between the biblical text and a commentary on that text. In a paraphrase, however, the words used typically do not connect back to the words in the original language of the Biblical text. A translation serves to act as a bridge to the original language and wording of the texts. This can be done through a "meaning for meaning" approach (known as "dynamic equivalence") as used in the New International Version. For our purposes of word study, a "word for word" approach would be better suited. Some of the best-known "word for word" translations include the King James Version, the New American Standard and the English Standard Version.

Whichever version you use, you will find yourself more and more conversant in the language of our Christian ancestors in the faith. In

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addition, you will better grasp those concepts which of speak of the glory of what Christ has done for us and of our relationship to Him.

## Chapter 12

### *Ezra & Nehemiah: A Case Study in Restoration - Part 2*

#### **Restoration of the knowledge of history**

When God acts to bring about some type of restoration (such as a revival movement referred to in Chapter 10), a restoration of the knowledge of history is often involved. Notice how the knowledge of their national and religious history played a role in the large-scale restoration which happened during the governorship of Nehemiah. During a prayer offered in the midst of a sacred assembly in Jerusalem, God's faithfulness is praised by the re-telling of Israelite history from Abraham, to Moses, to the conquering of the Promised Land and the subsequent large-scale disobedience to God's covenant which followed (Nehemiah 9:3-30).

Restoration of the knowledge of history might be on a grand scale of national or church history. It might involve a family or even personal history. Restoring your knowledge of this history will act to remind us that God has indeed acted as a restorer in the midst of real time and real places in the past. It encourages us to think that if God has done so in the past for His people, will He not also act for His people in the present and in the future?

#### **Restoration may be costly**

Restoration changes the status quo. As such, it may be costly. The cost may be of time or money. It may be at the cost of status or position in life. Such was the case for those Israelites who migrated from Babylon and made the thousand mile journey to a homeland which most had never seen before. Try to imagine what this would be like in the United States of the early 21st century. Most Americans have some tie to immigration within their family tree, be it directly or through a parent or grandparent. Try to imagine that your ancestors immigrated to the United States seventy years ago. Further, imagine that certain individuals from

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your migrant community are telling members of the community that God has now opened the way to go “back home.” They and you are being asked to move back to your ancestral homeland.

How willing would you be to make such a move? You probably have a settled life here in America. You have friends and family here. Assuming that you have a job, particularly your own business, you would have to think long and hard about making a move back to your ancestral land. You might not even speak the language of that land.

Most of these points were what went through the minds of the Israelite community which was in exile in Babylon. Going to the Promised Land would be strange. Unless you were over seventy years old, you had never seen that land. You would have to sever ties with family, with business and the only way of life you have ever known. It is no wonder that biblical scholars believe that only a small percentage of the exiled community actually made the trip “back” to Israel. The 1st century Jewish historian Josephus wrote concerning the time of the return from the Babylonian exile: “Yet many remained in Babylon, unwilling to leave their property.”<sup>44</sup>

When you are living a life being restored into the image of Christ, that restoration may come at the cost of relationship to a friend or to a family member. Your friend or family member might not understand what has happened to you. A cost may come when you attempt reconciliation with someone who has hurt you and your loved ones. Your loved ones may strongly resent that you’re even attempting reconciliation. Be mindful that restoration may come at a personal cost to you.

### **Possible discouragement, fear and opposition**

To be honest, there are times in which restoration may bring about discouragement, fear or even opposition. We have a tendency to build expectations for future events in which we will be involved. The actual path of restoration might look quite different from what you expected. When the small community of exiles returned to Israel, they had high



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hopes. This sentiment is wonderfully summed up in the opening verse of the Psalm 126:

When the LORD brought back the captive ones of Zion,  
We were like those who dream.

Over time, that community faced discouragement, fear and opposition. Despite being in their ancestral land, the restored community was being ruled by a foreign power. Work on a restored temple had been halted under outside political pressure. A hoped for prosperity had developed into a meager physical existence (see Haggai 1:6). It took God's special communication to His people through the prophet Haggai so that the people would be encouraged in their lives and their work, believing that the greatest encouragement they could receive was knowing that God Almighty had said to them: "I am with you" (Haggai 2:4).

In times of restoration, we may be guided more by our expectations than the reality of the given situation. During the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, there grew among the people a belief that Jesus was a king-like leader who would restore Israel to the glory known a thousand years earlier during the reign of Jesus' ancestor King David. When Jesus' words and actions did not fit that of an upstart king who would expel the Romans and bring visible glory back to Israel, the people turned on Him. One can only wonder how many of those who welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem with shouts of "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:9) were crying out only days later "Crucify Him!" (Matthew 27:23). The reality did not match their expectation. We must be careful that when we are witness to the restorative acts of God in Christ, we do not make the reality of God's good work subject to our expectations of how it should be done.

### **May take an unexpected direction**

In keeping with the counsel to watch our expectations, a movement of restoration or revival may take an unexpected turn. During the prayer

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revivals of the late 1850s, the media of the time observed that the prayer meetings were happening in places which, in some instances, can only be considered ironic. The New York Times of March 20, 1858 noted that due to lack of space in the churches, theaters were used to hold the meetings. The Times article particularly mentioned a prayer meeting at Burton's Theater in New York City. The irony was noted by the Times reporter:

Instead of noisy laughter, excited by play-actors, in low comedy and farce, those present listen quietly and seriously to earnest words from earnest men on the most solemn and earnest of themes.<sup>45</sup>

During the time when the Second Temple was being built, events went in two unexpected directions. The first was the halt in the building of the Temple. The second was its courageous resumption despite political problems which made the restart of the construction seem impossible. God's command through Haggai to re-start the construction was met with His wonderful provision. The political fight about the restart forced a search to be made of the Persian archives. It resulted in finding Cyrus' original order to complete this project as well as to ensure the flow of needed materials for the operation of the rebuilt house of God in Jerusalem. In God's great irony, the actions of the opponents to the building caused the re-building to be given political and economic approval by the empire. The attempt to stop the project turned out to be the action to ensure that it would be completed (Ezra 5:1 - 6:15).

### **Did not wait for all other things/conditions to be in place first**

There is a common saying: "Do not let the perfect become the enemy of the good." Simply stated, it is a way of recognizing that we should not wait to do good things until the perfect set of conditions is in place. It has been my experience that those "perfect" conditions rarely arrive. In the dust jacket of his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney notes: "Life never settles down." If we wait for that "settled

## Ezra & Nehemiah - A Case Study in Restoration - Part 2

time” and what might seem to us to be the “perfect” time, we might never get married, have children, start a business, embark on further academic studies, or do any of the things which make up the sum and substance of our lives on Earth.

