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## Conclusion

Someone has said, “History makes liars of us all.” The point, we believe, is that we are not good students of history. We seek to manage the challenges of our day without remembering that the same battle have been waged before and the same obstacles have been considered by the faithful who have lived before us.

On January 13, 1635, a baby boy was born in the village of Rappoltstein. He grew up in Strasbourg, learning the love of reading and the labor of ministry from his family and pastor.

This boy, Philip Jacob Spener, would become best known for his spiritual reforms within the Lutheran church in Germany and in his writing of *Pia Desideria* (“Pious Desires”). The book became very popular until the traditionalists and the state clergy began to recognize the implications of its suggestions.

Spener urged reforms in the Lutheran church at ministry levels, following the model of the New Testament:

*This might be done, first of all, by diligent reading of the holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament. It would not be difficult for every housefather to keep a Bible, or at least a*

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*New Testament, handy and read it every day or, if he cannot read, to have somebody else read.*

*Then a second thing would be desirable in order to encourage people to read privately, namely, that where the practice can be introduced the books of the Bible be read one after another, at specified times in the public service.*

*For a third thing it would perhaps not be inexpedient to re-introduce the ancient and apostolic kind of church meetings. In addition to our customary services with preaching, other assemblies would also be held in the manner in which Paul describes them in 1 Cor. 14:26-40.*

*Not a little benefit is to be hoped for from such an arrangement. Preachers would learn to know the members of their own congregations and their weakness or growth in doctrine and piety, and a bond of confidence would be established between preachers and people which would serve the best interests of both. In a short time they would experience personal growth and would be capable of giving better religious instruction to their children and servants at home.”<sup>1</sup>*

The priority of the Scriptures is there, the importance of the church meeting and regular participation in it, the need for relationships between “preacher” and people, and the transmission of that truth into the home. Whether it is Asia Minor in the first century, Germany in the seventeenth century, or America in the twentieth century, the need is the same. God’s answer to the dilemma of man is Christ proclaimed, and believed, and lived out in the lives of His body, the church of the living God.

A few days before his death on February 5, 1705, Spener, known by some as “the spiritual counselor of Germany,” gave instructions concerning his coffin:

*During my life I have sufficiently lamented the condition of the*

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*church; now that I am about to enter the church triumphant, I wish to be buried in a white coffin as a sign I am dying in the hope of a better church on earth.<sup>2</sup>*

The words of Christ and the apostles are similarly white. They are full of hope and confidence for the church. But that optimism is only as true as the blueprint behind it. The church is in need of a new restoration. The foundation remains the Lord Jesus Christ. The architects and builders are the church leadership. The blueprint is the New Testament. And the building is the Body of Christ.

*In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Eph. 2:21-22).*

*I will build my church (Matt. 16:18).*

