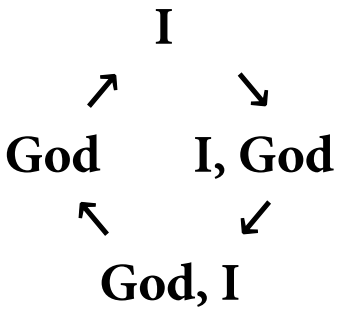
Bible Student's Notebook™
The Herald of His Grace
Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28
Volume XVI
Issue 389

The I-Cycle

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

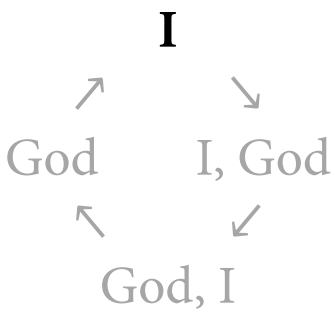


As we begin to get older, we are questioned as to what we want to be when we grow up. As our development continues, we have the *sense* that we're on the throne of our lives.

This stage can and often does last for many years. We envision ourselves as the captains of our own ships, as the masters of our own fates. God scarcely enters our thoughts.

Our life with God follows a natural progression that we might refer to as ***The I-Cycle***. This simple cycle will help illustrate the advancement through which God takes each of us in our recognition of Him in our lives.

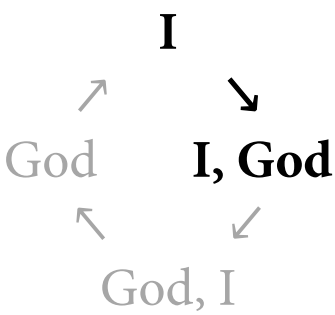
The "I" Stage



"**I**" is where we all start our lives. We come out of the womb naturally self-centered. It is all about "I." It seems as though all of the world revolves around us.

When we are hungry, we are fed; have indigestion, we are burped; are soiled, we are changed; are tired, we sleep. We are really unaware of anything that does not relate to our needs. We are oblivious that there is anything else even going on in the world.

The "I, God" Stage



In the next stage we begin to recognize God in our lives. We might call this the "**I, God**" stage. We might even call this the beginning of our "religious" phase.

This is the "God is my co-pilot" period. We realize that we need some help through life and that God is standing by, available to assist us in our difficult times.

*(see **I-Cycle**, page 3508)*

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 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 law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (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 freedom from 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).

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Strictly Personal

As I write this I have returned from traveling some 2700 miles. Martin Zender, Dan Sheridan and I embarked on a teaching journey to Florida with stops in North and South Carolina. There were 17 messages delivered during our week-long trip.

We had a two-vehicle caravan along with Clyde III, Nathan and Aaron, and Sheree Morris from Maine, and Terry Clemens from Canada.

NC

Our first stop on our journey was in Morganton, NC. Our wonderful hosts were Brad and Carol Truitt. It was a sweet fellowship with saints from across the state of NC, as well as from VA, GA and TN.

FL

The next day it was on to Coral Springs, FL. We were welcomed to a late night of food and fellowship at the home of Waylan and Regena Dabbs.

For the next three days we gathered in Fort Lauderdale, delightfully hosted by Kate Horne. Floridians were joined by saints from SD and AL.

SC

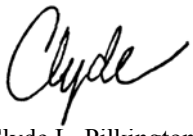
Our first return stop was in West Columbia, SC, with our gracious host Ron Tidwell. As with each place before, it was wonderful to meet saints we had never met before and to hear a little of Father's amazing story of their lives.

NC

Our last stop on the journey was for a breakfast fellowship in Charlotte, NC, with Tony Joiner and Phillip Garrison. It was a splendid time picking up with the sweet interchange that we had left off with when they both came to visit us in PA last year.

Now, safely back home, I have a week's worth of work to catch up on.