We see an example of this in the third chapter of Ezra. The effort to reconstruct the temple had begun. Although the foundation of the temple had not yet been laid, the morning and evening sacrifices were resumed using an altar constructed on the site of the first Temple. The Israelites did not wait for the entire infrastructure of the Temple to be in place. They were able to resume the morning and evening sacrifices and did so even if the entire Temple and all of its original operations had not yet been restored.

In the same way, we may have been given an opportunity and calling to do a work for the glory of God. Perhaps all the things which you think should be in place are not. Do not hold back from beginning the work because the time does not yet seem right. The Lord God made this point to the people when He spoke to them through the prophet Haggai:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, "This people says, "The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt."(Haggai 1:2)

The Lord God went on to show His people that indeed the time had come to rebuild. Even in the midst of a time of discouragement, the time had indeed arrived to restart the construction of the Second Temple.

I can speak to my own experience of this. I sensed a need to grow deeper in the faith academically around the time I married Julie. Although I delayed for about two years after being married, I finally put in the paperwork in the summer of 1991 and was ready to start on a Masters degree program in the fall. We found out just before orientation that Julie was pregnant. From the perspective of the “perfect” time to do this, many would have thought that the perfect time had come and gone in my life.

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Yet, I can testify of how I proceeded with the course work, going part-time. I would later jokingly tell people that I crammed two years of effort into seven. There were many times when I did class reading or worked on term papers after both my wife and Zack, and later, Thomas, went to sleep for the night. Yet, I can honestly say that the course work was worth it.

In retrospect, I do believe God's timing of this was perfect, even if it may not have seemed to be so from a human perspective. I had come to faith in Christ five years before getting married. I needed that time to get the foundations right. Pursuing Christian graduate work at that point would have been hurrying things. If I waited until my sons were older, when would have been the best time? If I had waited until about the time when this book was being written, the great economic crisis which has gripped the world may have made putting together enough tuition money a very difficult task.

I don't know what God is calling you to do for His glory and His kingdom. The call may seem impossible. Please do not let that stop you. God's people have done great things by faith. They have also done the small things by faith in Him. God's timing is perfect even when it may not seem perfect to us.

### **Restoration of the priority of the place of God**

In this study of Ezra and Nehemiah, we have found how God worked restoration into His community of believers. Their experiences become our lessons and patterns to copy. As the Apostle Paul says in Romans 15:4:

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

## Ezra & Nehemiah - A Case Study in Restoration - Part 2

Those historic lessons from the Bible give us instruction, perseverance and encouragement in the areas in which God has called us to be agents of restoration.

The last point to make in our overview of Ezra and Nehemiah is that the restoration which the returning exiles experienced was one which restored the priority of God in the lives of His people. The prophecy of Haggai, given during the time mentioned in Ezra 5:1, shows God's priority of Himself among His people. The repentance for the sin of marrying foreigners (the accounts are found at the end of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah) came about when the men of Israel understood how they had sinned in the sight of God. Their willingness to hear God's law and act upon it (Nehemiah 8-9) was another sign that the people recognized the primacy of God in their lives. They willingly made the commitment of a covenant renewal with God (Nehemiah 10).

If we are restorers, or in some way, even to be restored ourselves, we must understand the priority of God in our lives. Nothing we do, or say, no program of study or practice of spiritual disciplines will avail if we do not see God as the prophet Isaiah did: "lofty and exalted" (Isaiah 6:1). As the Lord Jesus would say on the night of His arrest, eight centuries after Isaiah: "He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, *for apart from Me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5 - emphasis added)

We have looked at lessons in restoration from Ezra and Nehemiah. We have had re-emphasized to us that God is a restorer. He and His purposes must be our priority in any work of restoration we perform.

To start a work of restoration, we must know the state of things at the present moment. In this next chapter, we will learn to recognize the need to look at things as they are. Once that is understood, we can then begin to learn to pray and act for a restoration which takes things as they are and begin to move them to the way that they should be.

## Chapter 13

### *Things As They Are*

Each of us is born into a time and place in which things are as they are. Such an observation is painfully obvious. It is not meant to be deeply profound. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 - 322 B.C.) said as much with his famous “A is A” proverb. Yet, the ways in which we perceive what “A” is will differ. Some might deny what they see or the implications of what they see. In the 1930s, many, including England’s Winston Churchill, recognized that Adolf Hitler would soon be mobilizing a military machine determined to conquer Europe and lands beyond. There were those who saw such things and yet denied them. Perhaps the best known examples from that time were British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) and Norwegian Minister President Vidkun Quisling (1887-1945). Both are now looked down upon with contempt in the annals of world history. Chamberlain sought peace by appeasing Hitler and failed miserably. Quisling acted as a collaborator with the Nazis in World War II against the interests of his own country despite being its leader. After the war, he was convicted of high treason and was executed by a firing squad. Soon, Quisling’s very name entered the English language as a term for a collaborating traitor. Appeasement and collaboration did nothing to solve the problem of Hitler’s desire for conquest. They actually made matters worse.

There is also denial at a personal level. For some, there is a denial of the passing years and the attempt to behave as if they are decades younger than they really are. For some, the denial takes place at the level of relationship. The abuse of one person by another, be it verbal, physical or psychological, is denied by rationalizing it away. This is all too common in the area of spousal abuse. The abused will often try to cover for the abuser, and, in some cases, try to convince themselves that they were deserving of the abuse inflicted upon them.

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One who looks to be a restorer must not deny what is. Rather, the one who wishes to be a channel of God's restoration must recognize and understand that things are as they are but also that things are not as they should be. We can use the example of slavery in the United States during the early to mid 19th century. It was obvious that slavery existed in America. That was a plain fact of the way things were. There was no disagreement about that. Yet there were those who recognized that slavery existed and thought that such a practice reflected the way that things should be. Many Americans did recognize that slavery did exist and was a practice which should not be. How those abolitionists responded made the difference we know today. There were millions who knew slavery was an evil but thought there was nothing they could do. Those who did make the difference were those in the Abolitionist movement who did three things:

1. Recognized that slavery existed
2. Believed that slavery should not exist
3. Were willing to work to put the matter right by ending it.

Recognizing your calling to be a restorer may involve effort which is large, small, or somewhere in between. There are often situations which need restoration in a church, a neighborhood or even a family. Years ago, I became aware of a situation of such a condition within the family of some friends. Due to some unresolved medical issues, a man had chosen to live, as if single, in a different city (and state) apart from his wife. Their adult children were grieved at what had happened and recognized the way things were with their parents. They also took the next step which restorers will take. They realized that this was not the way that things should be. These adult children prayed and fasted for a resolution to the issues which kept their parents separated. God graciously answered their prayers. This couple was wonderfully restored.

