



Bible Student's NotebookTM

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 55

Various Thoughts Related to Church and Spiritual Life

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

NUMBERING PEOPLE: A GENTILE OBSESSION

We have an inherent obsession with numbering people. We are impressed by it. It is a vexation of our spirit that carries over into our view of spiritual life. We assume that if it is of God, or for God, it must be large and involve many people.

Listen to us:

“How many believe what you believe?”
“How many do you have on Sunday?”
“How many were at the Conference?”
“How many are attending Bible study now?”
“How many are on your mailing list?”

“How many ...” Just pay attention the next time you are with other Christians. You might be amazed at how **central** this concept is thought to be in our “spiritual” life.

God is not so obsessed or impressed. He is not bound or motivated by such a Gentile viewpoint. Let's reflect on a few Biblical examples.

The Ark

“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah **the eighth person**, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (II Peter 2:5).

“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the

days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, **eight souls** were saved by water” (I Peter 3:20).

God's work in the ark resulted in the world-wide saving of eight souls. Count them – eight souls. This is not very impressive by Gentile standards (nor Christendom's either!).

Gideon's 300

Israel was facing the Midianites in battle. The Midianites (and the Amalekites) were “*along in the valley like grasshoppers for a multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for a multitude*” (Judges 7:12).

Gideon had one small problem: he only had 32,000 men to fight against them; but God had a different view. He thought that Gideon had too many in his army.

“*The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me*”

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Dear Blessed Ones:

THE CHURCH SERIES

At this point in our BSN “church series,” a few personal comments appear appropriate. There are many dear and precious saints, servants of our Lord, whom we value and respect who have a different understanding on these issues than us. Our differing views do not abate our personal appreciation and love for them. Neither is it our desire to judge another man’s servant (Romans 14:4).

As with other subjects that we have addressed in the BSN, we are nonetheless very passionate about these truths. We believe that they are important and should be brought to the forefront. The BSN is an attempt, more than anything else, to seek truth B especially as it relates to Christ, and God’s present identification of us in Him. Therefore, this “church series” is foundationally an appeal to freedom – freedom that has too long been obscured by slavery to religious tradition. The series is an appeal for us to take another look at things – things the way that they really are – especially in light of what many of us already profess to believe about the subject.

It is not our desire to push or pull anyone. As Miles Stanford has stated:

“So many of us, after having entered into some of the deeper realities of our Lord, seek to immediately pull or push others into this wonderful advancement; and then we wonder why they are so slow to learn and seemingly apathetic in their understanding and concern. We so easily forget the many years it took, and by what wandering wilderness ways our Lord had to traverse with us in order to bring us over Jordan and into Canaan.”¹

With this we concur. We do not seek to push or pull anyone into any new “position” or “movement.” We seek only to enlighten and encourage others. For truly we have been encouraged by these truths. We are quick to acknowledge that ultimately these matters are deeply personal (Romans 14:22-23).

ATTITUDE

Here is a portion of the editorial from our very first issue of the BSN:²

“We have no corner on truth, nor does anyone else. None possesses ‘all truth’ infallibly. Therefore we seek to fellowship with all those who love the Lord Jesus

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This biweekly publication (24 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God’s abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God’s purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the “preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of *rich* Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any “Movement,” “Organization,” “Mission,” or separate body of believers, but is sent forth to and for all “saints.”

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PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God’s Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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(recompiled and edited)

(Judges 7:2).

So, God had Gideon reduce the number. He told Gideon to tell the people, “*Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart ...*” (:3). The result? 22,000 departed. Gideon’s army was reduced to 10,000 men.

But God said that there were still “too many” (:4), so He gave them a test that resulted in the release of 9,600 men. Gideon was then left with an army of 300.

God used Gideon and his army of 300 to do the job!

The 2,000 & 5,000 In Acts

The Book of Acts is sometimes viewed as a place where positive significance is given to “large” numbers:

*“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about **three thousand souls**”* (Acts 2:41).

*“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about **five thousand**”* (Acts 4:4).

