

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

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## *PAUL'S PRISON EPISTLES*

Much perplexity arises from the use of loose phrases not found in Scripture. Such phrases are the chief stock of those who generalize concerning divine truths. When our study and presentation of truth is characterized by accuracy, most of these phrases have to be abandoned. If a phrase truly characterizes some scriptural truth it is proper, and often helpful, to use it. For example: the term "water baptism" is not found in Scripture, but it describes perfectly that rite performed by John, so we do well to use it. Neither is the term "eternal security" found in Scripture but it is a true characterization of the blessed safety of those whom the Lord Jesus Christ has saved:

The term "body truth" is not found in Scripture and it does not truly characterize any body of truth in the Word of God. When it is used to describe the truth concerning God's present out-calling it misrepresents it, so we have never used it. It is an inaccurate, misleading term. When one speaks of "body truth" no one can know whether he is speaking of that body which was Israel, the body of the Acts period, or the Church, which is His body.

We can find only amusement in the claim of those who insist they find "body truth" in Corinthians. Of course they do. If they did not we would doubt if they had even read the book. We can find just as much "body truth" in Corinthians as any man can, but we cannot find there any revelation concerning that unique out-calling, "the Church which is His body."

### **Paul's Prison Epistles**

The term "Paul's prison epistles," or "the prison epistles," commonly used in speaking of the seven last epistles of Paul is another term that is inaccurate and misleading,

therefore, one that we cannot use. It ties us up to the proposition that these epistles were written while Paul was in prison. This may be true, and it may not be true, but it cannot be established by the fact that they are generally called prison epistles. We do not believe that all these epistles were written in prison, even though we do believe that 1 Timothy, Titus, Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Timothy were written **after the pronouncement of Paul recorded in Acts 28:28**. Let us trace through the recorded facts and see what we can establish from the Word of God.

In Acts 21 Paul was seized by the Jews who were bent upon killing him, but the appearance of a band of Roman soldiers forced them to desist. He was then taken into protective custody by the Romans. The Romans had nothing against Paul; and Tertullus, the Jews' clever orator, was hard put to find something concrete to say in accusation of him. In fact, Paul was so clear of any offence that Festus, the Roman ruler, was forced to admit that he was faced with the absurd task of sending a prisoner to Rome without being able to state the charges made against him. Even Agrippa admitted that Paul could have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar. This appeal had automatically taken the case out of their hands so Paul had to be sent to Rome. Of his arrival there we read:

**"And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with the soldier that guarded him." Acts 28:16.**

In Rome it would have been the duty of the chief of the Jews there to prosecute Paul upon information and affidavits supplied by the Jews in Jerusalem. When Paul sent for the chief of the Jews and they came to see him, they confessed that they had received no letters concerning him and there were no witnesses against him. It is evident that this would have released Paul from the technical custody in which he was being held. Thus, Paul is in Rome, where he had longed to be, without a written charge or a witness against him. The Romans had nothing against him, the Jerusalem Jews sent no affidavits against him, no prosecuting witnesses have appeared, so Paul is a free man in Rome. He remains there exactly two years.

**"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.**

It does not seem right to read into verse 30 the conditions that existed in verse 16. In verse 16, Paul is a nominal prisoner; in verse 30 he is not a prisoner at all. He is free to go or to stay, but he chooses to stay for two whole years.

If in verse 30 Paul is a prisoner, then the present writer is a prisoner also. The Editor dwells in his own hired house, he receives all who come to see him, he proclaims the Kingdom of God, and he teaches those things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, and no man forbids him. The Editor is not a prisoner, and it is evident that Paul was not a prisoner during those two years.

It is our contention that 1 Timothy and Titus were written in those two quiet and peaceful years in Rome. The language of these two epistles is the language of a free man. Not once does he mention anything connected with imprisonment. In fact, he is making

plans to depart from Rome, and there is neither hint nor inference that these plans are dependent upon his being set free.

**"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly." 1 Tim. 3:14.**

**"When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter." Titus 3:11-12.**

There has been much controversy concerning whether Paul suffered two Roman imprisonments or one. We believe that it can be established from Scripture that Paul left Rome after these two years, and there was an interval of travel and ministry, after which he returned to Rome as a prisoner. We know that Paul remained just two whole years in his own hired house. It seemed that if he had been returned to prison after this, or if he had been executed, Luke would have recorded.