Those who wish to be restorers must be forthright about the evil they encounter. They clearly know that such an evil exists. Further, like the adult children in the last example, they know that the evil thing should not

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exist. Yet, in addition, rather than simply complaining about the way things are, they are willing to work and take action to move things from the way they are to the way they should be.

Keep in mind that in such an effort, restoration does not necessarily take things back to the way things once were but back to the way that God intended they should be. To use the slavery example just a little longer, those who witnessed the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865 were not witnessing a return to the way things were earlier in the nation's history. No American alive in 1865 had a living memory of a time when slavery had not been a part of some facet of American life. Yet, in a biblical sense, the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was indeed an act of restoration.

This can be a difficult concept to work through in real life. We live in a time when our view of history is often limited to the scope of what we personally remember. We must beware of limiting our vision to the history of our immediate time and place. The unchallenged evil of a given time and place will seem normal to those who have no knowledge of history beyond their own time and who have failed to believe that restoration is even possible. To others, the desire and vision to rectify an evil might seem to be a strange thing. In the ongoing struggle concerning legalized abortion in the United States as the 21st century moves on, we should remember that the majority of American adults, as we enter the second decade of the 21st century, have no living memory of a time when abortion was actually illegal. As the struggle to change the hearts and minds of Americans about this heinous state of affairs continues, it will not be motivated by memories of how things changed but rather a dream of how things should be.

Those who have been Christian visionaries of restoration, whether on the personal, family, national or global level, have understood that their vision of restoration relied on three things



## Things As They Are

- 1) The effort toward restoration must be done
- 2) God will empower them to do what must be done
- 3) The knowledge that outward and visible circumstances which seem to doom the effort to restore are ultimately irrelevant.

Doesn't this ring true of God? In creating a covenant with Abraham to bring out a restoration on the scale of universal blessing in the "seed", God chose to use a man whose outward visible circumstances screamed out "Impossible." God is glorified and shown to be the ultimate restorer who empowers us to imitate Him and follow His lead.

There are times in which restoration has happened much more quickly than the experts thought. The fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in the late 20th century is one example. During most of the 20th century, geo-political experts believed that it would take well into the 21st century before Communism could fall. Yet, with the help and strategy of leaders such as U.S. President Ronald Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Pope John Paul II, Eastern European Communism was, in a sense, pushed down the stairs of history. It "went out of business" far sooner than expected.

Sometimes, restoration does take a long time. In the era of the old Soviet Union, there were those who lived during that time of about 75 years who never lived to see the end of the Communist system in that nation. They waited, and waited. Like the multiplied generations of God's Old Testament era people who waited, and waited for their Messiah, and never lived to see Him, we can sympathize with those whose lives are those of waiting. In the next chapter, we will examine what one can do while they wait for a restoration. It has to do with time and place.

## Chapter 14

### *Biding and Abiding*

Restoration, be it on the physical, emotional, mental or spiritual level, takes time. What may appear to be a very sudden restoration will, most likely, be the product of an investment of time. Recall the example from the last chapter concerning the fall of Communism in eastern Europe between the years 1989 and 1991. Though the final events played out rapidly, it was ultimately the result of decades of planning, struggle, and effort, including prayer.

### **The Waiting Room**

All of us are familiar with being in a waiting room. Most commonly, we spend time in a waiting room at a doctor's or dentist's office as we wait for our name to be called so we can then go on to the next phase of our medical visit (often, a room requiring another wait). On this small scale, we do know what it is to wait. This experience reminds us that we must learn to know how to wait, or, to use an older term, how to "bide" the time. There are occasions when we will be called quickly. On other occasion, the wait is far longer.

To expand this comparison, our life experience is a type of waiting room here on Earth as the preparation for entering eternity, either in Christ (salvation) or outside of Christ (damnation). However, unlike the waiting room in a doctor's office, there may be times in this life that our name "does not get called". Preachers of revival such as Leonard Ravenhill (1907-1994) never witnessed the large scale revival he so longed to see. Yet, while he waited, while he was biding, he prayed, taught and preached revival. The teaching and preaching in which Ravenhill persisted will, no doubt, be foundational to those who are going to be the human channels of a future, large-scale, God-initiated revival. Ravenhill didn't see a great revival, but he "stored up" for those who will.

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### **Biding does not mean being inactive**

Biding one's time, waiting for an event to occur, does not mean that one does nothing in the process. One who is unemployed does not simply sit back after a first round of resumes are sent and interviews are conducted. Until word of a decision for which the job hunter must eagerly wait, the job seeker will continue to seek employment. The wait for word of a hiring decision can be stressful. However, it typically cannot be hastened or manipulated by the job seeker. While one waits, one acts.

### **The Polish Model**

A number of my ancestors came from the nation of Poland. While one grandmother, both of my parents and I were born in the United States, I learned from my grandparents and parents about some key events in Polish history.

Poland has a long history of suffering through foreign oppressions. The way in which the Polish people bided their time while waiting to overcome this oppression and restoring their nation to a free and truly Polish land serves as an example for us during the time in which we pray for a mighty and true revival of God's church. Whether we are waiting for restoration in a family situation, restoration of employment or restoration of the spiritual power of Christ's Church in a true revival, we will need to wait. Here's how one nation did it.

### **Recognizing, believing in and holding onto what is your rightful possession**

In the years 1772 to 1795, Poland was parceled out as the territory of three nations, Russia, Austria and Prussia.<sup>46</sup> While there were some brief periods of a type of formal kingdom of Poland, the effects of the partitioning remained through the 19th century. Despite being treated as residents of the nations which parceled out the land, the people of Poland never stopped thinking of themselves as being Polish. As far as they were concerned, the land was really theirs, even if held, for awhile, by an

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occupying power. Poland won back its independence in 1918 and was once more restored to being a sovereign Polish state. Despite the Nazi occupation during the Second World War and the decades of being a Soviet satellite nation, the Polish people never stopped believing that the land was really theirs. During the Second World War, there was a Polish government in exile which operated out of London. In the American-Polish Cultural Center in Troy, Michigan, there is on display a poster to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the September 1, 1939 invasion of Poland. That poster contains within it a replica poster from 1939. It states most clearly: "Poland is not yet perished as long as we are alive." Despite a long history of foreign occupation and domination, Poland, once more returned to being an independent state in 1989.

