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The Restoration Principle

I. An Illustration

- a. This is a 1970 Buick GSX*
- b. In its day, it was the most powerful muscle car sold to the public, with 360 H.P., and 510 ft. lbs. of torque*
- c. Only 678 of these cars were produced in 1970, and you could get one in one of two colours: Apple White, or Saturn Yellow*
- d. Today, these cars are sought after by muscle car collectors and enthusiasts. Why?*
 - i. Because they were the most powerful*
 - ii. Because they were rare then, and are even rarer now*
- e. And these cars are bringing high dollars as well – some of them upwards of 6 figures*
- f. However, they are a 40 year old car, and it is extremely rare to find one in original, unmodified condition*
- g. They are normally found in this state*
 - i. Rusty*
 - ii. Well-used*
 - iii. Adorned with second-rate aftermarket parts*
 - iv. Many of the original parts are long gone, tossed in a dumpster years ago*
- h. Yet, when a car is found in this shape, all is not lost – this car can be restored to the condition it was in when it left the dealership back in 1970, using various references*
 - i. Surviving examples of originals*
 - ii. Factory documentation that states just how these cars were designed and assembled*
 - iii. If it is a specific car that is being referenced, there may be*
 - 1. Old photographs*

2. *Original documents such as the bill of sale*
 3. *What is known as the "build sheet" which is usually found under the rear seat or on top of the gas tank which lists all the options that this car came with*
- i. *When the car is finished...*
 - i. *It is prized*
 - ii. *It is valuable*
 - iii. *It functions as it was originally intended to function*
 - j. *And what may have seemed like an insurmountable task is actually accomplished*

II. Purpose of Illustration

- a. *The purpose of this illustration is to use a modern-day example to familiarize us with the concept of restoration*
- b. *This weekend, we are focusing on restoration in the realm of the Christian faith*
- c. *Which is to say that the concept that we have just seen in this illustration applies to our life in Christ - both individually and collectively (and the two are never mutually exclusive)*
- d. *Thus, tonight, I would like for us to look at the principle of restoration as it applies to the Christian faith, both individually and collectively*

I. What is Restoration? (At Least) 2 Presuppositions

- a. *That a restoration is necessary; That there is value in restoration*
 - i. *Part of the nature of this world - part of the result of the fall of man - is that things deteriorate, things decay, things tarnish*
 1. *My necklace chain is tarnished*
 2. *My parents just replaced the roof on their house*
 3. *My car has rust holes*
 4. *We ourselves may become ill, we become diseased*
 - ii. *Now, there is a way of counteracting these effects, and that is to isolate object - to put it in a time capsule or put it in a place where the effects of this world will not touch or contaminate it*
 - iii. *And you can do that with all sorts of things, if you wanted to, with:*

1. *Time capsules*
 2. *Clean rooms*
 3. *Museums*
- iv. *But you can't do that with people, and you can't do that with the church!*
- v. *The church works best when it is in contact with other people - God has designed it so that the rubber actually meets the road - we need contact!*
- vi. *But as a result of people being an integral part of the church, and having contact with people outside of the church, it strays - it can deteriorate*
1. *Like the car that was pulled out of the barn, the church*
 - a. *May be tired*
 - b. *May have second-rate parts attached to it*
 - c. *May place emphasis on some things to the neglect of others*
- vii. *The church can stray or deteriorate for two reasons*
1. *Our wisdom is limited*
 - a. *If I had only known - if I had only known! - I wouldn't have eaten 13 hot dogs tonight*
 - b. *What seems like a good idea at the time may backfire on us*
 - i. *And it may take 1/2 hour*
 - ii. *Or it may take years, decades, perhaps centuries*
 - c. *These things happen - they just happen*
 2. *Satan does not work shift work*
 - a. *The church is established at Pentecost in Acts 2*
 - b. *But we do not even get 2 chapters away before, in Acts 4, the disciples are seized and questioned and threatened, and then in Acts 5, they're flogged*
 - c. *And then we move into Galatians and 1 & 2 Corinthians, where these challenges start arising from within the church!*

viii. So, if the church has strayed, if it has deteriorated in some way, it does not reflect its original condition, its original functioning, its original glory – a return to the original is necessary and valuable

b. That we know the substance or look of the original

i. There may be value in restoring something to the original state, but do we know what it originally looked like or what it was made of?