From 2 Tim. 4:20 we know that Paul left Trophimus at Miletus sick. This could not have happened when he went to Jerusalem, for Trophimus was not left in Miletus; he was seen in Jerusalem (See Acts 21:29). It could not have happened on the journey from Jerusalem to Rome for every stop on that journey is carefully recorded, and Paul did not stop at Miletus on that trip.

The brief record of this incident supplies sufficient evidence that Paul left Rome after those two years and went forth to minister. Something in his ministry brought him into conflict with Rome. In the Philippian epistle we find him back in Rome and a prisoner of the Romans. During this imprisonment he wrote Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Timothy. In each one of these he makes some reference to his imprisonment. See Phil. 1:13, Phlm. 1:1, Col. 4:10, Eph. 6:20, 2 Tim. 1:8. These are truly prison epistles for they were written in prison. I Timothy and Titus were not. Therefore, we conclude that the term "Paul's prison epistles," when used to designate the seven last epistles of Paul is inaccurate and misleading. Since it can only cause confusion, and since it misrepresents two of these epistles, all who prize accuracy should determine to abandon the use of it.

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## ***THE UNFOLDING OF THE SECRET***

**(Continued from Vol. III, No.6)**

### **Progressive Revelation**

There is no truth in the Word of God that can be properly understood apart from giving due consideration to the truth that precedes it. This is because God's revelation to man by means of His written Word is a progressive revelation. The principle of progressive revelation underlies and under girds the Word of God. If this principle is not recognized, the student cannot hope for any correct understanding and appreciation of the sacred Scriptures.

Inasmuch as this principle acts as a divine restraint against the mind of man, many men reject it in order to be free to interpret the Bible according to their own preconceived notions. It is not possible to begin just anywhere in true Bible study. True Bible study

must begin at the beginning; and the study of specific subjects must begin where the revelation concerning the subject begins. And even though the subject may be a new thing, like the call of Abraham or the giving of the law, we must give due consideration to all that has gone before.

Under the principle of progressive revelation, God begins with minor declarations, then carries the truth step by step to larger, fuller revelations, and then finally to the complete unfolding. As a truth progresses through Scripture, its revelation is orderly, harmonious and progressive; and when the truth is studied in the same orderly and progressive fashion it becomes self-explanatory, and brings to the student the deep conviction that he is coming into possession of the truth of God. He knows that he is not reading his own thoughts into the Word of God, but he is getting God's thoughts out of it.

One of the major subjects of the Word of God is that body of truth, which Paul calls the Secret. By this term he is not referring to the secrets of the Kingdom, mentioned in Matthew 13; or to the secrets of the gospel of the grace of God, spoken of in Romans 16. He is referring to the greatest secret that God has ever told to man. So great that it needs no identifying terms to go with it, for he calls it simply "the Secret." Just as we say "the Book" and mean the Bible. It is this Secret that he speaks of in the Colossian and Ephesian epistles.

**"Even THE SECRET which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of THIS SECRET among the Gentiles; which is Christ among you, the hope of glory." Co!. 2:26-27.**

**"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward. How that by revelation he made known unto me THE SECRET, as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in THE SECRET of Christ. Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Eph. 3:2-5.**

**"And to make all men see what is the fellowship (administration) of THE SECRET, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." Eph. 3:9.**

All revelation concerning the present administration is contained in the seven last epistles of Paul, namely: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. Within these epistles we find the revelation of the Secret. And since it is a progressive revelation we can expect the unfolding to be orderly, It begins with certain minor declarations concerning the administration, states certain primary truths concerning the Body of the present administration, then continues until it reaches a full burst of glory concerning the present administration and the Church which is His body. We have every right to expect that the truth revealed in the seven last epistles of Paul will be orderly and progressive. We find this to be so when we examine the epistles in the order in which they were written. It does not seem reasonable that Paul should declare himself to be a member of the Church which is His body, as he does in Ephesians; then declare that he does not count himself to have apprehended as he does in Philippians. Yet, this is just what we have if we consider the Ephesian letter to have been written before Philippians.