Similarly, as we do the work of restoration, we must never stop believing that what we seek is the way that things should be. We may be hindered but we should never be deterred. A restorer must have the vision to take things from where they are to where they should be. The efforts of the Polish people took time. It took endurance and stamina to see the vision through to its completion.

### **Preserving a language**

The people of Poland also struggled to preserve their language. There was political pressure from the occupying nations during the time of partitioning for the Polish people to stop behaving as Polish people and to start behaving as citizens of the occupying powers. The Polish people knew that a key factor in holding them together and allowing a restoration of their land was their language.

Concerning a revival, we have already seen how this worked in our case study of Ezra and Nehemiah. While God's people might speak any of the thousands of languages which still exist on Earth, there is a special vocabulary which must be preserved. That special vocabulary consists of how the church has described those things having to do with Christ and with each other. Ironically, those who would press for Christians to drop

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such distinctive terms such as justification and sanctification from their vocabulary are not members of a foreign political power. Often, they are those in the church who see these things as old, dated and unworthy of keeping. Rather, they are a part of our Christian heritage, a biblical heritage worthy of being kept. Those special terms remind us that we are, in God's sight:

A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Peter 2:9)

In the area of a personal relationship which may need restoration, language may not be as much a factor as the ability and openness to use language. In other words, it is the ability and openness to communicate. One who is seeking to restore a relationship must pray that communication can be open as well as understandable. It is not uncommon for two people who speak the same language somehow to speak past each other. To a third party observer, such "communication" looks like two monologues going on at the same time. Restoration, in such circumstances, is a reconciliation based upon open communication and mutually-understood language.

### **Preserving a history**

The struggle of the Polish people to preserve their language was matched by their struggle to preserve knowledge of their history. In the effort to preserve both language and history, two things in particular had to be kept in mind. The first is that preservation of the Polish language and knowledge of their history was thought to be a worthy and necessary thing to do. The second is that in a struggle which lasts more than one generation, there must be an effective and dedicated effort to pass along the knowledge of these things to future generations.

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We see an example of a failure to do this in the case of the Israelites in the generation following the time of Joshua and the conquest of the Promised Land. Somehow, the people failed to pass along to their descendants the knowledge of both their history and their faith:

All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. (Judges 2:10)

In the context of a revival of God's people, knowledge of Christian history is vitally important. It reminds us that we do not stand alone in this pilgrimage to what John Bunyan called "the Celestial City."<sup>17</sup> Many have gone before us as fellow believers in Christ. They have left us a rich legacy of literature (theological writings, biographies, etc.) music and custom. We owe them much. We are privileged to take in what they have left for us, including their examples of a life lived in faith in Christ. We dishonor them when we adopt an attitude of what has been called a "provincialism of time."<sup>18</sup> The term *provincial* once referred to people whose interests did not extend beyond their own province (i.e. their own little world). As the 21st century unfolds, many in western culture have shown the same attitude in regard to their own time. All they know and value is the present moment. For far too many, knowing history is considered unnecessary. Knowing the adventures, the trials, the legacy and the faith of those who went before us is not valued. A restorer needs the encouragement of knowing that others like you have done such things in past times and succeeded.

However, that "provincialism of time" can also extend to those in our future. We are the current "baton-bearers" of the knowledge of faith. When I think of this, I think of my younger son Thomas, who is a rather fast runner and loves to compete in what is known as the "four by one" relay race (4 runners each running 100 meters). The key element in this relay race is the handoff of the baton. If the handoff is done clumsily, or worse, if the baton is dropped, valuable seconds are lost in retrieving the

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downed baton. In the same way, if we drop the “baton” of our faith, time will be wasted in the process trying to teach succeeding generations about the things of the Lord. To be restorers of God’s calling to us, we must not drop that “baton” but hand it off well to the next generation. To extend the comparison, if we have “dropped the baton” with our children, grandchildren and those who look to us for guidance, take the time to quickly pick up that baton so that it may be carried on. Pass along the history of the faith. Be willing to tell your family, your friends and those you know of the good things which God has done throughout your life.

In the case where a personal level of restoration is needed, recalling and retelling elements from family history can be helpful (or a shared history/set of experiences). Such accounts serve to remind us that we do not stand alone. A recounting of personal history may remind us that it is not wise to destroy a long-standing relationship over an intense but really minor disagreement. It is good to remember in the midst of such a dispute that long years have been invested in a relationship. Should that shared and personal history be ignored in the midst of a dispute? The answer, of course, is no. Whether on a church-level, national or even a personal scale, remembering our history, as the people of Poland did, can be the glue to keep us together or to restore a broken relationship.

A future revival of the church will rely on the factors of the “Polish Model” being in place. This is found so clearly in the historical accounts of what happened during revivals in the past. Throughout church history, Christians in times of revival have known that the things of the faith are their rightful inheritance in Christ. Preserving a biblical language (in the use of a term such as “propitiation” which so briefly yet powerfully speaks of Christ’s payment of sin for His people and turning away God’s anger in so doing) is a part of that inheritance. We can take comfort in knowing the history of the Church and realizing that we are not the first people to have come to faith in Christ, nor will we be the last. Many have gone before us. The example of their lives shows us that we can walk with Christ faithfully and that the Lord Jesus will give us grace to persevere to the end of our pilgrimage on Earth.

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The acceptance of Jesus Christ by faith, and who He said He is, and His message of good news (otherwise known as the Gospel), has been the greatest and only true means transformation which the world has ever seen. That transformation affects us on the level of nations, communities, families and individuals. The wonderful and life-giving impact which true faith in Jesus Christ has yielded through history cannot be fully measured. The Korean Revival of the early 20th century is an example of this on the level of nations. On the more personal level, people have been brought to repentance for their sinful ways and sinful thinking. They have been transformed by being given new, eternal life because of Christ and the gift of faith which He gave to those individuals (see Ephesians 2:8). They went from being God-haters to God-glorifiers, loving the One who saved them from their sin. The transformation worked inside of them has truly glorified God.

Coming to true faith in Jesus Christ will not necessarily solve all of your problems. To be candid, it might actually create some new ones (i.e. family and friends who cannot or do not want to deal with a truly saved individual). Yet, true faith in Christ begins to affect a change in the thinking of the converted. They will now try to solve a break in relationship from a biblical perspective rather than dealing with it the way that our western culture often does (i.e. refusing to talk, seeking revenge, etc). It can truly be said that if one begins to approach restoration (reconciliation) in a Godly and biblical way, even if your circumstances and other people haven't changed (yet), you have.