Until next week,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Our Mailbox

I just finished reading *The God of Judas Iscariot* (BSN #384). How beautiful and how amazing our Father is! This writing brings tears to my eyes. I have always believed this, but to have it written out so beautifully is mind boggling. I can only think that for those with the greatest sins, so-to-speak, what their utter joy and love for Christ Jesus and our Father God will be when the consummation is, and they see and know Fathers love for them and that they (we) were only a vessel in God's hands to bring about His perfect will. This writing blesses me to the core of my being. I cannot wait to see the day when this ALL unfolds and to see Judas' unspeakable joy in this. – ***NM***

God bless you and your family and keep supplying these blessings of God to a needy world. – ***CA***

I enjoyed *Due Benevolence*. Over the last few months I feel like I have been un-programming my brain from 20 years. I have even looked at my past journals and cannot believe I wrote about earning grace and did not see it! – ***UT***

I am a member of that glorious Body of Christ and have been for a number of years. I left organized religion back in 2003 because it was not what I was seeking. I am currently reading your book *The Outsiders: God's Called-Out Ones*. I know that it's the absolute truth which your book projects because as the saying goes, "It takes one to know one," and I recognize truth when I see it. I am so happy to find that there are others such as myself. – ***MD***

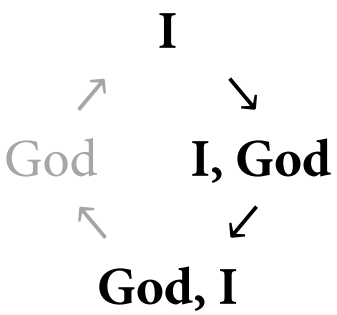
What you are doing for Father *matters* and is helping all of us who study with you to grow in Christ! We cannot thank you adequately; but maybe the successes in faith and walk that we get from Father through you gives you some contentment. I pray that Father is giving all of your students the desire to give you feedback. After all, your calling is not like ours. It is not just for your personal walk. It truly is meant for The Body of Christ! What a responsibility Father has put on your shoulders! Thanks to Father for His gifts to you for us! – ***LA*** ■

***I-Cycle** (continued from front page)*

We view God as our advisor, but His presence and activity are contained. We think that we keep Him in a box, as it were. Perhaps the box in which we keep Him is a religious house of worship where we visit Him once a week, or on special occasions to give Him recognition and honor – and then go back to our regular daily lives without Him.

We may progress during this stage where, even on a daily basis, we take Him out of His box and offer Him some devotion for a select period of the day, and then resume our "I-life."

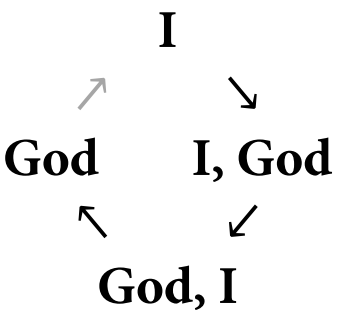
The "God, I " Stage



The next distinct change might be termed the "**God, I**" stage. This is where we begin to desire to "give" God *first place* in our lives. We now "surrender" to God, "allowing" Him passage into our lives.

In this part of the cycle we are much more conscious of His presence in our daily lives. Instead of being our "co-pilot," we are now His. Where He was once our advisor, we seem to envision that we are His advisor. Though a true progression, this is more often than not the height of the "religious" stage.

The "God" Stage

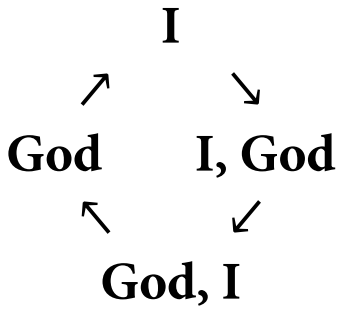


This is that unique stage where we begin to truly recognize the sovereignty of "**God**." We acknowledge that He is in control and rules all things, and that both good and evil come from Him.