If we were given a simple arithmetic book which had become unbound and the leaves scattered, we could line them up in order without the aid of page numbers if we put the addition first, subtraction second, multiplication third, and division fourth. In the same manner, if we work from simple statements to the full revelation of truth in Paul's seven last epistles, we should be able to establish their order. We have done this and believe that order to be 1 Timothy, Titus, Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Timothy,

The reader is requested, for the purpose of examination, to tentatively accept this order, and permit us to demonstrate the correctness of it as we unfold the truth of these epistles. However we are far from ready to present the exposition of these epistles, for we must give some consideration to the truth that precedes them. The truth of the Secret is not suspended in mid-air for it rests securely upon a foundation laid by the apostles and prophets. Therefore, we must travel up to that point where Paul announces "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles." This will require an examination of the truth concerning Israel from the call of Abraham to Pentecost, then from Pentecost of Acts 28:28. As we have dealt with this before in our pages it can be somewhat brief here, and will be presented in a series of numbered propositions,

1. Up to the call of Abraham, God's work with man was an individual work and concerned only the individual. The call of Abraham was the beginning of the first outcalling of God. It was at this point that God began to separate to Himself a body of people. This body was not formed by God sending out Abraham to find others who would unite with him. It was not to grow by accessions from the people among whom Abraham lived. It was to be composed of the descendants of Abraham through Isaac. Thus, the descendants of Abraham became a distinct body of people. They formed the nation of Israel; they were God's people; they were God's nation.

2. Membership in the nation of Israel was by natural birth. Each child born the seed of Abraham was related to God by covenant. Circumcision was established by God as the sign of this covenant.

3. Israel was not only the nation and people of God - they were the Church of God. The Hebrew word *qahal* is identical with the Greek word *ecclesia*. A comparison of Psalm 22:22 and Hebrews 2:12 will show that the Holy Spirit uses these two words interchangeably. This fact establishes their absolute identity, so no meaning can be attached to one that cannot be given to the other. In Neh. 13:2 we read that "the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever." The word used here for *congregation* is *qahal*, It is *ecclesia* in the *Septuagint Version*. Israel was the Church of God in the Old Testament, and is called a church by Stephen in Acts 7:38. He who would join the Church of God before the time of Christ had to become a member of the nation of Israel.

4. The nation of Israel had God-given authority, which usually resided in certain ones in Israel. An outstanding office in Israel was that of elder. The members of the nation of Israel were the children of God. To them had been given the promises and hope of the kingdom.

## **Pentecost and After**

God's covenant with Abraham was an unconditional covenant; it was based upon God's "I will." In spite of the failures of Israel the truth expressed above was true when the Lord Jesus came to earth. It was to the seed of Abraham, the nation of Israel, the Church of God that the Lord Jesus Christ came. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. The Church of God, which He came to was so apostate that when they made a convert (proselyte) they made him a child of Gehenna, for nothing but judgment awaited this apostate group.

When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16), the Lord announced that He would build His out-calling (church) upon that rock. This was to be after the Son of man had risen from the dead. On the day of Pentecost a radical change was made. Israel as a nation lost her spiritual privileges and prerogatives, and these were transferred to those in Israel who confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Therefore, the 120 believing Israelites on the day of Pentecost were publicly constituted the Church of God. The events of that day witnessed that that little group was God's out-calling, that He was now dealing with it, and that to it He would add His separated ones. On that day the 120 was increased by 3000 additions. This ended the standing of the nation of Israel as the Church of God.

At Pentecost God began to separate a remnant out of Israel unto Himself. He had done something like this before in the days of Elijah. In his day practically the whole nation had gone into idolatry, but God reserved Himself seven thousand men who had not bowed to the image of Baal.

**"Even so then at this present time (the Acts period) also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Rom. 11:5.**

In Elijah's day these 7000 were the true Israel in the midst of the unfaithful nation. In the Acts period the believing Israelites were the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) in the midst of Israel after the flesh (I Cor. 10:18). In Elijah's day a position in the remnant was according to works. They had been faithful; they had not bowed. In the Acts period a position in the remnant was according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

The Israel of God in the Acts period formed a separate nation: Peter spoke the truth of them when he said, **"Ye are. . . an holy nation." I Peter 2:9.** This was the new nation to whom the Kingdom was given in harmony with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**"Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Mat. 21:43.**

**"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32.**

Membership in the Church of God of the Acts period resulted from a new birth. Those in Israel who believed that Jesus was the Messiah were born of God. 1 John 5:1.