### **Storing up for a future restoration**

There are instances in which we must help, ahead of time, to supply the needs of those who must bide their time while waiting for restoration. We have the example of Joseph, son of Jacob, whose God-given interpretation of two dreams of the Egyptian Pharaoh led to making preparations to save Egypt and his own family during a time of severe famine. The grain carefully collected during a time of abundance was



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used to feed people during a seven year period of famine. (See the book of Genesis, chapters 41-47).

As deadly as a famine of grain can be to us, far more damaging is a famine of hearing the Word of God. One can bring death to the body. The other can be deadly to the soul. In the prophecy given by Amos, God speaks through Amos and states:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. (Amos 8:11)

There have been times when God has allowed such a famine to take place. While not unique in history, the conditions of western culture in the opening decades of the 21st century show indications of such a famine. Strangely, much of this famine can be traced to churches which have a reputation for being known as Christian. In these churches, the preaching of the biblical text has been replaced with dramas, talks or activity which looks like a sermon but is more accurately described as a self-help lecture with a (very thin) sprinkling of bible verses. If a Christian sees such a time of famine coming, what should that believer do?

Joseph laid up physical provision to preserve the lives of the Egyptian people. He would later realize that his being brought to Egypt as a slave was under the direction of God to preserve the lives of not only the Egyptians but also that of his father Jacob and his family (Genesis 45:5; Genesis 50:20). We can lay up spiritual provision, ahead of time, for those who come after us. What does such spiritual provision look like?

### **Preparation by Prayer**

We can pray for those who come after us. Perhaps these individuals are our children or grandchildren. They might be those with whom we have no family relationship but are like a son or daughter to us in a mentoring

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relationship. In his biography of the 19th century British preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Arnold Dallimore wrote that Spurgeon knew of the devotion of one particular great-grandfather. Charles wrote that this ancestor was a godly man “who used to supplicate God that his children might live before Him to the last generation.”<sup>49</sup> How many of us pray for our descendants? We need to lay up the spiritual provision for those who will come after us. In fact, upon reading the Dallimore biography of Spurgeon, my wife and I have begun to pray for all of our descendants and their spouses so that they would live a life faithful to Christ.

### **Preparation by the Word**

We can lay up the provision of the Bible for ourselves and those who follow us. One shining example of doing this is found in those who produced the Geneva Bible in 1560. Five years earlier, in 1555, Mary Tudor (1516-1558) became the Queen of England. She sought vigorously to return England to Roman Catholicism. A number of the English Protestants understood the fate which would await them if they were to remain in England. Thus, a contingent of scholars and theologians, numbering about 1000,<sup>50</sup> along with their families, migrated to a handful of cities in continental Europe. Somewhere between 20 -25 percent of the refugees settled in Geneva, Switzerland.

Having a safe haven in the city in which John Calvin ministered, several of the scholars and theologians worked to revise the New Testament English language translation done by William Tyndale (c.1494-1536) decades earlier. Their efforts resulted in a revised translation of the New Testament in 1557. The translation of the entire Bible was finished in 1560.

The resulting effort became known as the Geneva Bible. It holds the record for a number of firsts for an English translation of the Bible. It was the first English translation of the entire Bible which was done from the original Hebrew and Greek, not relying on translating another translation, such as was the case of John Wycliffe translating the Latin Vulgate Bible

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into the English of his time almost two centuries earlier. It was the first English Bible to use verse numbering in the text. It was also the first to include a rather extensive set of explanatory notes. The Geneva Bible was purposely designed to be accessible to the people. Not only would the explanatory notes be of benefit but the actual size of the printed text (the quarto version pages were 21.8 cm by 13.9 cm) resulted in a book which was easily portable and as well as quite affordable.

When the project began in Geneva, the English translators did not know how long Queen Mary would be in power. However, they did know that she was putting numerous Protestants to death, including the one-time Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556). She was working feverishly to wipe out the existing English texts of the Scriptures such as Tyndale's New Testament. Those translators knew that a famine of the Word of God was taking place in England. It was the translators' intent that their work would provide the bread of the Word of God to the spiritually-starving masses in England.

The completed full translation of the Bible was printed in Geneva in 1560. It contains a preface addressed to Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) who succeeded Mary after her death in 1558. Despite the fact that there would be varying degrees of conflict between the Anglican Church (of which Elizabeth was the head) and Protestant non-Anglican churches (Non-Conformist), the introduction of the Geneva Bible to the English people could not have had more profound results. It went through 200 printings by the end of the 17th century.<sup>51</sup> Because of the text's accessibility, biblical literacy in England skyrocketed going into the 1600s. This version would be quoted hundreds of times in the plays of William Shakespeare. The Geneva Bible would influence the English pilgrims seeking religious freedom in the new world. As those pilgrims on the Mayflower were traveling west across the Atlantic Ocean, along with them was a Geneva Bible. Its' influence on those pilgrims and their influence on the land which would become the United States cannot be fully measured. A provision of the holy "grain" of the Word during a time of spiritual famine yielded civilization-shaping results.

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There is another way of storing up the Bible for a time of spiritual famine. It has to do with what the Bible calls having the word of Christ dwelling within us (see Colossians 3:16). There are occasions in which we would be blessed to be able to bring to mind a verse of the Bible during a difficult circumstance. If we are feeling abandoned or alone, it is good to have God remind us: “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Memorizing Scripture gives us instant access to those passages which we have stored away within us. Thus, we are able to recall them at any time or any place. These memorized texts are our possession in all circumstances. If, in the future, a famine of *hearing* the Word of God would worsen into a famine of *possessing* the Bible, the precious treasure of those memorized texts would still remain ours. If someone were to burn all our Bibles, how much of the Bible do we have hidden away within us which would survive a drastic time of spiritual famine such as a persecution?

### Preparation by Example

Lastly, we can lay up the provision of a godly legacy for those who follow us. At some point, every Christian wonders whether he can really live the Christian life for the rest of his life. Of course, that cannot be done without Christ and His life being lived out in us.

In the experience of many, it is helpful to know of someone who did live a full lifetime devoted to Christ. Perhaps we have benefited from reading a Christian biography or even personally knowing someone who ran with and for Christ, right up to the finish line of life.

Our children and those younger than us in the Christian faith will be asking themselves the same question we did. We can provide instruction for our children and for others in showing them the same comforting answer which we have been given. Our faithfulness to Christ is a tremendous object lesson for those who observe us. Our actions are teachers. However, our words can and should teach. Speak to those younger than you in the faith and encourage them to “press on toward the

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goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). If you like to write, leave behind a journal which gives testimony of Christ’s faithfulness to you in your times of famine so that they will be encouraged to trust in Christ during the famines of their lifetime.

