

## RESTORING FIRST CENTURY ATTITUDES

I Corinthians 11:1

### I. Introduction: I

1. **2** Every generation must struggle to “restore” Christianity back to the model of the first century. Each generation must “re-dig” the wells (Gen. 26:18: Isaac had to re-dig the wells originally dug by his father Abraham; Philistines had “*stopped them up*”).
2. We rightly speak of “restoring the New Testament” church:
  - A. Restoring the scriptural plan of salvation.
  - B. Restoring the scriptural work, worship, and organization of the church.
3. But we need to realize even when we have restored all of these things we can still fall short of truly restoring what is described in the New Testament!
4. Because our efforts at true restoration fall short if we fail to restore the attitudes common among first century Christians.
5. We must realize that...
  - A. Attitude is everything! **Prov. 23:7:** “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:*”; **Prov. 4:23:** “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*”
    - (1) Attitude is where you are in relation to where you ought to be.
    - (2) Many Christians are far from where they ought to be!
  - B. As individual saints we will not and cannot make it to heaven without restoring and imitating the worthy attitudes of faithful first century saints! **I Cor. 11:1:** “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*”; **Gal. 4:12:** “*Brethren, I urge you to become like me,*”; **Gal. 2:20:** “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*”
6. **3** Let’s look at some first century attitudes we need to restore today.

### II. Discussion:

1. **4** “**First Gave Their Own Selves to the Lord**” (2 Cor. 8:5: “*And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.*”)
  - A. People readily give themselves to:
    - (1) Job/career
    - (2) Home/family
    - (3) Hobby/recreation
    - (4) Sports teams
    - (5) Education
    - (6) 1,001 other personal desires (maybe even non-sinful)
  - B. But, it is nearly impossible to get folks to really and truly give themselves to the Lord.
  - C. This is shameful! Especially for those claiming to be Christians!
  - D. We have such short and poor memories! **Eph. 2:1-7 5**
  - E. **6** How then can we fail to completely give ourselves to the Lord? **I Cor. 6:19-20:** “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and*

in your spirit, which are God's.”; To fail to do so is the height of ingratitude, hypocrisy, and selfishness! **Rev. 3:16:** “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”

**2. 7 “Spend and Be Spent” (2 Cor. 12:15:** “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls;”)

A. Again, many give all they have to:

- (1) Job/career
- (2) Home/family
- (3) Hobby/recreation
- (4) Sports teams
- (5) Education
- (6) 1,001 other personal desires (maybe even non-sinful)

B. But, how many do you see wearing themselves out in the Lord’s service? Even when, unlike Paul, they are appreciated?

C. Consider your level of service to the Lord.

- (1) If you gave the same level of service to your job, would you get a promotion or a raise?
- (2) If every member of this church gave the same level of service what would become of this church?
- (3) Nobody will make it to heaven by the “skin of their teeth”!
- (4) Reflect on your level of service to the Lord...does it reflect 2 Cor. 12:15?

**3. 8 “Searched the Scriptures Daily” (Acts 17:11:** “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”)

A. Again, many give time daily to:

- (1) Job/career
- (2) Home/family
- (3) Hobby/recreation
- (4) Sports teams
- (5) Education
- (6) 1,001 other personal desires (maybe even non-sinful)

B. But, how many spend even a few minutes per day reading and studying God’s word? 2 Timothy 2:15

C. The general ignorance of the brethren of the scriptures is amazing!

D. Even more amazing is the lack of shame and remorse over this willful lack of knowledge!

E. The study of the Bible is like the study of any subject, success requires desire, determination, diligence, and repetition (2 Tim. 2:15).

F. Consider your level of Bible knowledge (given how long you’ve been a Christian):

- (1) Would you let a mechanic work on your car who had the same level of knowledge of his profession?

- (2) Would you fly on an airplane if the pilot knew as much about flying as you know about the Bible?
- G. Lack of knowledge is both shameful and very, very dangerous! **Heb. 5:11-14; Eph. 4:11-14; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 1:5:** *“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,”*; **2 Pet. 1:9:** *“For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”*
- H. Lack of knowledge will ultimately result in your faith standing in the wisdom of men rather than the wisdom of God! **1 Cor. 2:4-5:** *“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”*
4. **9 “Received Their Word as the Word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13:** *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”*; cf. Jn. 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:6-13; **Gal. 1:11-12:** *“But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*)
- A. What level of attention would you give to an obvious piece of junk mail versus a certified letter from the IRS?
- B. Just think if folks really had this attitude toward the Bible:
- (1) How much more success in preaching the gospel?
  - (2) How much more growth of individual Christians?
  - (3) How much more growth of individual congregations?
  - (4) How much closer we would all be to one another and to God?
- C. Do you have the attitude of those on Pentecost? Acts 2:41 Or, when it comes to the Bible can you “take it or leave it” depending on your mood? **Jn. 12:48:** *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”*
5. **10 “I Am Pure” (Acts 20:26:** *“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.”*)
- A. Please note what made Paul “pure”! **Acts 20:27:** *“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”*
- B. Many are too timid or faithless to even declare some of God’s word, much less “the whole counsel of God”!
- C. We need to get over this and get over it now! **Ezek. 33:8-9:** *“When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”*
6. **11 “I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel” (Rom. 1:16-17:** *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”*).
- A. Many Christians appear to be ashamed of the gospel.

