

RESTITUTION

BIBLE TEXT : Leviticus 6:2-5; Numbers 5:6-8; Ezekiel 33:11-16;
Matthew 5:23, 24; Luke 19:8, 9

LESSON 269 **Senior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgement; and some men they follow after" (1 Timothy 5:24).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Leviticus 6:2-5

² If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the LORD, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour;

³ Or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein:

⁴ Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, ⁵ Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, *and* give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering.

Numbers 5:6-8

⁶ Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty;

⁷ Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth *part* thereof, and give *it* unto *him* against whom he hath trespassed.

⁸ But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto,

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Under the Law

1. The man who committed a sin against his neighbour also committed a trespass against the Lord, Leviticus 6:2, 3; Numbers 5:6.
2. Repentance toward God included restoration to man of all unlawfully gained property with an additional one-fifth, Leviticus 6:4, 5; Numbers 5:7.
3. If the restitution could not be made to the man or his kinsman, it was to be recompensed unto the Lord, Number 5:8.

II Under the Prophets

1. Sin and wickedness brought death to the soul; but turning from sin, making restitution, and walking carefully and sinlessly, brought eternal life to the soul, Ezekiel 33:14-16.

III Under the Dispensation of Grace

1. Jesus showed plainly that all men who expect to be reconciled to God must also be reconciled with their brothers, Matthew 5:23, 24.
2. The conversion of Zacchæus demonstrates the possibility of being justified before God before restitution is completed if the promise to make restitution is faithfully given to God, Luke 19:8, 9.

NOTES:

The primary definition of the word **restitution** is **the act of restoring; specifically, restoration of anything to its rightful owner; act of giving an equivalent for loss or damage.** Throughout the Bible we find the principle of restitution tied in very closely with the act of sinful man's returning from his sinful ways to serve the true and living God. Often when a man sins against God other people suffer as the result of that sin. The opposite is always true. When a man sins against his neighbour he sins against God in the same act, because one of God's commandments has been broken. God willingly forgives the sins committed against Him when they are repented of; but He requires man to make amends to any person he has injured or wronged by his sinning.

God's Ordinance

Among the commands of the Law of Sinai was the law of restoration or restitution. This restitution of misappropriated or stolen articles was to be accomplished on the day when the trespass offering was brought to the Lord. The Law specified that any article obtained by fraud, by lying, or by any false pretence whatever should be restored in the principal with one fifth of the value added thereto.

In a case where a person had wronged his neighbour in taking something from him, the neighbour might not know that the property had been stolen; or, if he did know, perhaps there had been no witness to stand with him to bring the guilty one to trial.

let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, *even* to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him.

Ezekiel 33:11-16

¹¹ Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

¹² Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth.

¹³ When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

¹⁴ Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

¹⁵ *If* the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

¹⁶ None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

Matthew 5:23-24

²³ Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there

In this latter case the neighbour's word of accusation would be nullified by the guilty man's word of denial, since two or more witnesses were required to condemn a man in Israel's civil court. But this is not true in God's Court of Justice. God knows the heart of every man, and knows every sin committed; therefore, the man who brought his trespass offering, asking full pardon for his sin, would never be received by the Lord until he had made his restitution to his neighbour for all the wrong deeds done.

The rules for righteous living are just as high — or higher — under the Dispensation of Grace as those under the Law. Restitution is as much a part of the Gospel as conversion. When a man is saved, he will confess and restore if he has robbed; he will seek forgiveness for lies, false reports, unjust criticisms, or any act wherein others have been injured in word or deed. God will hold a man to these conditions, but He will furnish the needed strength and grace to meet these conditions. The man who feels real conviction for sin will long for deliverance at any price, and he will not feel that restitution is a hardship. He will do gladly whatever is necessary to get relief from the burden of sin. It is useless to talk about loving the Master with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength unless that love has caused the old life to pass away and has caused restitution to be made for all past misdeeds.

Equal Ways

The Word of God has not changed through the years, in spite of the attack of men and of devils. The Children of Israel tried to change the meaning of that Word to fit their sinful lives and desires, but God's prophets stood as watchmen to warn the people that God meant just what He said. The Israelites, captives in Babylon because of their sin and idolatry, complained to the Prophet Ezekiel that God's ways were not equal; but a careful study of God's Book will show the blameless equality of God's dealings with the children of men of all ages.

God outlined His equal plan to Ezekiel thus: "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). The Lord said that the righteousness of the righteous would not deliver him in the day of his transgression, that he would not be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinned. Many people seem to think their self-righteous acts will be placed on one side of God's balances, to be weighed against their sinful acts, which will be placed on the opposite side of the balances. Whichever weighs the most — the righteous acts or the sinful acts — they think will determine the eternal destiny of the soul; but in no place does the Bible bear out that thought. The Word declares, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

On the other hand, the eternal God, whose ways are equal, decreed that the wicked man would not die for his wickedness in the day that he turns from his wickedness to do that which, was lawful and right in the sight of the Lord. To show the sincerity of his repentance, however, the formerly wicked man was required to "restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity" (Ezekiel 33:15). Could any plan be more equal? The truthful heart answers that all God's ways are equal — blamelessly equal!