This all sounds very impressive, doesn’t it? Yet aren’t these two numberings really a part of the indictment against Israel? Think about it for a moment: God had been dealing with Israel (Abraham’s descendants) for over two millennia. He had sent them prophets; He had given them His word; He had sent them His Son. What was the result? 5,000 men! 5,000 men from an entire nation! 5,000 men from an entire nation after over 2,000 years of work! This would seem more like an indictment against the Nation. So maybe we need to adjust our Gentile thinking to match the context. Maybe these numbers are not as impressive as they may first appear.

While reading on in the Book of Acts, when we come to Paul and His Gentile ministry, we don’t read of specific numbers like this.

“The Church in Thy House”

How many were actually involved in Paul’s ministry? What do you usually visualize when you think of his work?

Let’s take the capital of the Roman Empire for example. How many believers were at Rome when Paul wrote to them? It would appear from Romans chapter 16 that there were as many as five home gatherings of the church (“the church in thy house”). Now, how many would a typical house hold? 20 or 30 saints? Let’s say that they did have as many as 30 each. That would be a total of 150. Not 150 men (as 5,000 are numbered in the Book of Acts), but there are 150 men, women, and children in 5 home gatherings in the capital of the Roman Empire. This was after some 15 years of Pauline ministry in the Empire. Impressive? It depends on one’s viewpoint!

The story grows yet more interesting.

During Paul’s first Roman imprisonment he served under house arrest. This worked out to a great advantage for Paul, for we read in the Book of Acts:

“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:30-31).

Still, it gets worse!

Paul wrote the Book of II Timothy from Rome. When he wrote Timothy this last time, what did he say? He said, “*all they which are in Asia be turned away from me*” (II Timothy 1:15). Paul addressed the Asian problem because this was where Timothy was. This is the ruins of which Timothy was aware. That’s why he starts that statement, “***This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me.***” Truthfully, this apostasy of the Body of Christ permeated the whole Roman Empire.

Paul said concerning his first trial date, while in this last Roman imprisonment, “no man stood with me, but all men forsook me” (II Timothy 4:16). There was not one man in Rome who came and stood with Paul! This was after some 22 years of ministry in the Roman Empire. It was after writing an epistle to the saints at Rome, and it was after coming to Rome and having a two year house teaching ministry there. What happened to the Roman saints? Now we can’t even count 130.

Garden of Eden

The ultimate illustration may be at the very beginning. In the garden of Eden, how many people did God make? He made one man and one woman. Now, think about that for a moment – He could have made multiple men and women. In so doing he could have provided women for Eve with whom she could do “girl things.” He could have provided a wonderful opportunity in the garden for “women’s fellowship and Bible study meetings;” but this was not necessary in the mind of God.

In making multiple men, God also could have provided Adam with other men with whom he could do “guy things.” They could have had “men’s meetings,” and they could have had a sympathetic ear as they shared things that they could not talk about with their wives (what things?). Again, this was not necessary in the mind of God either.

Then of course God could have provided other couples with whom Adam and Eve could “hang out.”

Finally, these multiple couples could have provided children with whom Cain and Able could socialize. They could have played together, and even have been assembled together for educational purposes. Yet neither was this necessary in the mind of God.

GOD IS INTERESTED IN WEIGHING PEOPLE

God is not so concerned with counting people, but in weighing them.

“Thou are weighed in the balances, and art found wanting” (Daniel 5:27).

The issue with God is one of personal faithfulness.

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found **faithful**” (I Corinthians 4:2).

“... The same commit thou to **faithful** men, who shall be able to teach others also” (II Timothy 2:2).

Sort, Not Size

God is looking not for size, but a certain sort of work!

“... The fire shall try every man’s work of what **sort** it is” (I Corinthians 3:13b).

A “Not Many” Ministry

Paul’s was a “not many” ministry: so it is with ours. The “not many” ministry is the ministry to which God has called us!

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that **not many** wise men after the flesh, **not many** mighty, **not many** noble, are called” (I Corinthians 1:26).

At the beginning we listed the inquiries of “How many ...?” Now Paul gives us the answer: “Not many!”