- (1) They don't like it when one preaches the "whole counsel of God."
- (2) They prefer the gospel to be watered down, don't like it preached direct and forthright with obvious applications.
- (3) Substitute carnal means of "drawing" men to God.

B. Such views are wrong to their core!

- (1) The gospel is the only means by which God draws men to salvation (Rom. 10:17; **2 Thess. 2:13-14**: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."; **Eph. 1:13**: "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,")
- (2) A watered down gospel is an ineffective gospel (**Jn. 16:8**: "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."; **Eph. 6:17**: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;"; **Heb. 4:12**: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."; **Jer. 23:29**: "'Is not My word like a fire?' says the LORD, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?'" ; Acts 2:37 vs. 7:54).

7. **12 "Forgetting Those Things Which Are Behind" (Phil. 3:13-14**: "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.").

A. Must learn from the past (**Rom. 15:4**: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."; **1 Cor. 10:11**: "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."), but...

- (1) Can neither rest on our laurels,
- (2) Nor be mired down by past sins and failures.

B. Instead we must focus on the goal and do what needs to be done "today" to get there! Phil. 3:13

8. **13 "I Can Do All Things Through Christ" (Phil. 4:13**: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.").

A. Implies at least two things:

- (1) There is something we must do.
- (2) There is only one source for our empowerment...Christ!

B. We need to busy ourselves doing what needs to be done.

- (1) Overcoming some powerful and persistent sin in our life.
- (2) Growing in Christ.
- (3) Growing in duty, faithfulness, attendance, and spiritual courage.
- (4) Gaining Bible knowledge.

- (5) Repairing broken relationships.
  - (6) Removing any and all obstacles between us and God.
  - (7) Striving to reach the lost with the gospel (we all have a sphere of influence).
- C. Christ is the only source of empowerment to overcome our obstacles, but what a source!  
**Eph. 3:20:** “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”
9. **14 “Not Seeking To Please Men” (Gal. 1:10:** “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”).
- A. When our preaching and teaching upsets others it is no guarantee that it is scriptural.
  - B. But, when our preaching and teaching **never** upsets others it **is** a guarantee that it **is** unscriptural! **2 Cor. 2:15-17:** “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. *16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*”
  - C. It is not easy being unpopular, neither should we “intentionally croak out insults against others”, but we must preach the truth **and** what folks need to hear (**Matt. 14:4;** “It is not lawful for you to have her.” Herod the tetrarch, or Herod Antipas, had married Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife and also his own niece!).
  - D. If you carefully examine every sermon in Acts and every epistle in the New Testament you will find the speakers and writers told their audiences very clearly and exactly what they needed to hear in a very pointed, no-nonsense way. Why we think our preaching should be any different? (The only reason is lack of spiritual courage!).
  - E. Such preaching does not “win friends and influence people”, but it pleases God and puts us in the best possible company (**Ezek. 3:17-19:** “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: *18 When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 19 Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.*”; **Matt. 5:11-12:** “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. *12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*”).
10. **15 “I Fight: Not as One Who Beats the Air” (1 Cor. 9:26:** “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.”).
- A. Are you a **pretender** or a **contender**? A pretender is one who thinks he’s something when he’s nothing; in other words merely a hypocrite!
  - B. We spend (waste) so much of our lives trying to play both sides of the street, straddling the fence.
  - C. Recall our study of the “high places”? **Jas. 4:4:** “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”; **Col. 3:1-2:** “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. *2 Set your mind on*

things above, not on things on the earth.”; **Col. 3:5**: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

11. **16 “I Am Set For the Defence of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:17**: “but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.”).

- A. Many Christians are too busy apologizing for, or looking for ways to “soften,” the gospel to ever think of defending it!
- B. Where did Paul’s defense of the gospel place him? **Acts 17:18**: “Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this babbler want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.”; **Acts 24:5**: “For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”; **1 Cor. 4:11-13**: “To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. 12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.”

12. **17 “I Am Now Ready” (2 Tim. 4:6-8**: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”).

- A. Are you ready? **2 Cor. 5:10**: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
- B. Are you fighting the good fight?
- C. Are you determined to finish the course?
- D. Are you resolved to keep the faith?
- E. Are you giving the sacrifice necessary to obtain the “crown of righteousness”? **Rom. 12:1-2**: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

### III. Conclusion: **18**

- 1. Have you restored first century attitudes to your character?
- 2. These are attitudes we all need to make it to heaven!
- 3. Invitation

Adapted from a sermon by Johnie Edwards entitled *First Century Attitudes Needed Today*, in *Gospel Sermons by Three Generations of Gospel Preachers*, Edwards Publishing, 1997, pp. 50-51.