### **Abiding while you are biding**

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the need to be active during the time of waiting for a restoration. Yet, in a sense, we must stay right where we are if we are believers in Christ. On the night of His betrayal, the Lord Jesus told us where our strength comes from. It is not a power cord but a vine:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit."You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. (John 15:1-8)

While we are biding, we must abide with Christ. To abide with someone is to stay with them. In our human planning, we must not forget the One who gives us strength. Whether our dreams of a restoration happen within our lifetime or must wait for a time beyond that, we know that God’s will is for us to “stay put” with Christ in the vine. It is His will that

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we be connected to Him regardless of how long we wait for other things to happen. If we try to out-scheme God by working in our own strength, that effort, according to John 15:1-8, will fail. We can be no more successful apart from Christ than a tendril which has been disconnected from a vine will be in bearing grapes. Stay in the vine. Abide with Christ while you bide the time for restoration.

### **Some final thoughts**

Earlier in this chapter, we explored the idea of sometimes needing to wait (to bide one's time) for a restoration or reconciliation to happen. It can be frustrating. However, we have seen in the Polish Model that while restoration might take time, perhaps even years, decades or centuries, one should not be inactive while in the time of biding. Like Joseph, son of Jacob and those intrepid translators of the Geneva Bible, we must learn to store up spiritual provision for those who come after us for their times of needed restoration

While possibly being frustrating to us, we must understand that God indeed is working out His purposes during times of waiting. I have wondered if in the midst of early 21st century western culture's turning away from Christianity, God is permitting this to allow a future generation to come to faith in Christ without copying the many mistakes in living out the faith which have happened in prior generations.

In the next and final chapter, we examine what the Bible says about a future time in which restoration will be final, assured and permanent. Yet, the restoration of that time gives to the Christian an opportunity to live the life of that future, even now. What we act, in part, to restore now in Christ will be restored fully then. It is the blessed and wonderful time which the Bible refers to as "the restoration of all things."

## Chapter 15

### *The Restoration of All Things*

In the third chapter of Acts, the apostle Peter used the occasion of a man being healed from lifelong lameness as the means of presenting the Gospel to a group of astonished onlookers. Peter spoke about Jesus as the one

whom heaven must receive until the period of the restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. (Acts 3:21)

Indeed, over nineteen centuries later, we still await the promised “restoration of all things.” What glorious promises are attached to this time! There will be a restoration of our physical bodies after death. This restoration is known as the resurrection of the dead. Paul the Apostle wrote to the church in Corinth concerning this resurrection from the dead:

For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:21-23)

This is a promise from God that we will once more be whole. Our souls will be re-united to our bodies which will have been transformed and made immortal. Those restored bodies will never get sick or die again. At this time, death will completely and finally die.

There is the promise of a new heaven and a new earth in which there will be no more night, no more tears and no more suffering. It happens as a part of what has been called “The Final Revival.” The authors of *An Urgent Appeal* describe this in the following way:

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From one perspective, revival is where all the purposes of God ultimately end up. The last two chapters of the book of Revelation describe what some have called the “Final Revival” of which every other season of revival is a prototype. Every historic revival is, in a sense, an “approximation of the Consummation” -- that is, an intermediate expression, or a preliminary but substantial demonstration, of Christ’s Kingdom in all of its glory. It is a dress rehearsal, if you will, of the climactic “renewal of all things” that transforms heaven and earth when Jesus returns.<sup>52</sup>

Remember that restoration, as written about in the Bible, is not necessarily a return to a previous state of existence. It is the bringing about of what is intended to be. Restoration is the return to the original purpose, not necessarily the original state of things.

In Genesis 3, only three chapters into the beginning of Scripture, we read the narrative of how Adam and Eve lost their place in the Garden of Eden due to their sin. Yet, in Revelation 21, the second to the last chapter of the Bible, God’s restored people are not marching back into a restored Garden of Eden. They enter, rather, into a new heaven and a new earth dominated by an immense city, the New Jerusalem.

At some point in the future, there will be a resurrection of both those who are good and those who are evil [Daniel 12:1-3]. At that time, we will not merely have our bodies restored to the way they were in our physical lifetime. Resurrection will be far more than the re-assembly and re-animating of a corpse. We will get a life that never ends, never knows sorrow, sickness or death again. Biblical restoration gives us something better than what we had before.

One aspect of Adam and Eve’s life in Eden will be restored in the new heaven and the new earth. God walked in that ancient and first garden



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and in the next world, He will once again make His dwelling with us. Remember that Christ did dwell with us on Earth in His human body for about 33 years over two thousand years ago. But that too was temporary. Yet, we find the promise that at the restoration of all things, Christ will dwell with us forever. It is His presence among humanity that will be restored ... permanently. We are reminded in the next to the last chapter of the book of Revelation of this joyous truth:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

When Christians gather together for communion, we, in a sense, copy what the Lord Jesus did with His Apostles on the night before His death. Our present-day celebrations of the Lord's Table copy a past event. Christians understand this as an ongoing command. Thus, this copying of the past is to be done until the Lord returns in the future.

A genuine revival, though, copies not a past event but a future event, namely, the restoration of all things. It is what Pastor Jon Enright refers to as "the great reversal of all that is wrong."<sup>53</sup> It is what the book of Revelation refers to as the time when God says: "Behold, I am making all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

### **Migrants in time**

Looking at patterns of human migration from one nation to another gives us an example to examine. Living in the metropolitan Detroit area has presented me the opportunity to see and know people who have migrated to the United States from a variety of ethnic and national backgrounds. Living here, it would be difficult to miss noticing this. For example, ethnic

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restaurants are rather popular in this area as they give those of us who are not a member of that ethnic group an opportunity to sample cuisine from outside our own ethnic or racial background.

This ethnicity manifests itself in a number of ways. Often, the language of the country from which one migrated will continue to be spoken in the home. (In the city of Troy, Michigan, the U.S. Census of 2000 found that over 80 different languages are represented in the school district of Troy)<sup>54</sup>. In addition to food and language, some people continue to dress in the clothing style of the land from which they migrated.

This example of the customs of immigrants is actually intended here as a “reverse” example. Many of those who have migrated to the United States are copying and preserving the customs of the land from which they came. Christians are called to do the reverse. We are called to copy and preserve the customs of the place to which we are going.