So the next time you are asked one of those “How many” questions, simply reply, “Not many!”

Instead of a “many” ministry, ours is a “foolish,” “weak,” “base,” “despised” and “things that are not” ministry!

“But God hath chosen the **foolish** things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the **weak** things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and the **base** things of the world, and the things which are **despised**, hath God chosen,

yea, and the **things which are not**, to bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, *he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*" (I Corinthians 1:26-31).

Let's not allow ourselves to be carried away with the Gentile obsession of numbering people. Let's not fight the divine plan and viewpoint! Let's stop contending with God.

The Offscouring

In contrast to the religious system which secures acceptability, honor, prestige and respectability before the community and the world, Paul was viewed as the "offscouring of all things."

"*Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day*" (I Corinthians 4:13).

Paul was viewed as filth and offscouring! Let's look at these words briefly:

Filth – Strong defines this word as, "refuse." Webster defines it as, "Dirt; any foul matter; any thing that soils or defiles; waste matter; nastiness."

Offscouring – now there is an interesting word. Strong defines it as, "off-scrapings (fig. scum)." Webster defines it as, "That which is scoured off; hence, refuse; rejected matter; that which is vile or despised."

Every time I think of this passage and Paul's use of the word "offscouring," I am reminded of the kitchen sink. When I grew up, my mother mainly used iron pans in her cooking. In fact, it is a method that my wife has continued in our home to this day. After something extra good has been fired-up in the iron skillet, inevitably the time comes for cleanup. The iron skillet is placed down into a pan of clean water and a scouring pad is

applied. When the job is complete, nothing else can be washed in *that* water! In fact it is *good-for-nothing* water. It is one of the nastiest pans of water one would ever want to see. It is filled with offscouring. Anybody thirsty?

That was the world's view of Paul. He was "scum." If we are seeking to be recognized and accepted by the world, we will have to follow another course other than Paul's.

Instead of bearing the simple names of who we are in *Christ*, such as saint or brother, leaders of religious movements would prefer titles that would be more acceptable to the world – titles that would identify who they are in *the system*, such as Reverend, Doctor, Founder, Director, President, etc. How impressive they all sound! They seem to make us *something* before the eyes of the world, and give our work some type of legitimate *standing*. Yet are we not already something, and do we not already have a standing? Why would we want to have something more than what we already have in Christ?

Belonging

Most of us have a built-in desire to "fit in." We have a deep-seated desire to "belong" – and not just to anything, but to belong to something significant, something respectable, something big!

The fact is we *already* belong to something! Something that is not of *this* world. Something that is separate from the religious and world systems. It is something that is eternal and heavenly – it is the church, the body of Christ.

From the world view, as we have already seen, God has chosen things that are foolish, weak, base, and despised.

So we must always keep in mind that there are two conflicting viewpoints. Let's not allow ourselves to be pressured by the religious and world systems. Let's not be pressured into abandoning God's assessment of things. Let's not be drawn into the world's mutual admiration societies!

High Esteem

While on earth, in His ministry to Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ pointed out a great and significant truth:

“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

We would do well to ponder this in our hearts.

True Success

Sometimes it is hard for us to estimate real value, because there are two viewpoints: human, and divine. How should we measure real success? How will real success for us be measured?

All true success will be determined at the judgment seat of Christ!

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Corinthians 5:10).

On the other side of this life things will not appear as they do here.

“Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God” (I Corinthians 4:2-5).

If all this is true (and it is!), then we should live our lives with an eternal view. It is only through this

view – the divine viewpoint – that we are able to build that which has true success.

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:18).

Stolen Identity

“I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord” (Psalm 122:1).

One of the fastest growing crimes in our day is identity theft. Larger and larger numbers are finding that their identity has been assumed by others. With this stolen identity, professional thieves have been able to amass great wealth by fraud.

Identity theft is nothing new for the church, the body of Christ. Our true identity has been stolen from us. That’s right: human organizations and institutions, along with their brick and mortar structures, have assumed for themselves our identity “*in Christ*.”

