

The peace and assurance that God will give you will not deteriorate or grow old. It will remain fresh and new in your heart, because He will give you the power to keep it. None of us can serve God in our own strength, but He gives the strength day by day as we keep our hands in His. This Gospel is nothing but pure, heavenly power and it will do for you what nothing else can do. Jesus is the Restorer. He came here to earth to die for us so that we could be made whole, and that truth makes us free.

If you do not have peace with God in your heart today, admit it and ask God for help from above. When you turn from your sin in honest repentance, and reach out to Him in faith, He will do that for you. He will restore you and make your life brand new.

APOSTOLIC FAITH CHURCH

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THE MASTER OF *Restoration*

Restoration is a concept that we are familiar with in our society. Some time ago, the city of Tacoma, Washington, began the task of restoring a historical bridge. The Murray-Morgan Bridge connects downtown Tacoma with the tide flats where the ships come in. It was built in 1913 to replace an 1894 swing-span bridge, and it crosses a beautiful waterway where the boats are all nestled. The bridge has some unusual features: it is higher above the water than most lift bridges, was constructed on a variable grade, and has an overhead span designed to carry a water pipe.

The Washington State Department of Transportation closed the Murray-Morgan in 2007 due to deterioration and structural deficiencies. For a time, the City of Tacoma did not know what to do with the bridge. At one point, a decision was made to tear it down, but then plans were put in place to restore the bridge because concerned individuals saw value in preserving this historical structure. Their desire was to make it possible for vehicle and pedestrian traffic to travel across the bridge once more.

While restoration specialists work to preserve physical objects and structures, we serve a God who specializes in restoring lives. He is the Master of restoration! He not only has the

power to renew, heal, and rebuild, but His whole purpose revolves around doing so. He sees value in individuals that man might view as hopeless or damaged beyond repair.

Scripture records many examples of Jesus' power to restore the physical body. In the Gospel of Matthew, we find an account of how Jesus healed a man with a withered hand. We read, "And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: and, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other" (Matthew 12:9-13).

Jesus faced much opposition as He walked this earth. The Pharisees did not believe that He was the Son of God. They actually hated Him, and they tried to discredit or trap Him on numerous occasions, but they failed every time. This was one of those occasions. However, in the middle of all that opposition to His

ministry, Jesus reached out to one who needed restoration.

Matthew's account states that this man was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. We are not told if he knew Jesus was in the area, or if he had any expectation that Jesus might show up at the synagogue. Whether or not he had any hope of seeing Jesus, that is exactly what happened.

When Jesus told the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand," He was asking him to do something that was totally impossible in the natural. The man might have thought, I don't know if I can obey this command—is it even possible for me to stretch forth my hand? The Bible does not tell us how long the man's hand had been withered. It gives no details as to whether he had suffered a stroke or an injury, how old the man was, or how long he had been in that condition. It just tells us that he had a hand that was inoperable. He could not use it.

The details about why he could not use it did not matter to the Lord. What matters is that the man with a withered hand met the Master of restoration. When he stretched forth his hand in faith and obedience to the One who stood before him, something happened. Glory to God! That is the way it works. In a moment of time, Jesus restored that withered hand and it became as whole as the other.

Today, Jesus' power to restore is just the same. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. He is still in the

WE SERVE A GOD WHO SPECIALIZES IN RESTORING LIVES.

business of restoring lives. Those who have been born again through His power know that He has done that in their lives. He will do it for you if you are not born again. It does not matter what you have done or how long you have been in your sinful condition. It does not matter if your situation looks hopeless. Faith and obedience will always bring results! You can have an assurance down deep in your heart, settled and anchored, that you have been received by God. You will know that He has touched your life and transformed it. You will know that you have received something worthwhile, something of great price. And that assurance will carry you through every opposing factor, every hard place, every trial you face in the days ahead.

There are talented individuals in our society who have the skill and ability to restore

houses, buildings, cars, or other objects of historical value—items people have had for years, that show the effects of misuse, abuse, or even just natural deterioration. It is amazing to observe what a transformation can take place when someone who knows what he is doing refurbishes that structure or object to the point that it is as good as new. However, there is One who is a Master in restoring people's lives. What could be more wonderful than that? He can restore what has been torn down through sin. He can heal the damage done through things that were taken into the body. He can mend the effects of years of destructive behavior. God is a God of mercy, forgiveness, and healing!

After Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, Matthew relates that He "withdrew himself from thence." However, great multitudes followed Him, and the Bible tells us, "... he healed them all" (verse 15). Jesus had not come to this earth to hold healing services; He came to seek and save those who were lost. Salvation of lost souls was His number one priority, but in His great love and mercy, He healed those who came to Him for physical healing. That is our Lord. He wanted to save their souls, but He had such compassion and mercy for them that He also responded to their physical needs.

In verses 18-20, Matthew quoted from Isaiah 42, "Behold my servant [Jesus], whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles . . . A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Commentators note that the reed was a symbol of weakness. A "bruised reed" signifies something bordering on death. Oh, the divine gentleness of Jesus that ministers to those who are bruised and damaged by sin!

Maybe life has not been very good to you, and you wonder if there really is a God in Heaven who cares. You are like the bruised reed, but the Lord offers restoration. A bruised reed was something without value, but you are not worthless. Jesus loves you! He gave His life for you!

If you have ruined your life by sin and the enemy has told you that you are beyond help—that you have done so much wrong that you can never be forgiven—that is a lie out of the pit of Hell. Jesus can restore you today. He wants to restore you! That restoration will not take months or years. It will not take a man-made process or a ten-step program. The power of Jesus can come down and make you whole in an instant of time. He wants you to be whole!