

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

Volume 02-54

Dear Younger Reader

This 54th edition completes our series of basic truths as to God's Church. We pray earnestly it has been of help to you and will act as a catalyst for further study on your own. Don't be afraid to ask questions of the older brethren. If you don't get a satisfactory answer we will attempt to answer questions you ask of us in future issues of the Assembly Messenger.

QUESTION 28: TIMOTHY'S DISCOURAGEMENT AS SEEN IN 2 TIMOTHY 1

Yes, Timothy was a very discouraged young man! He had essentially stopped ministering (ch.1:6), for his gift was inactive. Paul admonished him to get going! The JND and NASB translations use the thought of him needing to "rekindle" his gift. The NIV uses "fan into flames." He was acting as if he had the spirit of *fear*, but Paul reminded him he had the Spirit of *power* and *love* and of a *sound mind* — the mind of Christ (1 Cor.2:16). Paul was in jail (1:8), discouraging in itself, but Paul had been there before. No, that wasn't the cause of Timothy's big discouragement. The big change is seen in 2 Timothy 1:15. "All those in Asia have turned away from me."

The force in the Greek is lost in the English translation. Every use in the New Testament of the Greek expression "turn away" has the thought of turning away from a *belief or teaching*, never from the person himself because of his personality or outward circumstances. Sadly, there had been a major defection from Paul's teachings! Maybe *thousands* of believers no longer wanted the narrow assembly-walk found in the teachings of Paul. Just as Demas, whose name means *popular*, had forsaken Paul, "having loved this present world" (ch.4:10), most then (and today) preferred a church position that has more appeal to the sinful nature than the path the apostle Paul marked out in his epistles. How sad! Man's ideas are placed above God's revealed Mind in His Word, as if *my* thoughts were higher than God's thoughts. But Paul wrote to Timothy "to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things you have heard from me ... commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach

others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (ch.2:1-3). Will we also endure the hardships of a scriptural assembly life, even though it will mean not gathering with most Christians? If so, there will be many blessings there also, both now and after the Lord's coming when *rewards* are dealt with.

QUESTION 29: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 2 TIMOTHY 2:19-22

You are quite right in your question. This is a very significant portion, vital to our assembly walk today. We've already looked at many of Paul's instructions for Church order and fellowship together. But there never were any instructions as to what to do when Christians weren't all walking together. Think of it: for some 35 years or so, many thousands of people got saved in hundreds of localities around the then-known civilized world. Little assemblies were formed in these localities, all acting together on the ground of the one body. They had the same general conduct, doctrines and discipline. They followed the instructions laid down by the apostle Paul. There was failure, and Paul wrote many of his letters to seek to correct that failure. But they were all together until the time of 2 Timothy when a large subset of the believers defected from the truth of the assembly which was particularly Paul's ministry (Eph.3). We saw how discouraging this was to Timothy.

Now what? What should Timothy do? With whom should he fellowship? There now was a choice. He could go on with Paul in Paul's *narrow* path, or go with the defectors in their broader, more tolerant, more naturally-pleasing assembly walk. After all, to the defectors, it undoubtedly seemed good and right as long as Paul's letters weren't taken too seriously. They undoubtedly now appealed to a wider segment of the total population, and thought *that* was doing God's work. People are still doing the same thing today, still thinking they are pleasing the Lord. But does God or man know best?

Paul thus gave Timothy further instructions — instructions every individual today has to choose to receive or ignore. Let's briefly look at them. In spite of defection, the Lord is over all. The solid foundation of Christ Himself (1 Cor.3:11) still stands and the *Lord* knows those who are His. That is *His* responsibility! What is mine? What is yours? "Let everyone who names the name of the *Lord* depart from iniquity" (2 Tim.2:19). The Greek word *adikia* here translated *iniquity* means anything not according to God's Word, *unrighteousness*! It is a broad word. Whether others will or not, I am to continue with what is right before God! And that particularly includes my collective or assembly position and walk! Those are Paul's instructions, written by divine inspiration! They, as much as Paul's earlier writings, are "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor.14:37).

Outwardly, the house of God where order is to be maintained (1 Tim.3:15), has become a *great house* where disorder is everywhere. Today, there are people who are seeking to walk pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor.5:9) all mixed up with others who are not wanting a scriptural pathway, and even unsaved "religious" people. Further, there are hundreds of denominations and thousands of little independent groups. There are many unsaved people in the Christian profession, often going on in church-fellowship with believers, against God's Word (2 Cor.6:14). It's a spiritual mess (2 Tim.2:20)!

Paul's instruction for anyone who wishes to please the Lord is to "*purge himself*" — a very strong Greek word — from those who do not honor the Lord (v.21). It is not a question of whether or not they are Christians or how personally pleasant they are to be around, or how personally godly they are, but a question of whether or not their church-walk is according to God's Word. They aren't enemies; in fact, they may be good friends, but I cannot have church fellowship with them if they are walking in disobedience. *That is what God says*. How people try to reason this away!