Such Scriptures as these begin to capture our attention:

> *All is of God* (I Corinthians 11:12).
>
> *All is of God* (II Corinthians 5:18).
>
> *Out of Him and through Him and for Him is all* (Romans 11:36).
>
> *The purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will* (Ephesians 1:11).

The "I" Stage



The I-Cycle brings one full circle back to "I." God's sovereignty eventually leads us to the place where we actually realize that we are His handiwork, or His achievement (Ephesians 2:10). We are not self-created, self-made or self-determined.

Many stumble with personal pronouns. Such was not the case with Paul. We notice that he was not afraid to use the word "I." This is because the mature believer recognizes that their life is Christ's and, therefore, has no difficulty using personal pronouns.

> *By the grace of God I am what I am* (I Corinthians 15:10).

Paul had no trouble making such statements, because he knew who he was. He knew that his old "I" *was* dead with Christ (Romans 6:8; Colossians 2:20), and his new "I" was Christ. He knew what he was – was by God's grace. He did not give up who he was. In Christ, he had actually found his true self.

We, too, as we grow in our realization of God, grow in the realization that He is our life. We do not lose our identity of self; rather, we gain it.

Those who have not progressed in their development

to this last stage of the cycle appear to have lost sight of themselves – the true "I" that God has made (and is making) of them.

Those not making it back to the "I" will appear to be afraid to speak of themselves using personal pronouns. Without this final stage in their development, their language becomes uncomfortable and detached regarding themsleves. For example, you will not be able to thank them for anything – as they will awkwardly deflect anything personal back to God. "No, don't thank me – it was all God."

This may come as a surprise to some – but Paul uses *"I"* nearly 700 to upwards of 1200 times, depending on which translation one uses. He uses *"me"* nearly 200-300 times, again depending on which English version is used.[1]

Paul's use of personal pronouns flowed from his full understanding of God's sovereignty in his life. It was the continued circumstance, the backdrop, and the context of his new "I" in Christ. As a result he could freely speak of himself.

Simply put, Paul recognized that his life was Christ's.

> *To **me** to live is Christ* (Philippians 1:21).

Listen to those amazing words: *"To me to live"* – is what? *"To me to live **is Christ!"*** Christ was Paul's life! (Colossians 3:4).

Paul went so far in this view – that his life was Christ's – that he even declared that he could save people.

> *If somehow I should be provoking those of my flesh to jealousy and should be saving some of them* (Romans 11:14).
>
> *I became as weak to the weak, that I should be gaining the weak. To all have I become all, that I should undoubtedly be saving some* (I Corinthians 9:22).[2]

Paul realized that everything he did was Christ's life. The same is true with us. Though our cycle began with the Adamic "I," that seemed as though it was independent of God and was the center of our own universe, now we have come full cycle to see the new "I" united with the life of God's Son.

The "I" of the old creation died with Christ, and now the "I" of the new creation thrives in the very life of God. There are not two "I"s. The pre-Calvary "I" is gone; only the post-Calvary "I" remains.

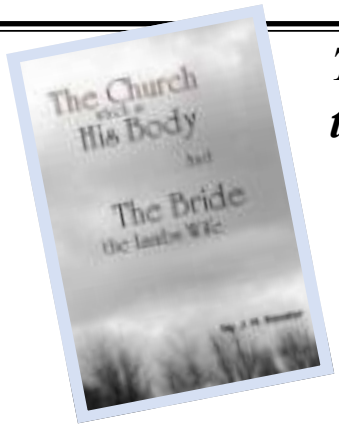
Paul was very much present in his life. He had ***not*** some-

*(see **I-Cycle**, page 3512)*

1. Now of course, some of these many uses were quotations, references to God and others, and even used in a negative light of his old "I." Nevertheless, many of the personal pronouns used by Paul were spoken of as a positive reference to himself.

2. Paul even told Timothy that he could save himself and those who heard him.

> *Attend to yourself and to the teaching. Be persisting in them, for in doing this you will save yourself as well as those hearing you* (I Timothy 4:16).



