

LET US RESTORE THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

A sermon by Ed Bousman

Let us restore the New Testament Church. Perhaps a better way to put it would be; let us restore the people to the New Testament Church. Jesus said that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it, so it has always been here. We need to restore people to it. A question often asked is, "Which one of the New Testament Churches do you want to restore?" How about the one at Sardis, it was dead? How about the one at Laodicea, it was lukewarm? How about the one at Ephesus, it had left its first love? How about the churches at Galatia, they were legalistic? How about the one at Corinth, it was full of division, bogus tongue speakers, immorality and many other problems? Which one of the New Testament Churches shall we restore? As far as being dead is concerned we don't have to restore the Church at Sardis. We already have churches that are just as dead or "deader," than Sardis ever could be. We don't have to restore the Church of Ephesus in leaving its first love. We have many congregations that never had any first love, at least as far as we could tell. We don't have to restore the Church at Corinth with all its problems. We have churches today that can put them in the shade any time with their bogus tongue speaking, immorality, division and all the other problems. Nor do we need to restore the Churches of Galatia, when it comes to legalism. We have congregations now that is far more legalistic than the Galatians ever dreamed of being. From this standpoint, perhaps we need to do away with the New Testament Church. However, we still say, "Let us restore the New Testament Church. Let us restore it as far as what the Lord commanded, commissioned, and commended is concerned." Perhaps it is hard to see the entire Church from looking at one of the New Testament congregations, but if we take a look at several of them, the composite of the many will give us an idea of what the Church was really like. Let us restore the New Testament Church.

LET US RESTORE THE NAME THAT WAS FAMILIAR TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

If you had gone to Rome in the first century and inquired for the location of the Baptist church or Methodist church or the Catholic Church, the members of the Roman Church would have been confused. They would not know what you were talking about. But if you had said, Church of Christ that would have been a familiar name, because Paul had written to them and said, "All the Churches of Christ salute you." Since he mentioned Christ's Church in the plural there must have been many congregations by this name. The Church of Christ at Antioch, the Church of Christ at Perga, the Church of Christ at Lystra, the Church of Christ at Iconium, the Church of Christ at Derbe, the Church of Christ at Ephesus, the Church of Christ at Jerusalem--all the Churches of Christ salute you. Any name found in the scripture is a scriptural name. In Corinthians Paul referred to the Churches of the saints. A saint is a Christian, so Christian Church is a scriptural name. Paul also referred to the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. The Church of God in reference to the member of the Godhead who gave His blood is a scriptural name. In connection with this he had said to make them that are causing occasions of stumbling among you contrary to the doctrine which you have received and turn away from them, for they are such as serve not the Lord Jesus

Christ, but their own belly, and by their smooth and fair speech beguile the hearts of the simple. Is there anything that sows the seed of division any more than denominational names? Is there anything that gives the appearance of division any more than this? Let us restore the New Testament Church as far as a name that was familiar to the Church at Rome.

LET US RESTORE THE LORD'S SUPPER OF THE CHURCH AT TROAS

Acts 20:7 tells us the Church of Troas met together on the first day of the week to break bread. Paul stayed at Troas for seven days. If he could have taken the Lord's Supper during, the week, perhaps or a Thursday night candlelight service he would have done so. He waited for Sunday, so he could meet with the congregation. Sunday was called the Lord's Day in the first chapter of Revelation. Sunday is not called your day or my day. Neither is it called the Devil's day. For most of America it is everybody's day but the Lord's Day. Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday. He made many of His appearances after the resurrection on Sunday. The Apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit on Sunday. The first gospel sermon was preached on Sunday. The Church began on Sunday. The first converts were immersed on Sunday. The disciples at Troas gathered together on Sunday for the purpose of the Lord's Supper observance. What verse in the Bible tells us that they met every month for the Lord's Supper? What verse says they observed the Lord's supper every three months? There is none! But there is a verse that says they partook of the Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week. There are some today who in the interest of freeing up the Lord's Day for their own personal selfish use have started taking the Lord's Supper on Saturday night and calling it Sunday. Whatever time system was used at the city of Troas is of no consideration. There is no way you can take the Lord's Supper on Saturday night in the good OLE U.S.A. and say that it is Sunday morning. If you can say that Saturday night is Sunday, I would not say you have a spiritual problem, but you do have a mental problem. Some say that every Sunday makes it too common place. That is most amusing.

