

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason, I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Restoration

Introduction

For quite some time during this season of the Lord's work, the keyword from the Spirit has been "restoration". This word has been stirring in the hearts of God's people for a long time. Long enough that we have heard a number of people expound on "restoration" and we have even seen "churches" and "ministries" that have been called "restoration churches or restoration ministry movements". However, they have all fallen far short of what the Lord means by "restoration".

To restore means to put things back into their proper *place* or *position* and in their proper *condition*. Anything that needs to be "restored" means that its condition has deteriorated, has components that are out of place, or has had other things added to it that were not part of the original.

When the Spirit says "restoration", He is saying that a process has begun. It is not a one-time event but a *continuing process* of restoration *until the original has been restored fully*. This process has many sub-procedures as individual aspects of the overall project are considered in order for the whole to re-gain its *correct form and function*.

The procedural steps are best outlined in the Lord's word to Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 1:10 NASB

(10) "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant."

In this Word, there are four negatives before the two positives. In restoration, the negatives must come first! This is where we fail when we begin to consider the Spirit's restoration word. In our desire to be un-offensive we "have gone along to get along" with too many things that are man's ideas and not God's. We want to build and plant before we pluck up, break down, destroy and overthrow.

Jesus told us that He would build His Church on the rock of the revelation of who He is [Matt. 16:17-18]. Jesus is doing the building, not us. The plans and the building materials are exclusively determined by the Lord. He is following the architectural plans that have been determined by the Father before the foundation of the world and He is building out of living stones. He, Himself, is the foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:11-13 NASB

- (11) For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
- (12) Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,
- (13) each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

When we become a worker in the Kingdom of the Lord, He decides and delegates our work to us. We participate with Him in the building of His Church. However, the only acceptable building materials have also been prescribed by the Lord—gold, silver, and precious stones. Yet, for centuries, we have built onto the foundation of the Church with wood, hay, and stubble—materials that are worthless to the Lord because they will not stand the test of fire [*1 Cor. 3:11-13*].

So, when the Spirit says, “restore”, the first step is to tear down, destroy, overthrow, and pluck up all of the centuries of wood, hay, and stubble “add-ons” to the Lord’s architectural plans. We have to return to the foundation and evaluate each piece of the building material to make sure that it is in the proper condition and in the proper position according to correct form and function desired of the Lord.

The restoration process began with the “Protestant Reformation” at the end of what we call “the Dark Ages”. (They are the Dark Ages because the light of the Lord in His people had grown very dim). After restoring a few truths, the “Protestants” began to build their own “add-ons” to the Church. The restoration process was not completed because they did not tear down all of the pagan and religion influenced additions until they reached the foundation.

Some of the wood, hay, and stubble left by the Protestants include the clergy-laity concept, ritualized worship, building focused "house of God" model, and a hierarchical authority structure. Many practices of the Church were simply re-labeled—Priests became "pastors" but the one-man leadership model was still in effect; Cardinals became "bishops" overseeing church districts, and Rome continued to be Rome only now each denomination has its own version of it at their home offices.

Because the Lord is building with living stones, restoration always begins in the individual with things like salvation by grace, baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and all of the things that accompany these. However, restoration quickly moves from the individual to the corporate expression of the Lord in the earth—His Body.

In the seasons of the Lord, this is where we are now—corporate restoration. This will happen whether we like it or not. The Lord will have a Bride, who is spotless and without blemish, prepared for Him before His return. Nothing in Heaven or earth can prevent this from happening. We just need to make sure that we are not hindering the process.

The “house church” movement is part of the corporate restoration process. However, this movement runs the risk of making the same mistakes that were made at the time of the “protestant reformation”. For the “house church” movement to continue to receive the blessing of God, it must return to the foundation and examine all of the building materials. There is no longer room for the traditions or philosophies of men. Too many “house churches” are simply relocations of malcontents from the traditional churches. If you keep the same form and structure as the traditional churches, meeting in a house doesn’t change anything except the “pastor”.

I was part of the first wave of "house churches" during the Charismatic Movement. By the end of the 70's, there were thousands of "home fellowships" being created every month. Yet, today, most of these are no longer functional. Many "grew" into "charismatic or non-denominational churches", which have very little practical difference from traditional churches. Others moved into deception and became cultic in their functions. Some simply faded away because they couldn't determine their purpose as the anointing of the Spirit moved from the gifts to relationships, unity, and government.

I see similar things beginning to happen with the current wave of "house churches". Why did the first wave fail? Because its form and structure didn't change from the traditional model. They did not return to the foundation. What is the second wave doing differently? So far, very little. It is imperative that the current "house church" movement returns to the foundation and assesses and re-assesses all things in the light of the Holy Spirit.

The first test of the willingness of the "house church" movement to become what God intends begins with the foundation.

Ephesians 2:19-22 NASB

- (19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,
- (20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the *cornerstone*,
- (21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
- (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

The "house church" movement must be able to recognize and function with apostles and prophets, who are part of the foundation of the Church and are presented by Jesus as His equipping gifts to His people. This is a radical move from the traditional churches.

Accomplishing this will require a radical change in form and structure in terms of assembling together, in terms of financial provision, and in terms of leadership. The ability to do this will determine the future usefulness of the "house church" movement to the Kingdom of God.

If the "house church" movement fails in this, it will coalesce into a "network of house churches" banded together for mutual support and then slowly solidify into another denominational structure. Lord help us! We don't need any more of those.

Turning Point

When I look back over my 50-year walk with the Lord, I am forced to assess a number of failings on the part of the leadership of the people of God. When the Lord builds His Church, His Ecclesia, He also builds His leaders, which He has given as gifts to His people [*Eph. 4:11-16*]. What we fail to realize is that God's leadership does not look like nor function like the leadership of the world systems [*Mar. 10:42-45*].

This seems to be where the various movements over the years have failed. They were unable to make the transition from worldly leadership and authority to the proper Godly leadership and authority of the Kingdom of God. It doesn't matter how powerful a ministry you have developed,

the Lord doesn't allow you into His leadership until you have developed in you the Father's heart and have adopted His goals and desires for His people.

The world's hierarchical authority structure will not function in the Kingdom of God, including the Church. It will not produce properly functioning Godly government. This is one of the areas where we must “pluck up, break down, destroy and overthrow” before we can build and plant Kingdom government.

The Lord willing, I will expound further on this subject in the next and future Present Truth Teaching Letters.

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