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Paul the Pessimist

by — Vlademir Gelesnoff (1877-1921)

Pessimists Aren't Welcome in the World

To be a pessimist in this age concerning the things of the world is equivalent to being looked on as was one of God's servants in olden time, of whom it was said,

> *I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil* (I Kings 22:8);

and of whom the apostate king spoke when he commanded,

> *Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction* (I Kings 22:27).

Paul Not Impressed With Plato or Roman Aqueducts

Paul's teaching about the last days is intensely pessimistic. He has no word of praise for the gigantic achievements of modern intellect, no intimation of his having the slightest hope because of the attainments in mechanical art of the present age. His teaching concerning man in his relation to things mental, political, moral or ecclesiastical may be summed up in his words to Timothy:

> *This know, that in the last days* ***perilous times*** *shall come* (II Timothy 3:1).

How completely Paul was outside of the currents of modern life, and thought may be gathered from a comparison of his words just quoted with the words of those representative of present day affairs. The leaders in Twentieth Century philosophy, and Twentieth Century theology, unite in pronouncing the present era to be a *glorious age*. Thus their judgment is a decided negative to the declaration of the Apostle. Who, then, is right?

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> "If you need fellowship, or sound teaching, or counseling, or you just plain need a break from life and want to come to a place of palpable peace and lovely love for a day, or a weekend, or a week, come here. It's free. Just bring yourself, as you are. Go to the website and make a reservation. Find out when we're all going to be here, and come here and taste for yourself what God has produced in the middle of nowhere." – Martin Zender

Human History Proves that All Human "Progress" Is Godless

The answer is to be found in the records of human history; but to which page in the register shall we turn? Let us find in Scripture an indication of the method which will lead us most quickly to the result desired.

> *Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Either a vine figs?* (James 3:12).

The thought of James is this: *"As the root, so shall the fruit be"* (*cf.* Romans 11:16)). With this in mind, we proceed at once to the root of human history, and turn to the beginning of things to learn the moral value of these same things, in their end. If the fountain is bitter, its waters cannot, of necessity, be sweet. If the seed sown is thistle, of it we cannot gather the fragrant blossoms of the rose.

We would here ask the reader to peruse carefully the record of man's doings, found in Genesis 4. The record is not embellished in any way; the words chosen are few and simple; the writer's feelings are not once seen; hence the account given is ideally historic. Now, what we learn from history is this: The present achievements of man – the modern attainments of his science; the latest products of his art – all had their origin in that portion of the race which started out with its back towards God, its face towards destruction, and which, ultimately, was wiped off of the face of the earth in the waters of the deluge. Here we hear the first song that ever came from the lips of man was a praise of murder and of crime. The foundations of the first city were laid by an architect whose hands were crimsoned by his brother's gore.

The pessimist — we were about to write the Paul — of such an age of "progress" was found in an Enoch. We read of him that, notwithstanding the artifices in brass and iron, or the sweet strains of skilled musicians, or the adept poets of his day, he prophesied thus:

> *Behold! The Lord cometh!* (Jude 1:14).

He who *"walked with God"* (Genesis 5:22, 24) knew God's thoughts of the advanced science of his times, estimated it in the light of sanctuary values, and pronounced judgment on the whole.

In the account of the antediluvian age, we read of culture, science, invention, art and progress, but not of God. Hence, in these last days, history is but repeating itself. Man has quarried the rocks and read the records of prehistoric worlds, and boasts of the greatness of his Geology. He harnesses the powers of nature to his chariot and prates of his inventive genius. He sweeps the heaven with his eye, numbers the stars, weighs the planets, and ends by saying that in these days "the heavens declare the glories of Kepler and Newton." God is barred and bolted from His universe, hurled from His throne, and man would fain encircle his brow with the diadem of the Omnipotent One. Perilous times indeed.

Injustice Reigns: What Should We Do About It?

