

# “Where the Bible Speaks!”

## 2 Timothy 3:14-17

**Intro.** – A D.C. lawyer was opening the door to his BMW 760i when another car came along and hit it ripping the door off its hinges. The police arrived and found the lawyer hopping up and down in a rage, complaining about the damage done to his automobile. One of the police officers commented, “You lawyers make me sick! You are so materialistic. You’re so concerned about your precious Bimmer, you didn’t even notice your left arm was ripped off.” “Oh no!” said the lawyer looking down at the bloody stump where his arm had been, “Where’s my Rolex?!”

Let me use this to illustrate it is always good to examine our motives/priorities as the Lord’s Church. This means knowing/examining our heritage. Historically, we belong to what is called “The Restoration Movement.” This is not a religion, a denomination or a cult. It is simply a movement to *restore* New Testament Christianity.

One of the leaders of the Restoration Movement was Thomas Campbell. He had immigrated (legally I may add) to the US from Ireland. He had been a preacher in a denomination there and was quick to join the same denomination here in the US. He settled near Pittsburg and was given four counties from this denomination for which he was to preach. One Sunday, Campbell found himself in a community that had not participated in the Lord’s Supper for a long time. Now Thomas Campbell was a member of the Presbyterian Church. There were “sects” in the Presbyterian Church. Thomas was a member of “The Old-Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian.” This sect had a rule that one could not have the Lord’s Supper with other sects. You can guess what happened. The synod “hounded” him for doing such a thing. Irked, disgusted and persuaded there would be no reconciliation, Campbell withdrew from their fellowship.

Thomas Campbell continued to preach. In particular he preached in the homes of friends who had also come from Ireland. Such gatherings took on interest and popularity; so much so, that it was suggested there was a pressing need to clarify their position and make plans for the future. So, in the summer of 1809, Campbell and others assembled in the home of Abraham Altars to fulfill that need. It was at this meeting Thomas Campbell announced a slogan that summarized their rule and guide in all matters: *Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.* At another meeting held August 17, 1809, it was decided to form themselves into an association which they named “The Christian Association of Washington.” A committee of twenty-one with the assistance of Campbell was appointed to devise the means by which their newly founded association could accomplish its mission. At the next meeting of this Association, held September 7, 1809, a document bearing the unmistakable marks of the thinking and convictions of Thomas Campbell was presented for approval. It was immediately accepted and ordered to be printed. That document was entitled ***Declaration and Address***. Let me use this document to introduce this message and the purpose behind it.

Often called “The Magna Charta” of the Restoration Movement, the *Declaration and Address* set forth principles based on eternal truth. The first section lays the foundation for the remainder of the document. This foundation is two-fold: Biblical authority and “rest”.

**BIBLICAL AUTHORITY** is the first part of this two-fold foundation. The opening words of this document are as follows: “From the series of events which have taken place in the churches for many years past, especially in this Western country....” Bear in mind what Campbell had recently experienced. What really bothered Campbell was the matter of authority. Human authority had proven impotent in uniting the useless and senseless divisions in churches. Hierarchies, creeds, and councils were adding to rather than preventing division. Churches were seeking the favor/approval of men rather than the approval of God. This is why Campbell went on to write: “We are persuaded that it is high time for us not only to think but also to act for ourselves.” Whoa! Just what was it he was proposing to think and upon which to act? He continued: “To see with our own eyes and to take all our measures directly from the Divine standard: to this alone we feel ourselves Divinely bound to be conformed, as by this alone, we must be judged.” This “Divine standard” is unquestionably the Bible. Campbell recognized that all accountable beings will answer to God alone. Biblical authority was and remains the key issue.

The other part of the two-fold foundation as stated by Campbell was the desire for **REST**. Specifically he wrote: “...tired and sick of bitter jarrings and janglings of a party spirit, we would desire to be at rest; and, were it possible, we would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren

throughout all the churches; as would restore unity, peace, and purity to the whole Church of God..." Does this sound noble yet impossible to you? Such would be the case had he not backed this desire with a proven plan. That plan was the rejection of human opinions as authority and the taking of "...the Divine word alone for our rule..."

There you have it. The two-fold foundation of this historical document is best summarized as follows: 1) Christian unity 2) On the basis of God's Word alone. Might I be so bold as to say that such WAS the very basis of the movement which historically was given the name: The Restoration Movement!!