True Repentance

In the days when the voice of John the Baptist rang out in the wilderness with its message of preparation for the appearance of the Messiah, the truth of God was burned into the hearts of men.

rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

²⁴ Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Luke 19:8-9

⁸ And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.

⁹ And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

The message was simple, but the effect was weighty: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Multitudes of people flocked to hear John's wondrous message and to do the rules of righteousness that he outlined. The self-righteous Pharisees, the professing religionists of that day, came to hear the message, too; but John knew their sinful hearts and called out the challenge: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8). True repentance always has its distinguishing fruits, whether accomplished in the life of a moral man or in the life of an outbroken sinner.

The salvation of Zacchæus, the rich publican, serves as an example of true repentance. Once he had been a well-known sinner, demonstrated by the fact that the people who surrounded Jesus murmured that He had gone to be a sinner's guest; but Zacchæus was a sinner no more. Zacchæus sought to see Jesus, and he did not seek in vain. All people who really seek for Jesus are sure to find Him. Zacchæus had hid himself in the top of a sycamore tree, but somewhere between the top of that tree and the ground, God's salvation availed for him. Jesus told the people; "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

What were the evidences and fruits of Zacchæus' salvation? He received the Lord joyfully into his heart and house — the only way the Lord can truly be received. He wanted nothing to stand between himself and his salvation — not even his wealth. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8). The crafty little Jewish tax-gatherer willingly restored four times as much as he had unlawfully taken. God's salvation makes a person feel like returning all possessions that rightfully belong to another.

Reconciliation

Hatred and malice are sins that cannot be harboured in a Christian's heart. Love is the very essence of true Christian faith, and such faith cannot shelter at its altars a heart that is uncharitable or revengeful. Jesus spoke very clearly in this respect: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24). It is necessary to pause in our devotions to God in order to be reconciled to a brother, rather than try to worship Him with guilt upon the heart.

Undeniable Testimony

Another far-reaching benefit in God's plan regarding restitution is that an undeniable testimony is left with the one to whom restitution is made, and often this testimony is directed to people who otherwise might never hear the story of the Gospel. Men in high worldly circles are often totally unaware of the possibilities of Christianity; but when confession and restitution are made to them, they are confronted with the fact that God has changed a heart and life. A religion that compels a man to pay his just debts, take back the things he has stolen, confess his lies, and uncover his crimes, demands a confidence from the men of the world.

Heaven's Court of Justice

Restitution includes making right any act wherein others have been injured. It includes wrongs against corporations or

QUESTIONS

1. How did the trespass offering enter into the matter of restitution under the Law?
2. What price did the injured party receive from restitution under the Law?
3. Who received the recompense if the injured man or his kinsmen were no longer alive?
4. Tell what the Lord revealed to Ezekiel about restitution.
5. What value did Jesus place upon confession and restitution?
6. How did Zacchæus feel about restitution after he was saved?
7. Does God save anyone who is not willing to make restitution?
8. What extreme good comes to the men of the world from a Christian's restitution?
9. What extreme good comes to the Christian himself?

companies, or violations of the laws of the land. The person who has been wronged may be ignorant of the fact, but that does not exempt the wrongdoer from making restitution to him. The civil statutes do not always govern in matters of restitution. For example, the laws of the land provide a time limit for certain classes of debts and obligations, after which they become outlawed; but no debts are outlawed with God. Time cannot cancel moral obligations. The statutes of most states contain a bankruptcy act by which a man's entire indebtedness may be cancelled; but no petitions in bankruptcy are recognised in Heaven's Court of Justice. It is much better to meet these requirements in this life, where mercy can be obtained to season justice, than to wait until the matter is brought before the Judge of all the earth, who will then mete out justice without mercy.

Restitution, which would implicate others, or bring injury or harm to others, is a great problem. In case of criminal action the obligation upon the penitent is to confess his part of the crime or action. That is what God requires of him. But in some instance it may be impossible for him to confine it to himself alone. It will take much prayer and waiting before the Lord to know exactly what God would have him do in these matters. It is advisable to discuss these matters with a competent minister of the Gospel for his counsel and prayers. Many times a minister, from experience in earlier cases, can give advice that will be of immeasurable value to the one who is making restitution.

Saved upon Condition

Restitution is usually considered at the time of salvation, because God will forgive no man's sins until that man is willing, so far as it lies within his power, to make right every wrong that he has committed against others. God opens the heart of the sinner and shows him the sins of his past life. In some instances it has required years to make all the restitution that God showed in a few minutes of time, but God will not deprive a man of salvation all those years if he faithfully promises God that the restitutions will be made. Zacchæus experienced salvation before one restitution was made, but he knew they had to be made and he promised that they would be made. As he kept his word, he also kept his salvation. Zacchæus voluntarily repaid fourfold, but nowhere does the Bible say that Jesus required him to pay fourfold, or even suggested that amount. God has abundantly blessed the people of the Gospel dispensation who have repaid their restitutions on a straight basis — one Naira repaid for every Naira's worth of damage done.

There is joy in restitutions made. The peace of God floods the heart every time a man straightens out a misdeed. Many Christians have testified that they were so happy when their last restitution was made that they almost wished for more restitutions, so that they might experience that supreme happiness again.