The Church of God of the Acts period had God-given authority. This was vested in certain men. It was nothing new when the Lord Jesus spoke of binding and loosing in Matt. 16:19. All through the history of Israel someone usually had the power to bind and loose. In the Church of the Acts period we find the familiar office of elder. The believers

of the Acts period were the children of God. The honor of being the children of God was taken from the nation of Israel and given to those who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He authority to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name." John 1:11-12.**

Therefore it is evident that the Church of God of the Acts period came into possession of every spiritual privilege that had been possessed by the nation of Israel. We would emphasize that there was not one thing that was true of Israel before Pentecost that was not true of the Church of God in the Acts period. They came into possession of the covenants, the privileges, the sonship and the kingdom hope. It was a complete transfer of all that the nation had claimed as her own. It was not the beginning of some new thing, but the perpetuation of something old, on a new foundation - Jesus Christ.

God intended that the nation of Israel should be born anew, but a remnant was born anew; He intended Israel to carry blessings to the nations, but the remnant carried the blessings; He intended Israel to be a kingdom of priests, but the remnant became priests unto God; He intended Israel should receive the Kingdom, but the Kingdom was given to the remnant. In short, all that was good in the economy of Israel, God transferred and perpetuated in the believing remnant of the Acts period.

### **Conditions of the Acts Period**

In order to understand the events that took place after the close of the Acts period we must become familiar with the conditions that existed during those thirty-three years. There is no detailed written record that sets forth these conditions, but many truths are set forth, and each truth was a cause that produced a certain effect. If we meditate upon these truths we will soon become familiar with the conditions that prevailed in the Acts period.

1. There was supreme authority vested in the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. See Matt. 16:19, Matt. 18:18, John 20:22-23. This authority could not be despised, and it was honored by the believers of the Acts period. To this supreme council Paul carried, for adjudication, the controversy concerning Gentile circumcision. Acts 15:2. Paul fully realized that this council could decide against him, making his journey "in vain." Gal. 2:2.

2. Apostles with authority from God continually visited the Churches for the purpose of bringing them God's words. These men spoke by inspiration. If they could not speak by inspiration they were to keep silent. 1 Peter 4:11. The authority and power of these apostles was not imaginary.

3. There were men who possessed gifts in every assembly. These gifts were not simply natural abilities; for these men were in possession of abilities that were the gift of God. Some men were given wisdom and others were given knowledge. These did not come from years of study and patient searching. They were the gift of God. There were also gifts of faith, working of miracles, teaching, prophecy, government, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and healing. When we consider the force and effect of

these gifts we can readily see that an assembly in which these gifts operated was an awe inspiring, faith generating, and faith inspiring sight. No matter how much suffering the believers passed through, no matter how much scorn was heaped upon them, they could not doubt God's goodness, providence and purpose when they saw these gifts in operation. .

4. The Acts period was one of intense expectation on the part of the believers. They had hope and they knew that that hope rested in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This hope was imminent, something to be realized in their lifetime. This intense expectation was based upon the teachings of Christ, Peter, Paul and John. In the midst of deep, dark distress they could always comfort their hearts by saying:

**"Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Heb. 10:37.**

The Lord had spoken of the coming of Antichrist, the great tribulation and His own return to receive them unto Himself. And not one word had ever gone forth to tell them that these events had been postponed, for they had not been postponed. In fact every messenger told them that these events were drawing nearer.

**"But this I say brethren, the time is short." 1 Cor. 7:29.**

**"For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness." 1 Cor. 10:28.**

**"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Rom. 13:11.**

**"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Jas. 5:8.**

**"But the end of all things is at hand." 1 Peter 4:7.**

**"Little children, it is the last time. . . we know that it is the last time." 1 John 2:18.**

These believers knew that whether they entered the earthly sphere or the heavenly sphere of the kingdom, their hope would be realized when Christ returned and established His kingdom. Their hope centered in the coming of Christ.

