

Part Two...

and exciting. They said they came away with a warm feeling, an excitement that had not been enjoyed for many years. They were hooked and made the new place their church home. They do not want to look back, go back or return to the old 19th century church and worship.

While all of the above stories are fictitious, similar occurrences are tragically happening often in our world today. I learned of yet another friend who, just a few days ago, has drastically departed from first century Christianity and is not embracing an open denominational attitude. Such is heart-breaking.

Consider how things have gradually digressed and changed through the years. From a time when the Lord's church was the fastest growing religion (1950-1960's) to our age when many are rejecting the Lord's precious blood-bought church. How did that happen? Consider what Joni Eareckson Tada said:

And gradually, though no one remembers exactly how it happened, the unthinkable becomes tolerable. And then acceptable. And then legal. And then applaudable.

So, what can we do? What should we do? The words in Lamentations 1:12 rings in my mind,

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Or the words of young David to his brother Eliab, found in 1 Samuel 17:29:

And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?

Obviously we may not be able to make all the corrections needed, but we must **STAND** and **SPEAK** in defense of the glorious saving gospel of Christ.

We must **PLEAD** and **PRAY** for each family who is struggling to serve God faithfully.

We must be **LOVING** and **LONGSUFFERING** toward ones who have departed and do all we can to assist their return to the faith.

The Purpose Of This Study

Let us plunge into the water regarding the purpose of this study. We know and have established the fact that tragically many today are turning from the simple saving teaching of Jesus Christ. The absolute truths found in the Word of God are no longer being embraced nor taught publicly by some. Instead, the following false thoughts and beliefs are being publicly advocated (in statements or in the writing of some):

- If one believes in Jesus Christ as God's Son, then he is my brother.
- God has spoken to different people of the world in our age by different means/spokenmen - even with different doctrines.
- We should be in fellowship with others who are religious even if we disagree on some matters.
- One can worship with mechanical instruments of music and be acceptable to Almighty God.
- We should not judge another but accept them in whatever lifestyle or with whatever beliefs they hold - God will accept anyone just as they are.
- The Bible is not the only book of instruction from God to man today.
- The practice of the dedication of babies, celebrating the birth of Jesus, making Easter a religious holy day, etc., is pleasing to God.
- Women may serve as leaders in worship, even to proclaim a sermon in public worship.
- Fellowship may be enjoyed with many religious groups today - we should not think we are the only ones right in God's sight.
- We should not feel that the Holy Spirit does not work in our lives today as in the long ago.
- To appeal to millennials today, we must adapt our message, worship and attitudes.

Before going further, may I address the worship services at some local congregations. They are actually dull and boring, a mere ritual. Often, there seems to be little or no "genuine" life (joy, happiness, refreshing, peace) at all. The spirit of fervently pouring our love and praises before the throne of God is almost non-existent. Sometimes the reading of the Bible or the prayers are spoken with little or no feeling and sound as if it is even a burden to even utter the words. Brethren, this should NOT be!

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CONSIDER

My first car was a 57 Chevy, 2 door post, six cylinders, straight shift on the column. Through the years I have owned seven of these beauties (some say it is the most recognizable car ever made). I bought one of my 57 Chevys without a motor or transmission - and built it into a fun, dependable ride. With the help of some special friends, we tore one of them down, removed the rust, added new floor pans, etc. and it became a favorite. The last one LaDin and I owned was our "Black Beauty" - a black 2 door hardtop, 283 powerpack, Powerglide transmission, mostly original.



If you desired to restore a 57 Chevy, how would you go about it? To accomplish this task, you would consult the manual, to determine exactly how it was originally. It would be about arm rests and alternators, bolts, brackets and belts, clock and cloth (oh, by the way, the 57 Chevy did not have an alternator, but instead a generator). A further side note, to be precise in the restoration, under the hood you would find it "original" only if there was paint conspiracy in some areas (because that was how it came from the factory).



What do these thoughts have to do with our study? For all my life (of which I remember) I have heard the phrase "Restore New Testament Christianity." It is absolutely true that if we will do today what they did in the first century, we will become today what they became in the first century - New Testament Christians. Car enthusiasts understand what is necessary in restoring an old car to its original form. We must also understand what is required if we restore (or maintain), in the 21st century, the church for which Christ died, the church we read about in the Bible.

ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION: There are some things that are absolutely right, and any other way is wrong. If you have a 110 volt heater, you certainly do not want

to connect it to 220 voltage! If in wiring an electrical outlet, as you are connecting the three wires to that outlet, you **MUST** make certain you connect the live wire and the ground wire to the right terminals. There are no two ways to do this with good results.

ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION: When you have a sick child and the doctor prescribes penicillin - would you dare give that young one fentanyl? NEVER! The child's life would be in grave danger if you were so negligent. There is a right and a wrong in this serious matter.

IN MATTERS OF RELIGION - there is a way that is right and cannot be wrong. There are **NOT** many roads that lead to heaven. The only way we can possibly reach heaven is following the way of Christ (John 14:6).

Go with me to the Bible for another **ILLUSTRATION** of a similar circumstance and then we will go to the conditions that prevail today. The time is the first century, for over 700 years the Samaritans had worshipped in a way which was displeasing to Jehovah. Without doubt, God was displeased and disturbed by their unacceptable worship. God is grieved and heartbroken when His creation turns from His way, which is "for their good" (2 Cor. 4:15; Jer. 6:16).

God the Father sent His only Son to earth in the flesh, to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). At one time during His earthly ministry (as recorded in John 4), the Holy Scriptures tell us that "He must needs go through Samaria" (v. 4). Why was it necessary for Jesus to go through Samaria, where sinful people lived, even ones who were looked upon as dogs? The answer is chiding and challenging - precious souls in need of hearing the truth lived there. He loved them! He wanted them to hear and obey the truth that would save them.

Consider the similar situations today. In the brotherhood at this time in history, without doubt, some conditions are disturbing to Almighty God. Many have revolted against the pure simple way of salvation offered from our Father. Many seek to do what they consider as right in their own eyes (Deut. 12:8; Judg. 21:25). Tragically some who have preached the sound teachings of Christ in the past have now turned to doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. 15:7-9).

(Continued Next Week (Lord Willing))