ii. Our answer is “Yes!”

iii. The NT is God’s

1. Coffee table book on the church

2. Service manual on the church

iv. Now, these are really just oversimplified designations, because the Bible is much richer and sophisticated than just a coffee table book or service manual

v. But what God has left us in the NT is a window, a portal into the 1st century, and we are given a look into what the church was

vi. Now, that picture of the church is not as easy as flipping open to, say, the Book of Acts and finding some sort of checklist that we can consult – which may have been the case with the OT

vii. Of course, the NT is not written like the OT

1. It’s not a legislative document like the Pentateuch

2. 1 Corinthians doesn’t read like Leviticus

viii. So, the challenge for us is to identify God’s design – God’s ideal – in the pages of these documents

1. This is no easy task – there is always the difficulty of determining what was

a. Cultural in the society

b. Normal in the church

c. E.g., an example that Monroe Hawley uses is Acts 20:7-8

i. Break bread was normative

ii. Are many lamps and the upper room?

2. It takes careful, diligent, picus studying of the Scriptures

3. *Having done this for many years, this is one reason we have often been labelled as a people who know our Bibles well*
- ix. *But when it comes to what's involved in restoration, our belief is that we can know how to return to the original*
1. *In form*
 2. *In function*
 3. *In spirit*

II. Why Restoration?

a. Biblical Precedent

- i. *As Geeff has already mentioned, the Bible is almost saturated with the Restoration principle*
- ii. *Two classic examples are the restoration efforts of*
 1. *Hezekiah*
 2. *Isiah*
- iii. *Both of these efforts worked under the 2 presuppositions that we just looked at*
 1. *They recognized the corruption around them and deemed restoration necessary and valuable*
 2. *They discovered in the Law just what God had ordained, and thus, what was to be restored*
- iv. *But, yet, what becomes clear as we discover the Biblical precedents - and this sort of takes off from where Geeff left off in his presentation - is that even though man is involved in restoration (as Hezekiah and Isiah were), restoration truly begins and ends with God*
 1. *Consider the first 3 chapters of Genesis*
 2. *Then consider the last 3 chapters of Revelation*
 - a. *The end of the Scriptures ends with the beginning!*
 - b. *It's a restorative story!*
 - c. *And we are in the middle of it!*
 - d. *Which brings me to my second point...*

b. Restoration is in our Identity

- i. *Why ought we to be concerned with restoration?*
 1. *Because restoration is a part of our spiritual DNA, our spiritual heritage both individually and collectively*
 2. *We are a restored people in Jesus Christ*
- ii. *The Restoration Principle:*
 1. *Is not some old OT law or practice that we see practiced by a couple of OT kings*
 2. *Is not some dusty, crusty Modernist principle or idea that was born in the 1800s by outdated thinking and philosophy*
 3. *Is the story of life in Christ!*
 4. *Is the story of you and me and anybody who has had their sins washed in the blood of Christ, and our restorative walk with God*
- iii. *Why?*
 1. *Why seek to restore the simplicity of NT worship?*
 2. *Why seek to restore the structure of NT polity?*
 3. *Why seek to restore the spirit of NT fellowship and compassion?*
 4. *Because it mimics the process and pains God took in restoring us to him*
 5. *Thus, we draw close to God in seeking these things*

III. Why Not Restoration?

- a. *I think a good question to close with tonight is "Why Not Restoration?"*
- b. *To not practice a continual restoration - a restoration that is continually examining ourselves against the Scriptures, generation after generation - is to do two things:*
 - i. *Resign ourselves, or become ignorant to our tendency to drift, to stray, to deteriorate, and thus displease God*
 - ii. *To miss out on all the blessings and glory of the church and Christian life as God designed it*
- c. *My plea and Geoff's plea this evening is that you consider restoration and its practice in your life, in the life of the church, and really, as the only way to be*