### **Thessalonica - A Pattern Church**

In order to understand more clearly the conditions that prevailed during the Acts period, let us circumscribe our thinking to one Church, the Church in Thessalonica, and center all the truth that is revealed in that one Church. By this we mean, that since the gift of healing (for example) is spoken of in Corinthians, we would naturally expect the same to be true of Thessalonica. It does not seem that God would bestow His gifts on a carnal assembly like Corinth and pass by a faithful one like Thessalonica.

In Acts 17 we find Paul, Silas and Timothy approaching the city of Thessalonica. In Paul's day, even as today, the Jews were in dispersion all over the world. There was a large company of Jews in Thessalonica, and these had established there a synagogue. Paul following his usual custom, went there for three Sabbaths and reasoned with them from the Scriptures; pointing out that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise



again from the dead. He climaxed this message by insisting that the man Jesus whom he preached unto them was the Messiah. The results of these labors were that some believed and cast their lot with Paul and Silas; also many God-fearing Greeks believed, and not a few women of the best families. The unbelieving Jews created a storm and Paul and his companions were forced to leave the city. But they left behind them a band whose hearts God had touched. These had received the Lord Jesus as their long hoped for Messiah, so to them was given the authority to become the children of God. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah, so they were born of God. This believing band became the Church of God in Thessalonica. From that time God was represented in Thessalonica by those who believed.

The very heart of this assembly was the Jews that believed; and they were the center from which the Word of the Lord sounded forth in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:7) In the Acts period the Jew believed, and remained a Jew. Sir Robert Anderson has well said:

"The Divine religion of Judaism in every part of it, both in the spirit and the letter, pointed to the coming of a promised Messiah; and to maintain that a man ceased to be a Jew because he cherished that hope, and accepted the Messiah when He came - this is a position absolutely grotesque in its absurdity."

The promises God made to Israel were not transferable, for when they were made to Abraham, God confirmed them with an oath to him and to his heirs. This demonstrated the immutability of His counsel, so His purpose in Israel can know of no change. No promise that God made to Israel was ever transferred to the Gentiles; but the Gentiles were allowed to participate in Israel's blessings. This is illustrated in Romans **11** as being in the same manner as a branch grafted into a stock partakes of the root and sap with the natural branches. No amount of grafted' branches can alter the nature of the root. Even so, no number of Gentiles who participated in the blessings of the Acts period could alter the fact that they were Israel's blessings. This is why we insist that the Jews that believed were the very heart of the assembly in Thessalonica.

It is only logical to believe that the assembly in Thessalonica recognized and honored the authority, which God had vested in the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. This does not mean that they honored the person of these men, for they did not; they would not have kissed their hands or feet, neither would they have bowed the knee before them. They knew that God recognized no man's person (Gal. 2:6), yet, they would give due respect to and honor the authority that God had deposited there. Therefore, the question of Gentile circumcision could never be debated in Thessalonica, for the apostles and elders in Jerusalem had spoken and the question was settled.

The Church of God in Thessalonica recognized the complete authority of the Apostle Paul. When he spoke to them they received his message not as the Word of man, but as it was in truth, the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13).

What a marvelous thing a meeting of the Thessalonian assembly must have been! What a privilege it was to have been a member of that group! When they came together they came together as the Church of God. This was no idle claim or empty boast. They were the Church of God, and those who met with the assembly met with the Church of God. In the assembly was some humble man who possessed the gift of wisdom. They lived in

troublesome and confused times, but how delightful it must have been to be there and drink deeply as the man who possessed the gift of wisdom gave teaching that was word for word the Word of God.

Another believer in the assembly possessed the gift of miracles. Therefore, they could expect that at any time some strange thing would happen that was positively a miracle. And in the assembly could be found those who had never learned, yet could speak any language. Another could interpret any language. These were marvelous gifts among the polyglot people who made up the assembly. Then, there was the gift of healing. What a blessing that must have been in those days when disease was rampant and medical science was practically unknown.

Truly the assembly was a faith - generating and faith - inspiring sight. Let the world scorn, let the unbelievers mock, let persecutions come, let faith be assailed from every side - who in Thessalonica could doubt the goodness and purpose of God when they saw these gifts in action? Were such things seen in the synagogue? **No!** Were they seen in the temple of idols? **No!** Could the chief ruler of the synagogue perform a miracle, could he heal the sick? **No!** Then, who would want to return to these things?

