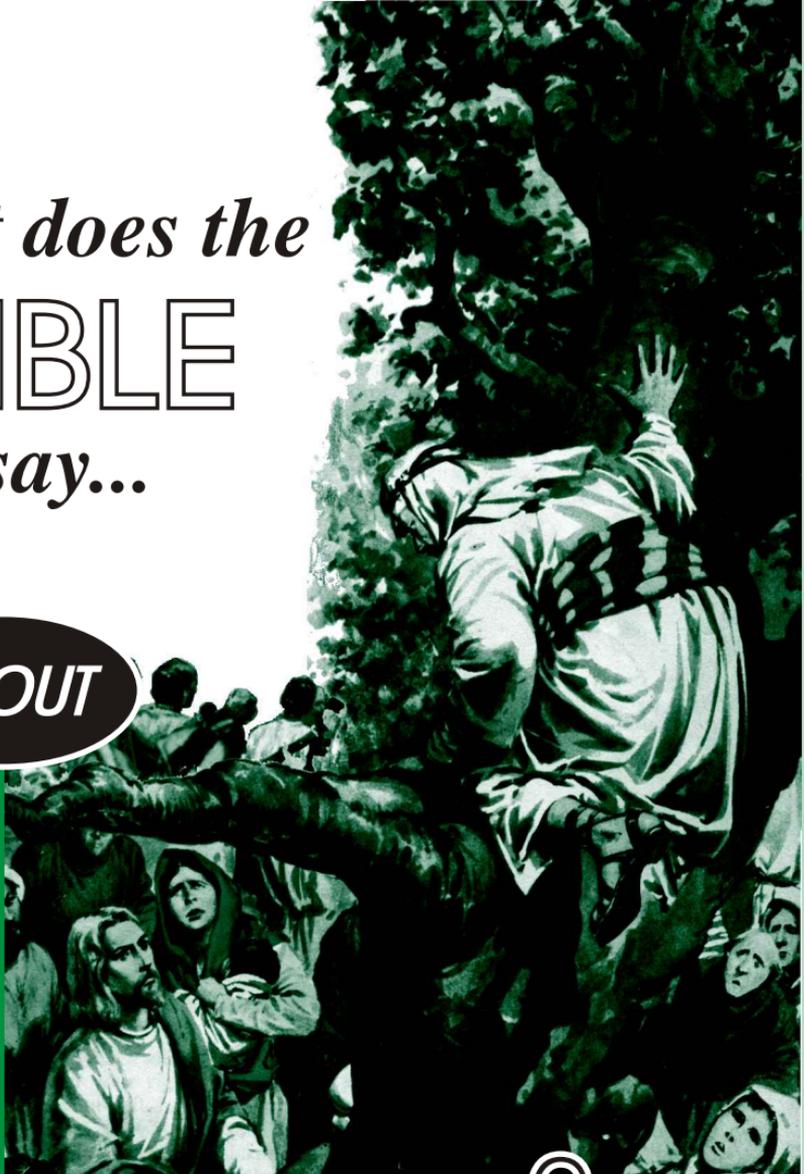


What does the

BIBLE

say...

ABOUT



Restitution?

RESTITUTION

Straightening up the Past

God forgives, but He requires man to make amends for wrongs done. 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 with the act of man's turning from his sinful way to serve God. Often, when a man sins against God, other people suffer as a result of that sin. God forgives the sins committed against Him when they are repented of, but He requires man to make amends to any person he has

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injured or wronged by his sinning. Being willing to do this is an absolutely essential part of true repentance. Restitution was a strict requirement of the Old Testament Law. The transgressor's “trespass offering” was accepted only on the condition of his making restitution (Leviticus 6: 2- 5). If the wronged individual could not be located, restitution was to be made to a kinsman (Numbers 5:6-8).

What was commanded in the Law was also preached and enforced by the prophets. The Prophet Ezekiel

urged the Children of Israel to turn from their wickedness, and indicated that restitution was necessary for reconciliation with God (Ezekiel 33:14,15). To show the sincerity of their repentance, they were required to “restore the pledge, give again that (which was) robbed”.