Now comes the positive side. I am to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, *with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart*" (v.22). I am not to walk alone, if at all possible. Some at least, are seeking to still go on in the Pauline pathway, obeying the instructions he gave, which, I reiterate, are "the commandments of the Lord." The Lord promises I But chapters 2 and 3 deal with the Church-age, the dispensation in which we still are living. Remember, Revelation is a prophecy. So Bible students have

will find them. So I am to earnestly search where and with whom I can pursue *righteousness*. I can't sit on the fence and still please God. I have to *depart from unrighteousness* to be able to pursue *righteousness* — that which is right before God! And it has to be done in *faith* that I'm doing what God wants me to do.

Then there is to be genuine Christian *love* both for God and for all my fellow-believers, whether or not I can walk with them. People often make *love* a sentimentality, simply an emotion. As a result, much tolerance of sin is allowed. But God defines love differently. "By this we know we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments, *for this is the love of God that we keep His commandments*" (1 Jn.5:2-3). Isn't that very plain and clear? Finally there is peace.

The expression "pure heart" has the thought of an *undivided* heart. The sole object is Christ and what pleases Him! I cannot walk in the big systems of men *where, generally, no money or talent is spared to please people and keep the congregation intact and growing*, but where much of the truth as to Christian position and privilege is left out. To walk *there* would not be pureheartedness.

The truth of 2 Timothy 2 gives us the only God-honoring assembly pathway found today when the outward testimony of and to the Church is divided into hundreds of factions. There *is* a divine path through this religious maze, and we earnestly ask the Lord that these studies will help you find it and to resolve before Him to walk in it.

QUESTION 34: THE 7 "CHURCHES" OF REVELATION 2-3

Your final two questions deal with the book of Revelation. This is a book of *prophecy* in the sense of what is in the future. It is divinely divided for us in Revelation 1:19. John was to write the *things he had seen* (chapter 1); the *things that are* — the Church-dispensation which then had just begun (chapters 2-3) and which is now nearing its end; and the *things that take place after this* (or, after these things). Chapter 4 begins with, "After these things" and the rest of the book of Revelation is taken up with events after the rapture of the Church to heaven.

found that the letters to the seven assemblies, even though they were written to actual assemblies functioning in Asia Minor when John wrote in about

AD 100, are prophetic of the general state of the professing Church from the time of the apostles to the future Rapture of the Church to heaven. It begins with the early Church having lost its first love for Christ (Ephesus), to the time of Roman empire persecution (Smyrna), to the time of the uniting of church and state in about 312 (Pergamos), to the dark ages (Thyatira), to the Reformation (Sardis), to the unique spiritual awakening of the 1800's (Philadelphia — brotherly love), to the time today when the *peoples' rights* (the meaning of *Laodicea*) instead of God's rights, are prominent in the professing Church. God chose the spiritual condition of these seven actual functioning assemblies to depict this prophetic account.

Since God also both commends and condemns things going on in these actual assemblies, we also can learn much from these two chapters of how God wants His assemblies to function and not to function. There are several books available that cover these two chapters, including one by myself entitled *God's Performance Review of the Seven Churches*, Believers Bookshelf.

QUESTION 35: THE CHURCH ELSEWHERE IN REVELATION

The Church disappears in Revelation because at the beginning of chapter 4, it is raptured to heaven (v.1). Remember, chapter 4 begins with "After these things" — after the history of the Church on earth ends. The Church is then seen around the Lord in picture language — the language of Revelation (ch.1:1) — in verses 2-5. The rest of the book is primarily taken up with the judgments on the earth during a future seven year period called the *Tribulation*. See my little book called "*An Outline of Prophecy*," and my little larger book, "*From Rapture to Reigning*," Believers Bookshelf. Finally, as we discussed earlier in this series of Newsletters, the Church is seen as the bride and wife of Christ, and as a city, in chapters 19-22. This is for the time we reign with Christ over the earth for 1000 years (Rev.20:4,6). At the beginning of chapter 21, it is seen in the eternal state — the eternity of the future — as still a bride adorned for her husband, still in the freshness of first love after 1000 years of reigning with Him (v.2)! That love relationship will continue forever!

We certainly pray this 8-part series has been helpful to younger Christians and those of any age just being

introduced to assembly truth. May the Lord add His blessing to this effort.

SUMMARY: THE APPLICATION OF THE ABOVE: QUESTIONS TO ASK OF ONESELF

How should we apply the above truths of God's Assembly to daily life? We often compartmentalize our lives — some for God and some for me. We think of our home lives, our school lives, our job lives, our married lives ... and our assembly lives. In one sense that is true, although we as Christians are *always* part of God's Assembly! We are *always* part of the body of Christ. And God has instructions for all parts of our lives! And how we think and act daily affects our general spirituality and our gathering together.

Our gathering together? What have I learned in this *Assembly Messenger* series as to what I should look for? It is a very important question that will have life-long consequences for me ... and for you. And even beyond this life, for it will affect our reigning with the Lord. Our relative position in that 1000 year reign is based solely on our individual *faithfulness* to the Lord now (Mt.25:14-30; Lk.19:11-27). See my book "*From Rapture to Reigning*," Believers Bookshelf.