We are to live in this world as if we were already living the life of a citizen of the new Heaven and new Earth. In that sense, we are not migrants in terms of a place but rather a time in the future. Among the ways of living out the future life is to now live out the life of a restorer. It is the life of promoting reconciliation with God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) and with each other. (Matthew 5:24). It is a life of actually restoring and rebuilding that which has been torn down (Isaiah 58:12). Those who restore and reconcile are merely following the biblical patterns laid out by God in Christ.

### **The Call of the Future**

In 1964, Ronald Reagan, sixteen years away from being elected the 40th President of the United States, gave a speech on behalf of the Republican Party Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. In that speech, known as “A Time For Choosing”, Reagan said he believed that the American people had a “rendezvous with destiny.” The Bible is clear that we all

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have a rendezvous with the future. The very flow of time, like a swiftly-moving river, moves us from the past to the future.

At some point in that future, we will encounter Christ. That encounter will either happen with our being “in Christ” or outside of Christ. For those outside of Christ, a day of dreadful judgment awaits. It will mean separation from God in Christ for eternity. For those in Christ, it means experiencing the fulfillment of history. It means being with God as He lives among His people forever. It means being a part of the wonderful time in which God will permanently dwell with His people.

Within Christian theology, we know that the encounter with Christ will happen at one of two times. It will either happen at death or when Christ indeed physically returns to the Earth. Yet, in whichever scenario happens to us personally, a future time remains for the restoration of all things. Restorations, revivals, and reconciliations of the past will have been partial, imperfect and incomplete. In the promised “restoration of all things”, the restoration will be full, perfect and complete.

### **A history book and a journey through time**

A great deal of theology can be derived from the very first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). From as early as the 5th century, we know that Christian theology has held that time is one of the things which God created in the beginning.<sup>55</sup> Since He stands outside of time, it would make sense that He would interact with time, being always present in the entire stream of time but not confined to it as we are.

This corresponds to what the Bible says about God, that He knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46.10). He is also called the “Alpha and Omega” three times in the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). The phrase is a reference to the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It would be similar to someone in an English-speaking culture saying that they know something from “A to Z.” It signals complete

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knowledge. It has also been understood as God being present in time from the beginning to the end.

Getting information from a being (the Supreme Being, actually) who exists throughout all time can be compared, in a limited way, to a science-fiction type of example. Imagine that someone from the early 21st century can go back in time to the 17th century when colonial America was just getting its start. Let's further imagine that our time traveler carries with him a printed text history book of the United States printed in the early 21st century. Upon arriving in the 17th century, he arranges to have a copy made of this book using a 17th century printing press. Then, having accomplished his task, the time traveler goes back to his home in the 21st century taking his original book with him. As the centuries go by, the pages of that 17th century copy will reflect weathering and age. However, the contents of the book will become more and more relevant as time goes by. The older the book gets, the more contemporary become its contents.

Granted, this is a limited comparison. But it does apply to the Bible, and in particular, what we know of the "restoration of all things." The One who has provided this information is God Himself. In inspiring people to write His Word, in what we now call the Old and New Testaments, we have the situation of someone like the time traveler. God Himself, being present at all times, inspired certain individuals in the past to write about things which would take place later, sometimes centuries later. Concerning all of those promises for the future final restoration, we find that as the printed text of the Bible gets older, its contents become more and more relevant with the passage of time. The God who gave us the Bible not only is with us today. He is already at that point of future history when the restoration of all things finally takes place.

### **A Final Motivation: A Motivation based on the final things**

We have covered a lot of ground in this book about restoration. We have seen that it is something God specializes in and calls us to imitate Him by

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also being restorers. We have seen that restoration can take a number of forms (such as the restoration of a relationship which is, by another name, reconciliation). We have seen the need to restore theology and prayer to our individual lives and to the life of the church.

In addition, we have examined case studies in the Bible of how a restoration can and should occur. We have discussed what to do while waiting for a restoration to occur. In this chapter, we have looked to the final and lasting restoration, the restoration of all things, which God through Christ will usher into the end of history as we know it.

Please use your knowledge of these things to motivate yourself to either become or continue to be a restorer. While we may not know what will happen in our lives years from now, or even tomorrow, we do know how all of this will be resolved in the future. We know the glorious way that this will turn out. Knowing this has motivated Christians from the time of Christ right up to the present. It has been the springboard for great missions work. It has been the motivation for a broken soul to continue yet another day because, despite heartache and pain, the enduring is worth it.

We can afford to be what Christ wants us to be in this life. We can turn aside personal insult because we know what we have and that it will last. Such a confidence allows us to reach out to those who misunderstand us or even hate us. When we have all of the grace of Christ given to us, how can we not be gracious to those around us? Keep on with your call to be a restorer!

### Conclusion

It is my hope that this book has stirred your thinking on the topic of restoration. I hope it has also provided incentive to imitate God's desire for restoration. We have the highest example of God Himself being our restorer through Jesus Christ. Just as we are called to love God, love others as ourselves and to be holy, we are also called to be restorers.

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Whether it takes the form of reconciliation between two people who are at odds with each other, or working to restore a broken culture or being the human means of a revival of the church, it is still imitating what our God does so well and so perfectly. We are assured that though our efforts at restoration are only partial at this time, with no guarantee of permanent effects in this life, we can look forward to the event which we copy now, the promised restoration of all things.

A young Christian couple I know who worked in a mission in Zambia passed along a saying which embodies what it has taken all of these chapters to say: “Hope is hearing the music of the future; Faith is to get up and dance to it.”<sup>56</sup>

## APPENDIX A

### *Sampler of Definitions of Christian Theological Terms*

**Adoption** - A work of God which happens at the same time as justification. In doing this work, God pronounces and makes the Christian His child. This holds true for each and every Christian who has been justified.

**Justification** - Originally a legal term, it refers to the action of God in declaring, not making, the sinner just. In it, we are given credit for (imputed) the perfect righteousness of Christ. In Christian theology, justification is received by those who have placed their complete trust, reliance and faith in Jesus.

**Propitiation** - The act of turning aside anger by the offering of an atoning sacrifice. In Christian theology, the shedding of the blood of Christ on the cross was the act of propitiation which turned aside God's anger for sin.

**Sanctification** - The process by which a Christian grows in personal holiness and in closer and closer likeness to the image of Christ.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Millard J, Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp 495-517, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1987

<sup>2</sup> Erickson, p. 294

<sup>3</sup> This “overlap” is not understood in classical Christian theology as a merging of Jesus’ two natures. It was clearly stated by the Council of Chalcedon (in the year 451 AD), that Jesus retains both natures while neither is mixed with the other. In other words, Jesus is not someone who is half God and half human but both fully God and fully human.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, transl. Leo Sherley-Price, p.27, Penguin Books, London, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> The name given to this book comes from an early translation of the book from Hebrew to Greek in the Septuagint. In Greek, Deuteronomy means “second law”.