This requirement was not set aside or abridged with the passing away of the Law. Grace covers no wrongs that can be made right.

Jesus expressed Himself unmistakably on the subject of restitution in His Sermon on the Mount. He taught that it is necessary for one to pause in one’s devotions to God in order to be reconciled to a brother, rather than try to worship with guilt upon the heart.

The teaching of the Word of God is clear: **“To have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”** (Acts 24:16). Every effort must be made to straighten up wrongs of the past and be right with our fellowman.

There are people who made right the wrongs they committed in the Bible. One example is Zacchaeus. In St. Luke Chapter 19, we are made to understand that Zacchaeus was

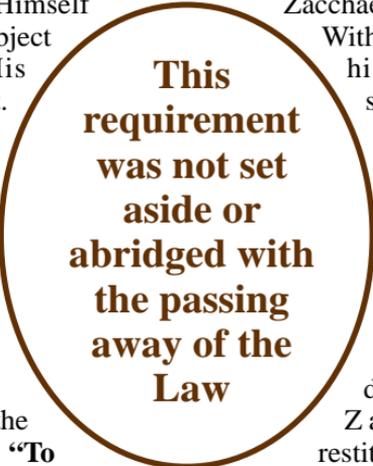
despised of his countrymen. Some of the sins he committed were fraud and extortion. He collected far more money than required by the Roman Government.

Zacchaeus, realising his sinful state, desired to see Jesus. But he could not because of his small stature, so he climbed a sycamore tree. Jesus knows when we are ready to accept Him. He stopped under the tree and commanded Zacchaeus to come down.

With heavy conviction in his heart, Zacchaeus stood in front of Jesus and promised to make restitution to the people he had wronged. He was going to return fourfold of whatever he stole.

Even though Jesus did not talk to Zacchaeus about restitution, the Spirit of God was faithful to his heart. God may not require the return of stolen things fourfold, but He does expect the return of the substance at face value.

Difficult restitutions require prayer and guidance of experienced ministers of God. Restitutions involving others also need prayer and guidance, so as not to implicate others or bring injury or harm to



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them.

Restitution includes not only making right matters of money, such as theft, dishonest gains, and unpaid bills; but also confessing lies, slanderous reports, unjust criticisms, hatred, malice, and those things in which one may have injured others in word or deed. You may say, "My brother does not know that I talked evil of him". But what about the person to whom you talked? Undoubtedly, you harmed him, and perhaps he repeated it to others. You should go to the one to whom you talked and the one you have injured and confess it. Wrongs will either be made right in this world or man will face them in the world to come. We had better face them here while the Great Advocate, Who has never lost a case, can go before us and soften the heart of those whom we have wronged. **"Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to**

judgment; and some men they follow after" (1 Timothy 5: 24).

A far-reaching benefit in God's plan regarding restitution is that an undeniable testimony is left with the one to whom the restitution is made. This testimony is often directed to people who otherwise might never have heard the story of the Gospel. A religion that compels a man to pay his just debts, give back the things he has stolen, confess his lies, and uncover his crimes, commands the confidence of the men of the world.

There is joy in making restitution. 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 joy and supreme happiness again.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I was born and raised in Kumasi, Ghana. In, 1981 I applied to the University of Benin in Nigeria for employment. Unfortunately, I did not get the job, so, through the effort of a friend of mine, I secured an appointment with the Ondo State Schools' Board to teach in a secondary school at Idanre. My wife also got a job and joined me in Nigeria in 1982.

"My wife came across the Association of Visiting Secretaries (AVS) in her school and discovered that they played violin. She became so excited by that instrument that she wanted to play it

too. Later on, she realised that two of her colleagues were members of The Apostolic Faith Church. She contacted them and they started coming to our house to have fellowship with us. In May 1983, they invited us to the Church at Akure because there was no branch church at Idanre at that time. By the grace of God, I got saved at Idanre on May 15, 1983, in a prayer meeting. Eventually, we received all our Christian experiences in Nigeria. I went back to Ghana in June 1985.