Does taking the offering every Sunday become too common place? Does preaching the sermon every Sunday become too common place? Does praying every Sunday become too common place? Let us restore the New Testament Church by restoring the Lord's Supper of the Church at Troas.

LET US RESTORE THE PREACHING OF CHURCH AT THESSALONICA

In Acts the 17th chapter we are told how Paul started the Church at Thessalonica. He entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer and rise again the third day. Paul preached the gospel at Thessalonica. We need to restore this aspect of the New Testament Church. Many denominational churches are preaching the gospel today, but do not tell people how to obey the gospel. They try to tell people to obey the gospel, but they get it backwards. Which comes first the crucifixion or the resurrection? Jesus was obviously crucified before He was resurrected. Most folk would agree with Paul that the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is demonstrated in our conversion by believing in His death, dying to sin by repentance and then being buried with Him in baptism. Some folk get it backwards by being baptized first which represents the resurrection and then believing and repenting later on if indeed they get around to it later on. Salvation through this plan is just as impossible as if the Lord had been resurrected before He was crucified. In II Thessalonians, Paul would tell them that the Lord would come in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that had not obeyed the gospel. Let us restore the New Testament Church by restoring the preaching of the Church at Thessalonica.

LET US RESTORE THE BIBLE STUDY OF THE CHURCH AT BEREIA

At Berea it is stated that they were nobler than the people in Thessalonica were in that they searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so. The Church at Berea was formed, not so much in influence of the miracles of Paul, but from the testimony of the Word of God. These folk did not take the word of the Apostle Paul for the truth until they had compared what he said with the Word of God. We need to do the same today. There is a lack of concern about the word of God today. About Sixty years ago, a Church of Christ Polish missionary was preaching to an assembly of people in Poland. As he read out of the Bible the people clamored for a copy of the Bible. He had none, but the one he was using. So, he began to tear his Bible apart page by page and pass it out with the instruction to read that page and then pass it around to others as they pass their page to you. Many of you have several Bibles in your homes and never read them. Those Polish Christians will rise up in Judgement of you on that day. Many times I have told you about the plan of salvation, and many other things of the Word, but did you ever check it out for yourself? If these people checked up on Paul and were called noble for doing You will not only be called noble for checking on me; you will be noble, fantastic, and wonderful. Let us restore the New Testament Church by restoring the Bible study of the Church at Berea.

LET US RESTORE THE BAPTISM OF THE COLOSSIAN CHURCHES

In verse twelve of chapter two, Paul tells us that we were buried with him by baptism wherein ye were also risen with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead. We need to restore this aspect of the New Testament Church. They were buried with the Lord in baptism. There was no such thing at that time where some were sprinkled, some poured, some buried. They were all buried with him in baptism. The thing that saved them was their faith--through faith in the working of God. Those who will not submit to this command evidently do not have any faith; at least it is not a saving faith. It is a faith of the Devil; a faith that will not be obedient. Rack in the 1820's a Bible society employed a preacher to distribute Bibles to the Cherokee Indians in Arkansas. One young Indian who could read English fluently was given a copy of the Bible and to read it, believe it and do what it commands. The next summer the Indian attended a camp meeting in the neighborhood of the preacher who gave him the bible. As they talked the Indian told the preacher to come with him to the river. The preacher said, "Why do you want me to go with you to the river?" The Indian said, "I want YOU to baptize me." The preacher said, "I can baptize you without going to the river." The Indian anxiously said, "Where?" The preacher said, "Right here." The Indian looked around about him in surprise and said, "How can you baptize me where there is no water?" The preacher said, "We can have water brought to you for that purpose." The preacher saw that the Indian was confused and began to tell him how it could be poured on his head. The Indian listened carefully until his instructor was finished. Finally he said to the preacher, "Is that baptism?" The preacher said it was. The Indian paused for a moment and said, "WELL IF THAT IS BAPTISM, YOU GAVE ME THE WRONG BOOK."