Let us glance at a threefold description of these times of peril. First, from II Timothy 4:3, we learn that they are times of "*heaped teachers*"; next, from James 5:3, times of "*heaped treasures*"; and lastly, from Romans 2:5, times of "*heaped wrath*." It is not necessary to point out that the "*heaped teachers*" teach not concerning the "*heaped wrath*;" they are too optimistic to deal with such matters! Neither is it necessary to point out that the "*heaped treasures*" redeem not from the wrath piled up.

Yet, what of Paul's attitude towards this state of things? What manner of conduct did he enjoin on the servants of God? Three words contain the answer: *"Preach the word."* Is there injustice abroad? Preach the Word. Is Righteousness bleeding in the dust, and Wrong triumphant on the throne? Preach the Word. Those who preach the Word today are the real "Apostolic Succession." The "*sword of the Spirit*" (Ephesians 6:17) is the only weapon which Paul can commend to the Christian warrior. Hence in his letter to Timothy he puts a threefold emphasis on the Word.

The Word INSPIRED
II Timothy 3:16-17

The Word DIVIDED
II Timothy 2:15

The Word PREACHED
II Timothy 4:2

Let the reader note that it is to be preached, not only because it is inspired, but because it is divided; not only because it is authoritative, but because it is understood. While the world, then, is delving deep into the treasures of nature, let the church explore the boundless treasures of grace. While the world hastens on to its *"treasures of wrath,"* let those called out of its corruption enter into the present enjoyment of the riches of His grace and glory untold.

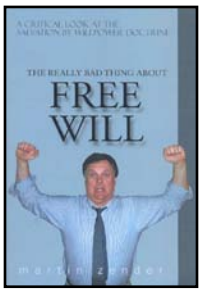
To Believe Paul Is to Suffer Like Paul: Embrace It

If we have noted Paul's pessimism, and pointed out his method, we cannot close without referring to his experience. In him we see the result of being severely scriptural. The path of faithfulness trodden by Paul was by no means a path of roses. It was

A Path of Suffering
II Timothy 1:12

A Path of Imprisonment
II Timothy 2:9

A Path of Persecution
II Timothy 3:11



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A Path of Abandonment
II Timothy 4:10, 16

A Path to the Lions
II Timothy 4:17

If you would be successful, preach anything that gets the people. If you would be faithful, *preach the Word* – but the path of faithfulness leads not to the court of human favor. The Micaiahs are smitten and mocked, sneered at and ridiculed. The Enochs know not companionship save they find it in their God. The Pauls are deserted and hied away to make sport before the godless mob.

Yet God is no man's debtor. If Paul must say, *"No man stood with me,* (:16), yet grace insists on interposing a *"nevertheless the Lord stood with me"* (:17) Who would not sacrifice the tinsel of Earth to gain the gold of Heaven? Who would not exchange the favor of mortal man for the fellowship of the true and living God?

Let us then plead for pessimists to take the field against the forces of human optimism: pessimists who will not have one single good thing to say of the natural man; pessimists who Paul-like will own to having *"no confidence in the flesh"* (Philippians 3:3); pessimists who can see but one place for the old Adam nature, that place being the cross of Calvary, and who will gladly acknowledge that,

> *In us, that is to say, our flesh, dwelleth no good thing* (Romans 7:18). ■

I-Cycle *(continued from page 3509)*

how been replaced by Christ Jesus – his supposed "Substitute." Instead, Christ had identified Himself with him in living union. The same is true of us.

> *I* [a son of Adam] *am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I* [a son of God] *live; yet not I* [the "I' of the old creation], *but Christ lives in me* [the me of the new creation]*: and the life* [the life of God] *which I* [the unique person whom God has made me to be] *now live in the flesh* [right now, this very day] *I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me* (Galatians 2:20).