The “Reformation” never did free the members of Christ’s body from this type of religious fraud. Thus centuries later, in spite of all the truth to which the body of Christ has been exposed, it is still the common practice to simply surrender our true identity to the religious system:

“Why not **go to church** with us tonight?”
“Remember that this is the **Lord’s House**.”
“Welcome to the **House of God**.”
“Be reverent when entering the **sanctuary**.”

Now, there was a time when the last three of these phrases would have had legitimate meaning. Psalm 122:1, for example – *“I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.”* Yet to what was this passage referring, and to whom was this written?

Well, first of all we must realize that at the time this was written the body of Christ did not, as

yet, exist. If we rightly divide the word of truth (in accordance with II Timothy 2:15), we can understand that the audience of that particular Scripture was Israel, and it was a reference to a physical structure.

In time past, Israel had the Temple. It was God's House in that day (c.f. II Chronicles 7:1-2, 5). It was the meeting place of God with Israel. Today, however, in the dispensation of grace, *we* – the members of Christ's body – are God's house.

How often have we heard Psalm 122:1 – “*I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord*” used in reference to some man-made structure in the dispensation of grace? This takes the passage out of its dispensational context. It is an illegitimate use of the passage. The truth of the matter is that any physical building presented as “the house of the Lord” today is a fraud. *We are the church. We are the house of God. God lives in us – we're His church building!*

On an even sadder note, we have been party to all of this identity fraud. We have supported and helped build such a system, and all the while, it was taking our identity from us and using it for ill-gotten gain! In fact, they took our identity, and then they took our money!

When will we wake up and realize that our identity has been taken from us? When will we understand that we have even been aiding and abetting them in this serious crime? When will we reclaim our true identity and live in the fullness of who and what we are *in Christ?*

It is high time that this evil crime against the body of Christ be reported. Let's search the Scriptures and learn of our true identity as God's church, God's house. Then let's report these truths to the saints. Let's ask them if they know that there are those out there parading under the pretense of being us. Let's encourage them to reclaim their identity and expose this scam.

Be and enjoy who and what you are *in Christ!* Then help lead others to this wonderful place!

ONE CHURCH – ONE BODY – ONE MEMBERSHIP

OR

TWO CHURCHES – TWO BODIES – TWO MEMBERSHIPS

One of the lines above represents the truth of the dispensation of grace. The other represents the methods of man.

Many believers claim membership in two churches. They are professing membership in two bodies.

A man will be a member of the Grace Bible Church, for example, while also claiming membership in *the church*, which is His body. This man holds membership in two bodies. He professes two churches, two bodies, and two memberships, consequently by practice denying the one church, one body, and the one membership.

Revivalism

Let's look at another example of the effect of the world system upon the body of Christ.

The religious system is supported in part by a series of special meetings held annually, semi-annually, and so forth. Different denominations sometimes call them different things. One of the most common names is “revival.” These meetings all have the same general idea – motivating folks to a “spiritual-high” that will carry them over until the next such series of meetings. People often say, “They're so important, they help keep my battery charged.”

Even the “Grace Movement,” and a few other “fundamentalist” groups, are often caught up with their own particular version of the “revival.” We get our “batteries charged” at what we call “Bible conferences.” Where in the Bible do we get all this stuff? Where did this phenomenon come from: Paul's epistles? The fact is, we do not find these “revivals” or “Bible conferences” in Scripture. They were actually handed down to us from another source – tradition. Would anyone disagree with this?

What is the source of this tradition? This is not

the tradition of Paul that we are talking about here. It is the tradition of *our* fathers (i.e., our *denominational* fathers). It is “the tradition of men” – the very same tradition against which Paul so warned us (Colossians 2:8-23).

How could we so mindlessly be caught up in such a system of meetings that has no scriptural basis? How could such meetings have secured so high a place in our priorities and activities? Have we never searched the Scriptures and asked ourselves, “Can we find this pattern in Paul?”