Ladies and Gentlemen, from what I observe in the Churches of Christ and Christian Churches today, I must be using the wrong book. Let us restore the Church of the New Testament by restoring the baptism of the Colossian Churches.

LET US RESTORE THE GIVING OF THE MACEDONIAN CHURCH

Paul speaks of their giving as a grace of God. He says in II Corinthians 8:2, how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded into the riches of their liberality. For according to their power and beyond their power they gave of their own accord. We all know people who are living beyond their means. I am one of them. Inflation being what it is easy to do. But here were some people who were not living beyond their means; they were giving beyond their means. Paul does not put them down for doing it. Rather he commends them. He tells us in the fifth verse how they were able to do it. He says they first of all gave themselves to the Lord. People who give themselves to the Lord will not have any difficulty in the matter of giving beyond their means. Not only did they give beyond their means but he commends this practice to the Corinthians also. He tells them in the seventh verse to abound in this grace. Also if we are going to restore the Church of the New Testament we will have to learn to abound in this grace.

LET US RESTORE THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

They continued steadfastly in the Apostles teaching, and fellowship in the breaking of bread and the prayers. They were steadfast in all of these things. Of course, they did not have a copy of the New Testament at that time, so the only way they could be steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles would be to go where the Apostles were teaching and preaching. They were, it seems, in services at every possible opportunity. When a person accepts Christ as his Saviour he automatically commits himself to faithful attendance for the rest of his life. All of his Lord's Days are reserved for the Lord's Supper and the teaching of the Apostles. Let us restore the New Testament Church by restoring the faithfulness of the Jerusalem Church.

LET US RESTORE THE ELDERSHIP OF THE CHURCHES OF CRETE

On the Island of Crete, Paul had left Titus for the purpose of setting in order the things that were wanting. He told him to obtain elders in every city. Not only did he refer to them as elders, he called them bishops. We need to restore this office to the New Testament Church. In those days a bishop and an elder were both one And the same thing. Today when we think of a bishop in the denominational sense, we think of a man who rules over many congregations, but in the apostolic days there was a plurality of bishops, or elders over each congregation. If Paul had been speaking of a Bishop in the denominational sense he would have told Titus to ordain a Bishop over the whole Island of Crete. One would have been enough. In what Church of the New Testament do we find a Bishop who ruled over many congregations? There was no such person. Another foul up on the New Testament plan of elders and or bishops is the violation that Paul gave to women elders and preachers. He said to Timothy in words that cannot be misunderstood to permit not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man. I must apologize for Paul because he was not politically correct. If he had lived today he would have modified the qualifications of the elder and or bishop. He would have said to Timothy, "If a man or a woman or one of another sexual preference desire the office of a bishop, he, she, or it desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband or the wife either one, of, one husband or wife, whichever the case may be, vigilant, sober of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach. Not give to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy

lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his, hers or it's own house having his, hers, or it's children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man or a women either one know not how to rule his, hers, or it's own house, how shall he, she, or it take care of the Church of God? Let us restore the New Testament Church by restoring the eldership of the Churches on the Island of Crete.

LET US RESTORE THE EVANGELISM OF THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

The Church at Antioch was the first congregation to send evangelists to foreign soil. In Acts chapter thirteen, we are told, there were at the Church in Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, Manaen, the foster Brother of Herod and Saul; as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. The Church sends out preachers. But let the Church send out preachers that will preach the words of the Holy Spirit--the Bible. Many have been sent out when the Holy Spirit had nothing to do with it. Would the Holy Spirit send out one man to tell people to bow their head and ask Jesus to come into their hearts and then send another to tell them what Peter said on the day of Pentecost. The world is getting a mixed message. When I was a young man a preacher told me that the Lord needed me. The Church sent me out. They sent me out to tell people that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, that He was raised from the dead and that they needed to believe it, repent and be immersed for the remission of sins. If Churches today don't send out preachers to preach the message of the Holy Spirit found in the Bible then who will? I pray that the static of divine wrath will drown out every program that does not preach the terms of pardon preached on the day of Pentecost. My prayer has not been answered yet, but I am still praying. I don't know how many Churches of the New Testament are out there but let us send out preachers and restore the New Testament church.

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