"In Christ" we are free to be ourselves, the real person whom He has made us to be. We are free to use personal pronouns. We are free to speak of what we are doing. We are even free to say "You're welcome" when someone says "Thank you." ■

The Nine

by — Martin Zender

When we think of all the blessings that have come from Paul's letters, we forget he was only one man. We tend to think God needs an army to conquer such a large thing as the world, and to overcome such a prevalent thing as the stupidity of the world. He does not. It pleases Him to do the most with the least. This way, the credit and glory go to Him, rather than to the vessels He chooses for such stupendous work. It is simply impossible for one man (Paul) to take over the world. And yet, he does.

Along with eight others. Nine people, in all, brought us our faith. Yes, Christ brought it, absolutely speaking, and God brought it even more absolutely speaking than that, but the Powers That Be handed this faith to a single man headed down that dirt road to Damascus. This man, in turn, handed it to eight others, who found in their soul a burning desire to receive it, understand it, and pass it on.

Paul and Barnabas were the first believers of the new message (of the grace of God) to be called *"apostles"* (Acts 14:4). In Romans 16:7, Paul refers to two believers named Andronicus and Junia as being *"of note among the apostles."* In I Thessalonians 1:1, Paul associates Silvanus and Timothy with himself, saying in 2:1-2 that these men were *"bold in our God to speak the evangel of God to you with much struggle."*

Paul mentions another man, Epaphroditus, in Philippians 2:25, calling him *"my brother, and fellow worker, and fellow soldier."* Sosthenes (I Corinthians 1:1) and Apollos (I Corinthians 4:6) were with Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 4:9,

> *I suppose that God demonstrates with us, the last apostles, as death-doomed, for we became a theater to the world and to messengers and to humans.*

Paul
Barnabas
Andronicus
Junia
Silvanus
Timothy
Epaphroditus
Sosthenes
Apollos

Oh, what we owe this handful of faithful men who struggled in relative anonymity in a hot, cruel world, two millennia before any of us were born. They did it for God, but they did it, as well, for us. They gave themselves for the sake of people they'd never met, and for names they'd never heard. The men listed above deserve to be in the Faith Hall of Fame, and indeed, they are. Each of these will receive a wreath of glory from their Savior at the dais, rewarded for faithful service, compensated for the evils and frustrations endured here. We shall be present to see it.

I have written the names of these men on a small piece of paper that stays in my wallet. I feel close to them. I desire not only to see these men rewarded, but to stand with them.

In II Timothy 2:2, Paul writes to his child in faith,

> *What things you hear from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who shall be competent to teach others also.*

By the time Paul wrote this letter, he suspected the era would be much longer than he'd originally anticipated. Thus, he commissions Timothy to commission other men after him – men who would be competent to commission yet others.

It has come down to the present day. In my humble opinion, there are never more than nine people during any generation who struggle in relative anonymity to dispense the pure Pauline gospel of grace ▶

on this same cruel proving ground on which the nine pioneers laid their sweat. The contemporary teachers, like their forerunners, herald the Word opportunely and inopportunely. Like these others, they hope, someday, to be compensated for their many and epic failures.

As I write this, I am preparing to fly to Rochester, NY. I am meeting there with Clyde Pilkington and Dan Sheridan to herald the same word Paul taught, to a group of 50 believers to be gathered in a small building next to a lake. Four days ago, Clyde sent the following text message to Dan and me:

> Brethren, we are called of God, it's our turn. We are the heralds of our day. We follow Paul in filling up what is behind in Christ's suffering. We heed his parting challenge to endure hardness, to suffer evil with him, so that we can finish our course. We will fight a good fight together as a celestial band of brothers.

Tears welled in my eyes as I read Clyde's text. It is an honor to serve with these men. In fact, it feels impossible to serve without them. Paul and his band of brothers were "*the last apostles*." I pray we are the last teachers. I pray that the baton that Paul passed to Timothy ends with us. I pray this, not because I would rob others of the message, but because I wish to see, with my own eyes, the fullness of the era of the Gentiles. I will be so bold as to say: I long to be present when the last member of the body of Christ says, "Yes." Then, the entire body of Christ – including the nine pioneers – will meet its Head in the air, and they shall ever be with Him.

(From Martin Zender's blog: Zenderville)

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