“Bible conferences” are human inventions that by and large rob believers of their time and finances, while usually being reduced in part to an “us-against-them” sectarian “pep-rally.” “Let’s all chant together, ‘We’re Independent, Fundamental, AV 1611, King James Bible Believing, Mid-Acts Pauline Dispensationalists.’” Furthermore, while at the conferences we basically cover the same subject matter over and over to each other. This keeps us “charged” until the next conference. How is this different from the other denominations

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Christ and take pleasure in His precious Word. We agree with the words of George Whitefield when he said,

“I truly love all that love the glorious Emmanuel, and though I cannot depart from the principles which I believe are clearly revealed in the Book of God, yet I can cheerfully associate with those that differ from me, if I have reason to think that they are united to our common Head.

“We desire to avoid destructive ‘uniformity’ and allow for differences of opinion. We don’t expect our readers to agree with everything that will appear within the pages of this publication. But we do trust that you will study out the information and that it will stimulate further Bible study. As one editor has so well said,

“I hope anyone following after me will go further than I have gone in the search for truth, will see more of the Word of God than I have seen, and will explore where I never dreamt treasures were to be found.

“And do not be surprised if, from time to time, you read articles which reflect *change* from previous things which we have said or written. This is *progress*. We simply ask that you keep an *open Bible* and an *open mind*.”

and their “revivals?” Don’t we hear of “batteries” being “charged” – just like the rest of the religious system?

Just where are our “batteries” located anyway?

One brother has put it this way, “I see these big meetings as just another form of a ‘pump-em-up’ sales session. … Personally, I’m having some trouble seeing it as anything more than yet another organized ‘church.’ There always seems to be an agenda …”

“Revivals” and “Bible conferences” are a part of the modern-day, religious, busy-ness system. It affords us the opportunity to build a reputation of respectability and spirituality while we continue building our worldly organizational identities. Why do we spend so much time, money, and energy in something that mimics the world system, and has no basis or foundation in our apostle Paul?

Think on these things. ■

II TIMOTHY SERIES

In this issue of the BSN we begin a new series on Paul’s second epistle to Timothy. This series is in conjunction with, and as an extension of the “church series.” We ask that you give this series of articles a slow, thoughtful, and prayerful reading. The study of II Timothy has personally brought immense clarity and encouragement to your editor. We trust that they will do the same for you.

CONFERENCES

As many of you may already have suspected, I have personally had great difficulty with the “Bible conference” system for some years now. After many restless nights and days of grief and struggle, I finally decided early last summer not to participate in “conferences.” These “conferences” are contrary to the light that I currently have. It is my personal desire to stand outside the religious system. I want live outside the camp! – not one foot in, and one foot out.

In fact, I realize that I have lead many to the wrong conclusions about what I have been attempting to communicate. No wonder that some of the saints think that I am always talking about the “other guys” when reading our BSN articles, when in reality, I am talking

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Brief Thoughts on II Timothy

Part I

The Church in Ruins

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Since the final days of Paul's ministry, *the church*, the body of Christ has been in a state (not standing) of ruins. The history of our state has mirrored the account of Israel's apostasy. Israel never fully lived in all the promises and position that the Lord had given to them. At one point they were even carried away from their divine calling into Babylonian captivity. When they were given the opportunity to return to their God-appointed land, only a small remnant chose to leave the comforts and familiarity of Babylon and go back home.

So it is with *the church*. As a whole, our history is that we have long abandoned our position in Christ. In fact, the body of Christ at large has remained satisfied and content in a similar "Babylonian captivity." Those who have been enlightened to their condition of captivity and to their true identity and freedom in Christ, and have taken the journey out of "Babylon," have been but a few. So when we consider "poor Israel" and their sad and long story of apostasy, we need to take a prolonged look in the mirror and realize that the body of Christ has done no better!

Paul testifies to this ruin in the book of II Timothy. He states straightforwardly that, "*all they which are in Asia be turned away from me*" (1:15). Now, what is so significant about this disclosure is that Ephesus (which was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia) is where Paul conducted a two-year teaching ministry, the result of which was that, "*all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 19:10). Quite a contrast of *alls*, is it not?