All of which brings me to the purpose behind this first session

*Purpose: to show the Restoration Moment WAS all about unity on the basis of Biblical authority*

Each of the leaders in the Restoration Movement (Thomas/Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, John William McGarvey, Rupert Clinton Foster) these not only had a high view of Scripture... but they recognized unity would come through no other means than by the authority of God's Word. Let's take a closer look at the Restoration Movement which WAS all about unity on the basis of God's Word alone!

## **I The Bible is DIVINE**

- all other books are of human origin... the Bible is of God!

### **A. The Bible is God's Revelation**

1. Restoration leaders had a firm conviction that God had not brought them into this world and left them without a way of knowing His will.
2. Each of these men recognized the Bible as God's *final, complete* and *unique* revelation:
  - a. final = taught and practiced not to expect any other revelation from God...
  - b. complete = taught and practiced there was no need for any other revelation...
  - c. unique = taught and practiced that here was no other book in the world like the Bible...
    - written by 40 men, over a period of some 1500 years, 3 different continents, 3 languages..
    - yet, its message is unified throughout all 66 books = Jesus *restoring* man to fellowship...
3. A. Campbell (*The Christian System*) "The Bible is to the intellectual and moral world of man, what the sun is to the planets in our system – the foundation and source of light and life, spiritual & eternal. There is not a spiritual idea in the whole human race that is not drawn from the Bible."
4. To say Restoration leaders had a "high view of Scripture" is an understatement...

### **B. The Bible is God Breathed**

1. Word *inspired* = "exhaled" or "God breathed"... not in the same way some think of Milton etc.
2. Spirit of God *superintended* or *moved* over 40 authors of the Bible = each used their own style.
3. As an historian of early Restoration Movement leaders said, "Soldiers of the cross attacked all human creeds as an impeachment of the authority of the Scriptures. 'Back to the Bible' in all matters of faith and practice became the rallying theme of the restorers, even before Thomas and Alexander Campbell arrived in America." (*Restoration Quarterly Vol. 1 No. 1, 1957, Paul Southern*)
4. 2 Peter 1:16-21 "*For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty... But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was every made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*"

### **C. The Bible is Without Error**

1. In describing his convictions concerning the inerrancy of Scripture, A Campbell wrote: "We regard the Apostles of Jesus Christ as gifted with a full and perfect knowledge of the Christian institution; which entitled them, without the possibility of error, to pen to mankind the whole will of their Master, whether in the form of fact, precept, promise or threatening; and as furnished with such knowledge of the signs of those ideas in human language as to express this knowledge clearly, accurately, and infallibly to mankind." (*Millennial Harbinger* [1846, p. 15]).
2. Problem with even hinting the Bible is not inerrant (original copiers were error free)... who was and is going to determine what is and what is not *truth* in the Bible then?

3. Illus. – 1986 North American Christian Convention (Indianapolis, IN) Session “Inerrancy as a Restoration Principle” – preacher from big Left Coast Church point blank said, “Bible has errors...” and that he didn’t have a problem with that...
  - this in itself was/is disturbing, but what’s more disturbing he got a standing ovation for saying it!
4. In recent times, noted archaeologist J.O. (John Ora) Kinnaman writes: “Of the hundreds of thousands of artifacts found by archaeologists, not one has ever been discovered that contradicts or denies one word, phrase, clause or sentence of the Bible, but always confirms and verifies the facts of the Biblical record.”
5. The Restoration Movement leaders believed this and understood this before all these artifacts...

Leaders of the Restoration Movement knew without question the Bible is DIVINE!