<sup>6</sup> Joshua Daniel in “The Lord’s Challenge” podcast for Sunday, August 23, 2009

<sup>7</sup> <http://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/science/planetary.html> accessed on January 7, 2010

<sup>8</sup> Donald Whitney, “Pursuing a Passion for God Through the Spiritual Disciplines – Lessons from Jonathan Edwards”; 2003 Desiring God National Conference, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 11, 2003. (10:45-10:52)

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Watson, “How We May Read the Scriptures with Most Spiritual Profit” found in *The Bible and the Closet*, ed. John Choules, p.25, Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, Boston, 1842.



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<sup>10</sup> David Wells, “The Nature and Function of Theology”; found at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=10> accessed June 24, 2009

<sup>11</sup> David Wells, “The Nature and Function of Theology”; found at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=10> accessed September 24, 2009

<sup>12</sup> Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, p 426, Merriam-Webster, Springfield, 1986.

<sup>13</sup> David Wells, “The Nature and Function of Theology”; found at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=10> accessed June 24, 2009

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Scott, *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writing of the English Revolution*, p. 228, University Press, Cambridge, 2004. Scott’s text states that Sydney’s “Discourses On Government” is the source of this quote.

<sup>15</sup> See the article “The Problem of Evangelical Biblical Illiteracy - A View from the Classroom” David R. Nienhuis in *Modern Reformation* Vol 19; 1 Jan/Feb 2010; Nienhuis discusses at length the irony and shame of a high amount of biblical illiteracy in the evangelical church, as well as ways to address the problem.

<sup>16</sup> James White, *Scripture Alone*, p.28, Bethany, Minneapolis, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> This statistic is difficult to find with any uniformity. I have found a range as high as 20% on the Scripture Union website and as low as “less than 9%” in a number of other sources; <http://www.freeoneyearbible.com/> accessed June 24, 2009

<sup>18</sup> Watson, p.25.

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Hummel, *The Galileo Connection*, p.105, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1986

<sup>20</sup> Hummel, p.105

<sup>21</sup> Anne Dutton, *Letters on Spiritual Subjects - Education*, found at <http://www.gracegems.org/Dutton/education.htm>, accessed on June 24, 2009

<sup>22</sup> Roger T. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian; Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies*, p. 141, Leiden, Netherlands, E. J. Brill, 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, p.66, Colorado Springs, NavPress, 1991.

<sup>24</sup> Leonard Ravenhill, "Prayer", found at <http://www.ravenhill.org/prayer.htm>, accessed June 24, 2009

<sup>25</sup> J. Edwin Orr, "Prayer and Revival" in *Renewal Journal* #1, p.13, Brisbane Australia: Christian Heritage College, 1993

<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "An Humble Attempt To Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer",

[http://www.reformed.org/eschaton/ha\\_pages/humble\\_attempt\\_part1.html](http://www.reformed.org/eschaton/ha_pages/humble_attempt_part1.html); accessed on August 4, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> <http://mgghistor.blogspot.com/2006/10/i-wish-i-had-prayed-more-john-sutcliff.html>; accessed on June 24, 2009

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, p.418, New York, Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, 1857

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<sup>29</sup> Bonjour Bay, “The Pyongyang Great Revival in Korea and Spirit Baptism” in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Volume 31:1, January 2007, p. 6, Pasternoster Periodicals, Nottingham, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> WLEX TV 18 Newscast - February 4, 1970

<sup>31</sup> Robert Lescelius, “Spurgeon and Revival” found at [http://theresurgence.com/robert\\_lescelius\\_1994-04\\_spurgeon\\_and\\_revival](http://theresurgence.com/robert_lescelius_1994-04_spurgeon_and_revival); accessed on August 4, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> William Henry Harding, “The Ulster Revival of 1859”, Chapter 2; <http://www.revival-library.org/catalogues/1857ff/harding.html>; accessed on June 26, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Julia Duin, “An Evening with Rodney Howard-Browne” found in the *Christian Research Journal*, Winter 1995; <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/crj/crj-irnl/web/crj0192a.html>; accessed on June 26, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> “Jonathan Edwards and the Crucial Importance of Revival” D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, found at <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=3437> accessed on April 30, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 7:16

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections”; found at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.vii.iv.viii.html>; accessed on June 26, 2009

<sup>37</sup> The 1859 Revival In Ireland <http://www.the1859revival.org/antrim.php> Accessed on February 16, 2010

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<sup>38</sup> Matthew 10:28 NASB

<sup>39</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, p. 192

<sup>40</sup> Operation World, webpages on North & South Korea:

<http://www.operationworld.org/country/korn/owtext.html>

<http://www.operationworld.org/country/kors/owtext.html>

Accessed on June 23, 2009

<sup>41</sup> Leonard Ravenhill, *Revival Forum 89*

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=5310878254>

accessed February 16, 2010; Comments made from 23:36 to 23:44

<sup>42</sup> John Denver, *Rocky Mountain High*, <http://www.lyricsdepot.com/john-denver/rocky-mountain-high.html>, accessed on July 5, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> White Horse Inn, August 26, 2007, during 28:00-32:00 of the program

<sup>44</sup> Josephus, Antiquities 11, found in *Josephus, the Essential Works, Flavius Josephus*, ed. Paul L. Maier, p.188, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1995.

<sup>45</sup> *New York Times*, March 20, 1858, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.polishroots.org/genpoland/polhistory.htm>, accessed June 23, 2009

<sup>47</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 40, Penguin Books, London, 1987.

<sup>48</sup> Taken from comments by Warren Cole Smith, on the program "Issues Etc" podcast, June 16, 2009; Comments made from 07:29 to 9:40

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<sup>49</sup> From C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, found in Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon A New Biography*, pp. 3-4, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1985.

<sup>50</sup> Mack P. Holt, ed., *Adaptations of Calvinism in Reformation Europe - Essays in Honor of Brian G. Armstrong*, p.241, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Holt, p. 242.

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.harvestprayer.com/ua/text/define.html>; Accessed June 23, 2009

<sup>53</sup> Pastor Jon Enright from a sermon entitled "Breath of God", delivered Sunday, May 20, 2007 at Troy Christian Chapel in Troy Michigan.

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.troy.k12.mi.us/liveandlearn/pointsofpride.htm>; accessed on June 26, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 11, Chapter 13, Verse 15; <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/confessions-bod.html>; accessed on June 26, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> This quote is attributed to Latin American theologian Reuben Alves.