Between those two passages, Paul had even written an epistle to the Ephesian saints. This epistle was one in which Paul laid forth the

pinnacle of the revelation of the mystery that the Lord had committed to his trust. Yet these very saints, who had been the benefactors of such a long personal ministry of Paul and of such a rich epistle, *ALL* turned away from him. The body of Christ lay in ruins as Paul lay in a Roman prison about to be executed.

This ruined condition of the church, the body of Christ, was not limited to the Roman province of Asia. Paul addresses the Asian problem because this was where the recipients of his letter resided. This is the ruins of which Timothy was aware. That's why he starts that statement, "***This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me.***" frankly, this apostasy of the body of Christ pervaded the Roman Empire.

Concerning his first trial date while in this last Roman imprisonment, Paul said, that "*no man stood with me, but all men forsook me*" (II Timothy 4:16). There was not one man in Rome who came and stood with Paul! This was after some 22 years of ministry in the Roman Empire. It was after writing a glorious epistle to the saints at Rome, and it was after coming to Rome and having a two year house-teaching ministry there (Acts 28:30-31). What happened to all the Roman saints? They *ALL* forsook him!

When folks inquire, as they often will do, concerning when the problems of the church began, one needs not look to various periods of human church history; one needs only to see the divine record of this apostasy as recorded in the book of II Timothy. As Paul was in the dark, damp dungeon of Rome's prison awaiting his execution, *the church*, the body of Christ lay in its own prison – a prison of apostasy and ruin!

PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ASIA

Asia was a Roman province of Bible times that covered the western portion of the Asia Minor peninsula. The city of Ephesus was its capital. Paul dedicated a significant portion of his ministry to this region:

ASIAN LOCATION	ACTS REFERENCE
Mysia	16:7
Troas	16:8
Ephesus	18:19; 19:1,9-10
Assos	19:3
Mitylene	19:14
Chios	19:15
Samo	19:15
Trogyllym	19:15
Miletus	19:15
Coos	21:1
Rhodes	21:1

When all the time is added, some have estimated that Paul spent three years or more in this province.

“... From the first day that I came into Asia ... that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears ...” (Acts 20:18, 31).

THE WARNING TO THE ELDERS

Upon leaving the region, Paul warned the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38; A.D. 60) of the serious dangers that lie ahead.

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29, 30).

Paul did not say, “There is a good chance, that after my departing ...” He said, “*For I know this ...*” Paul was prophesying concerning the future of the Asian saints. The body of Christ would not be spared a severe test. Would they heed this serious warning?

THE WARNING BY HIS EPISTLES

That's not all! After leaving, Paul also wrote three epistles to the saints in this province of Asia:

- Ephesians (A.D. 64)
- Colossians (A.D. 64)
- Philemon (A.D. 64).

Paul warned the Colossian saints of the real danger of being spoils of a spiritual war.

“Beware lest any man spoil you ... ye are complete in Him ...” (Colossians 2:8, 10).

“Let no man therefore judge you ... Let no man beguile you ... not holding the Head” (Colossians 2:16-19).

Paul warned the Ephesian saints to be prepared for the evil day of testing that lay ahead.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, having done all to stand ...” (Ephesians 6:10-13).

Nevertheless, in less than a six-year span from the time he warned the Ephesian elders of these dangers – all those in Asia had turned away from Paul and his message (II Timothy 1:15).

What does Paul say would be the ultimate result of the Asian saints turning away from him?

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Timothy 4:3-4).

So where does Asia stand today? Where does this region, in which Paul invested so much, stand spiritually today? It is the western portion of Turkey and is 98 percent Moslem! It does not pay to neglect the writings of Paul!

OUR APOSTLE'S LAST WORD

The book of II Timothy is of great significance because it is Paul's last epistle. It was written to detail the apostasy that was already upon the church. We benefit greatly from this epistle when we realize this and take special note of its personal

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about us!

Please don't get me wrong, I greatly enjoy seeing the saints and having fellowship with them. The issue is nothing personal against anyone. It is just the whole system itself. This has not been an easy conclusion for me to come to, and it is not made on a whim. In fact it is more than a half a dozen years in the making. I have been struggling with this – one conference at a time.