## II The Bible is AUTHORITATIVE

- there may be some overlap with this and the Bible being Divine; nevertheless, this is another key area where the plea of the Restoration Movement was grounded. These early leaders often referred to Scripture the way the inspired Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians 2:13 “*And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God’s message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*”
- A. The Bible is the Right Standard
    1. What our text states is also the application of the Restoration Movement – Bible speaks we...
    2. Our text makes clear the Bible alone is all that is necessary to meet our spiritual needs – it is the ultimate/final authority for faith and life itself!
    3. When T. Campbell first declared “Where the Bible speaks...” there was stunned silence. Finally, Andrew Munro said, “Mr. Campbell, if we adopt this as a basis, then such is the end of infant baptism.” T.C. replied, “Of course, if infant baptism be not found in Scriptures, we can have nothing to do with it.” Upon hearing this, Thomas Acheson said, “I hope that I may never see the day when my heart will renounce the blessed saying of Jesus, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven.’” He then burst into tears. After things settled down, James Foster said, “Mr. Acheson, I would remind you that in the portion of Scripture you have quoted, there is no reference whatsoever to infant baptism.”
    4. Significance of this, here’s group of people realized Bible was authoritative, accepted it as such!
  - B. The Bible is the Only Standard
    - false standards of authority abounded then and now:
      1. Tradition – human traditions one of biggest challenges to Biblical authority. Note: traditional practices not necessarily wrong UNTIL they are elevated to level of or even above the Bible.
        - Illus. – Rich Mullins’ home church preacher removed picture to illus. traditions being raised to a sacred point... tells how some responded as though he had committed unpardonable...
      2. Personal experience/opinion = e.g. “I-thinkism” or experience elevated to new revelations from God... Point: to elevate anything above Scripture is FALSE authority!
      3. Bible ALONE = authoritative rule in *faith* and *practice*!
        - a. why T.C. got into trouble when serving Lord’s Supper – following creeds or man-made traditions *always* divides = history is proven again and again!
        - b. some said/say, “But these creeds are just parts of the Bible or at least come from the Bible.”
        - c. if it is more than the Bible, it is too much. If it is less than the Bible, it is not enough. If it is the same as the Bible, then it (creeds etc.) are not necessary!

Past leaders in the Restoration Movement made clear the Bible and the Bible alone was the authority in all matters of faith and practice...

## III The Bible is *All Sufficient*

- some overlap continues; however, another key element in the plea of the RM was in the fact that Scriptures, the Bible was *all sufficient* in all matters:

## A. The Source of Faith

1. Romans 10:17 “*So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of God.*”
2. What brought people to faith in Christ in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century? 2<sup>nd</sup> Century? Etc.? UNTIL man made creeds, councils, confessions of faith started coming on the scene... Unless you accepted these you were not considered a Christian!...
3. Early leaders of the RM made it clear that the Bible alone was the all sufficient source for faith:
  - A. Campbell (*The Christian System*, pp 86-87) “Let him then examine the two following propositions, and say whether these do not express Heaven’s own scheme of augmenting and conservating the body of Christ. First: Nothing is essential to the conversion of the world but the union and co-operation of Christians. Second: Nothing is essential to the union of Christians but the apostles’ teaching... The word or testimony of the apostles is itself all-sufficient and alone sufficient to the union of all Christians.”

## B. The Sustainer of Faith

1. Jesus is the Object and Sustainer of faith... all done through His Word/Spirit.
2. Was this not the conviction of the early leaders in the RM?
3. Illus. – Raccoon John Smith tells of the time he encountered two men discussing their convictions. These two asked Smith as an impartial bystander to help resolve their conflict. They were not agreeing on religious matters. So Smith asked them, “What do you believe?”
  - 1<sup>st</sup> man – “I believe in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible.”
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> man – “I believe in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith and the articles it contains.”Turning to the first man, Smith said, “When you die you will go to be in the presence of the Lord.” Turning to the second man, Smith said, “When you die you will go to Philadelphia.”
4. Creeds, councils and names of men are utterly insignificant in comparison to God’s Word!

**Conclusion:** One more quote: "To remain divided is sinful! Did not our Lord pray, that they may be one, even as we are one? (John 17:22). A chorus of ecumenical voices keep harping the unity tune. What they are saying is, ‘Christians of all doctrinal shades and beliefs must come together in one visible organization, regardless... Unite, unite!’ Such teaching is false, reckless and dangerous. Truth alone must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity. Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord's prayer in John 17 must be read in its full context. Look at verse 17: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the Gospel." (“The Essence of Separation”).

What R.M. leader do you think wrote that? Not one of the Campbells, not B.W. Stone, not Walter Scott or J.W. McGarvey. It was written by Charles Spurgeon.

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus. "These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold." "Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get together like that?"

Where the Scriptures speak, we speak. Where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.” We must not bind anything on anyone nor preach anything that is NOT found in God’s Word. So much of the religious world is divided not by what God says, but by what man puts in place of what God says. For example, some will say you can’t be a Christian if ladies wear make-up and jewelry... Some will say can’t use Bible School material... church buildings... instruments in worship... coat racks... multiple communion cups... etc. On and on we could go, things people hold as matters of faith; yet, things the Bible has nothing about which to say.

Brethren, we are not going to do that. We are not a denomination. Our heritage is simply a movement seeking to *restore* New Testament Christianity. If the Scriptures speak on it, then we preach and practice “it.” If the Scriptures are silent on it, we refuse to make “it” a test of fellowship. We are not perfect nor have we arrived fully in this matter; nevertheless, where the Bible speaks we speak!