So let's summarize the above with a few brief questions in the order we took them up.

- Am I prepared to accept the scriptural truth of the Church and reject man's ideas all around me?
- Do I understand it's the *Lord's* Church and He is its Head? Do I realize and accept that *He* should be in control of how His Church should function on earth?
- Do I understand the *unity of assemblies*, that they aren't *independent* of each other (1 Cor.1:2; 4:17)? If so, why then would anyone want to meet on the ground that each assembly is independent of all other assemblies? Yet many strongly, but very wrongly, maintain *independency* to be God's order for today.
- Do I understand that the local assembly in any particular locality represents the entire Church of God worldwide?
- Am I willing to make Christ alone my gathering Center, and gather to His name alone?
- Am I willing to accept as fact that I am a priest with direct access to God, with the privileges and responsibilities to personally worship and serve? Am I willing to reject man's attempts to take that

privilege from me by the sinful clergy-laity system? Do I clearly understand there are no spiritual common people, no laity, today?

- Do I understand I have at least one spiritual gift to use for the profit of all? Am I willing to develop it and use it, and refuse that which would artificially
- Do I understand that leadership in the local assembly is appointed by the Holy Spirit alone? Do I refuse to gather where people appoint or seek to enforce rulers over me? Do I understand the huge difference between *ruling* and *leading*?
- Will I fulfill my roles as a brother or sister? Will I refuse to be a part of religious groups that ignore God's roles for the sexes? Will I refuse all thought that God is unfair to women?
- Will I obey the Lord's desire for me to remember Him in the breaking of bread, and take the responsibilities associated with it? Will I refuse to break bread where God's order for His Assembly is ignored? Will I refuse that which limits the breaking of bread to once a month or less often?
- Am I prepared that there will be difficulties in the assembly and even between assemblies that need to be handled according to God's Word, and not become discouraged when these difficulties are being handled according to Scripture? Do I realize God's holiness is at stake?
- Am I prepared to give financially to the Lord's work?
- Will I seek to pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord out of an undivided heart?

At the beginning about 8 months ago, we spoke of choirs, organs, trained speakers and all the other naturally-pleasing things many denominational "churches" use to draw crowds. *There is nothing in Scripture concerning such things.* "Church" (as people wrongly speak of it) is not for entertainment, but for spiritual fellowship together with and around the Lord, and to learn from Him through His gifts what His Word tells us. Yet *entertainment* which pleases the sinful nature is what is strongly pushed today in many groups. And they get huge crowds! But what is beautiful music by choir or organ — or so-called "Christian" rock bands (an oxymoron) — if God is not in it?

While there is nothing in itself wrong with beautiful orchestrated music which honors the Lord in its words and music, *it is not a function of the Church or a scriptural part of the assembly's worship.* The

limit the usefulness of my gift?

- Will I go forth unto Christ outside the camp of man's religion and profession, to meet with Him according to His directions, allowing Him to be in practice the Head of His Church?

scriptural thought for the meetings of the assembly is the simple singing to the Lord from the hearts of the gathered saints (Mt.26:30; Eph.5:19; Col.3:16).

Then, what good is a great orator if not called by God, and how sad if one actually called by God takes a position of pastor, reverend or clergyman, that is not given him by God, or if he teaches only half-truths? What is an ornate building if it is spiritually cold or if it excites the sinful nature, not the new? We are to worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn.4:23), not in ornate temples as in the Old Testament under Judaism.

What good is it to be given a gift if there is virtually no place to use it because an unscripturally-hired man (even if personally godly and gifted by God) has usurped the Holy Spirit's place? While gymnasiums may be fun to play in, that is not a reason to express assembly fellowship with the group that owns the gym. Basketball, volleyball and other sports, although not wrong in themselves (although all things can become an idol) are not found in the scriptural assembly.

Please study these things for yourselves! May the Lord bless!

Roger P. Daniel

NOTES:

We have begun our sixth year of publication in the Lord's mercy, and only He knows the future. As requested by Thomas Nelson and Sons, we remind you that they hold the copyright on the New King James Version (NKJV), used extensively in this Newsletter, which is used with their permission.

Even after about a year we do not have a new web site, but will inform you when one has been set up.

Our mailing address is either 22240 Morley Ave., Dearborn MI 48124-2127 or Dearborn Heights assembly, 24570 Ann Arbor Trail, Dearborn Heights MI 48127-1780. This Newsletter is sent free to those who specifically request it in North America, and we strongly encourage copying and further distribution.

We are very pleased to report that Believers Bookshelf plans to publish a book based on this series on the Church for the younger reader. We expect it to be available well before the end of 2002.

Finally, as to the future, it is our plan to get back on a little more realistic time schedule of one issue every 5-6 weeks. We also plan to branch out, covering in the Lord's will and we pray in His leading, other subjects than simply Assembly truth — subjects, however, that will have some relationship to the Assembly and our assembly walk on earth. The next issue will feature an article by Leslie M. Grant on *Outside the Camp*, certainly *directly* related to our assembly walk.

RPD