“I could have gone back to Ghana when I did not obtain the first appointment, but the hand of God moved me from Ghana to Nigeria, just to save me.

“I was a terrible person, but I thank God that He is able to change a bad person. Though, outwardly, people did not see me commit outbroken sins, I knew the things I was doing which were wrong. I was a quiet person, but if I told you one thing, I meant a different thing.

“My relationship with my wife was about to break up when God stepped in. We would be in the same room for two weeks without talking to each other. If we had to talk to each other, I wrote her a note and she also replied with a note. I cooked my own meals and she cooked hers. She washed her clothes, and I washed mine. So, I decided that if we went back to Ghana during the holidays, I would separate from her and take the kids. Then, God stepped in and I realised how wonderful my wife was. I really thank God that He intervened at the right time in my life. When I got saved, there was peace in our home. However, I had a lot of restitutions to make but God helped me through them all.

“One of the restitutions was with the tax office in Nigeria. When I filled my tax form at that time, I had only one child who was just two years old but I had fake birth certificates to confirm that I had four children so that I could be given more tax rebate. When God saved me, He pointed it out to me that I should go to

the tax office and let them remove the fake certificates from my file. I remembered that there is a provision that anyone who tells lies in the tax form, will be liable to go to jail. I discussed this with my pastor and he told me that since God had told me to make restitution, what he could do was to pray with me and God would go with me. I told my wife about the restitution but the very day I was going to make the restitution I did not inform her, for I would not want her to get disturbed since I might not come back from where I was going.

“When I got to the tax office, the devil told me that I was a fool and that I would not return home. I said, “I have decided to follow Jesus. Whether I go back home or not, I know that God would help me”. I met the tax officer and requested her to bring out my file. When she opened it, I told her that the four children did not exist. I told her that I had only one child and showed her the genuine certificate. I also told her that I was saved and that I wanted to have peace in my life. She was surprised and asked for the church I attended. I said, “The Apostolic Faith”, she said, “No wonder!”

“She then went to call her boss. The devil told me she was going to call the police and that I should run away. I said “No. I am going through with it”. When the boss came, he calculated all the money I had stolen from the government and allowed me to pay it back in instalments. Then, to my greatest surprise, he said I could go. Oh, the joy that flooded my soul that day! I cannot forget it. On my way home, I was singing.

“God also helped me to return the plates I stole from my hall of residence in the university, where I was the Soccer Manager. When I handed the plates back to the Hall Matron, she started to weep. She then called everyone to come and see something she had never seen.

“In the school where I was teaching, I was the Head of the Department of Agriculture. I contributed a lot to the development

of the school. I built a fish pond, poultry and a piggery for the school. But all along, I was pilfering. I colluded with the bursar to inflate the prices of the items bought.

“When God saved me, He reminded me of the fraud. He wonderfully made me to know the amount of money I had stolen from the school. I went to the bursar and told him I had become a child of God and was ready to pay back the money we had defrauded the school of. I asked him to give me the school’s account number but he initially refused. After much prayer and pleading, he finally gave me the account number. I was set to pay the money and God surprised me with a promotion, that made the payment very easy for me.

“Before I left Nigeria in 1985, by the grace of God, I cleared every restitution I had to make. God did many great things in my life”.



Akwasi Badu-Debra
is the Overseer of The
Apostolic Faith Churches in Ghana.

Steps to Salvation

Acknowledge

Admit that you have sinned and need God's help. (Romans 3:23).

Confess and Repent

Be genuinely sorry for the sins you have committed and ask God to forgive you. (Acts 3:19).

Forsake

Determine with God's help to turn away from all the sins in your life. (Isaiah 55:7).

Believe

When you have honestly and sincerely taken the steps above, believe that God will save you. (John 3:16).

Receive

God will let you know that the work is done. (Romans 8:16).

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