This decision is consistent with my current understanding of Scriptures, and the convictions of my conscience. I am sure that I will also need to make other choices along the way to be fully consistent; but the time has come for me to "come clean" in this area. As some of you may have heard our beloved brother Oscar Woodall say, "You cannot stand against what you are a part of." "Our's is *not* a ministry of infiltration." "We must fly one flag." Over the years, as I have thought on these, they have brought conviction!

Some of you may have known that this day would come. I do appreciate your love, concern, thoughtfulness, and patience to and with me during this LONG transition that I have been in. You may not understand the steps that I am taking. But I do want you to know that I love you, nonetheless. I am not mad, unhappy, or disgruntled. I just must be true to what I see in the Scriptures.

THOSE WHO CONCUR

This is a note to those who may find themselves in harmony with some of the material in the "church series." We must remember that knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth (I Corinthians 8:1). Let us dare not use anything that we may learn and hold dear as a tool of division between us and other believers. May we always remember that contentious debate has its place – it belongs to the realm of the flesh (c.f. Romans 1:29; II Corinthians 12:20). We should never use these

and individual nature. Paul's last word is not to the church as a whole, but to an individual member of it. It is an epistle of edification and instruction in light of the widespread apostasy.

BACKGROUND

This is one of Paul's prison epistles (1:8, 16-17). It was written during his second Roman imprisonment (around A.D. 67). As he wrote it, the time of his execution drew near (4:16).

(This is part I of a continuing series on II Timothy)

issues *against* a fellow member of *Christ's Body*. God the Father has *received* all those that are *in Christ* (Romans 14:3). Can we do any less?

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ has also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

MY MOTHER

As some of you already know, my mother was diagnosed with cancer in December. At the time of this writing she has moved from Newport News to live with us. We are making plans to add on to our home to better accommodate her. Needless to say, even though the circumstances of her move are trying, we nonetheless greatly rejoice to have her with us! Her new address is the same as ours, but she does have her own phone line:

Christine Pilkington
111 Charity Lane
Gladstone VA 24553
804-933-4552

Outside the Camp,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

(Endnotes)

1. Stanford, Miles J.; *The Principles of Spiritual Growth* (chapter 17).
2. *Bible Student's Notebook*™ Issue #1, May, 1989.

What Others Are Saying About the New Church Series

“What a thrill to know that I’m not crazy after all!! Issue #53 was the best ever. Just when I thought they couldn’t get any better, they did!” – **OH**

“Was impressed with the latest BSN and would like to send it to others ...”
– **FL**

“I have come face to face with it ['church'] being a hindrance to the spiritual growth of my own family as I have always put the 'church' first. I have since resigned my position in the 'church' and there have been positive changes in my family. I would like to thank you for the hours and hours of study you put into teaching those like myself who still have so much to learn ...” – **IL**

“... It is a great happiness to me to see these insights on the Church; that there is a God who has a plan and it is being followed through ...” – **VA**

“This stuff is so much where we’re at ... PRAISE THE LORD!!” – **NC**

“I wonder how many believers realize this wonderful truth, that there is just one church which houses God, and that everything else is in competition with it. Wonderful thought!” – **MI**

“You have been sending me some really great things that minister

super-abundant grace to my soul. I am so thankful for them. How sad that the rest of the world chooses not to have such spiritual beauty imparted to them!” – **HI**

“I have been carefully going through the study on the Church. ... Much of what you have said I have found, but needed to see it in writing. ... I thank God for you and your steadfast adherence to the truth, and are a very great help to those of us who are in the thick of it. Keep on keeping on; we need your leadership and encouragement as the battle continues.” – **FL**

“We appreciate the BSN contents, issue by issue, finding the material useful in ministering to our family and extended family ... As you, we have come to the position that this [the home] is the pattern Paul established for the church which is His body, not the traditional (worldly) practices which are so prevalent in the world today.” – **TX**

“I am enjoying this series on the 'church.' ... This is just another part of the mystery that most do not see ...” – **VA**

“I appreciate your bold stand for the truth. I pray for God to give us more believers who will stand with us.”

– **NC**