One of the greatest blessings that came to the believers in Thessalonica, as well as all believers in the Acts period, was the immediate and fruitful results that came from their labors in preaching the Word. There was no lack of visible results, and these could only bring deep satisfaction to those who labored in the Word.

As with all believers in the Acts period, the Thessalonians had been called unto God's kingdom and glory (I Thess. 2:12). They were waiting for God's Son from the heavens (1 Thess. 1:10), and they certainly expected this to take place in their lifetime. They suffered so much from unbelievers that they were inclined to think that the great tribulation was upon them. But they were instructed, if taught as others were, that through many tribulations they were to enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22); for there is nothing plainer in Scripture than the fact that the Church of God of the Acts period was to see the appearing of the Antichrist, pass through the great tribulation and be delivered by the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Thus it is from Thessalonica we can form a true picture of the conditions that prevailed during the Acts period.

### **Acts 28:28**

When the Lord said, '**Salvation is of the Jews,**' He was not expressing a new truth for this had been true since the day Israel was constituted a nation before God. God had been dispensing salvation and blessings with the nation of Israel as the center of His operations. On the day of Pentecost, Christ began to dispense salvation and blessings with the believing remnant as the center of operations. We can confidently challenge anyone to point to a single thing that God dispensed through a Gentile during the thirty-three years covered by the book of Acts. There is no record of Gentile ministry or labors, either in the Acts or the epistles of the Acts period. No Gentiles preached, no Gentiles baptized or laid hands on anyone. All of God's operations centered in believing Israel,

and radiated out from them for the blessing of others. Many Gentiles were saved, but none were sent forth to preach to others. The believing Jews were the sole dispensers of God's blessings. The Gentiles were partakers of Israel's spiritual things. And according to the Word of God this state was to continue until Israel became the center and channel of blessing to the whole world.

When Paul announced that "**the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles**" it completely reversed the profound and far-reaching truth that "salvation is of the Jews." From the moment of that announcement whatever work God did for mankind ceased to have the Israel of God as the center and channel of its operations, and Christ began to work from a new center, the Gentiles. From that moment the believing Gentiles became the dispensers of His blessings and the center of the work He purposed to do. God entered into no covenant with the Gentiles so it was not strange for Him to use certain individual Jews, such as Paul and Timothy, after Acts 28:28.

When Paul, as God's ambassador, announced that God had made a radical change and sent His salvation to the Gentiles, only a few heard the pronouncement, but its effect was immediate. It was as if a spring had been cut off at its source. The things that had been flowing from God through the Church of God ceased to flow. The members realized at once that some strange, unexplainable change had taken place. All that had ever happened to them before had been according to prophecy. But such a thing as this was not prophesied, and there was nothing in God's Word that explained it.

The most momentous effect in connection with Acts 28:28 was outward and visible - the gifts ceased overnight. Some may challenge this by showing that there were gifts after Acts 28:28. This is true, but we ask: What gifts, and for what purpose were they given? We do not say that there were no gifts after Acts 28:28, we do say that those marvelous sign gifts disappeared at once. This will be shown from the epistles.

The effect of this cessation of gifts was to throw everything into complete confusion. That something had happened was evident, but the gifted men who had always been equal to any situation were now impotent with no help to offer. There was no word of wisdom; no gift of knowledge; the inspired teachers had no gift of teaching. It would not avail to turn to the Scriptures for there was nothing in the Scriptures that explained the situation with which they are now confronted. They did not know what had happened, and they did not know what to do.

### **The Chart**

At this point in our studies we would bring to the attention of our readers the illustrative chart, which is enclosed with this issue of the magazine. This chart was designed for the sole purpose of illustrating these studies. Therefore, nothing has been placed on it beyond the things set forth in these articles. It has been purposely kept simple, and is, to some extent, self-explanatory. [ **ARCHIVER'S NOTE: no chart was available to add to this Volume; however, I will attempt to help us all visualize it by placing numbers 1 through 6, below, which will start from the left, and move to the right as time moves on**]

We would direct the attention of the reader to the nation of Israel, the Church of God **(1) before Pentecost**, as it appears at the left on the Chart. The chart does not show its beginning with Abraham, but, that is exactly where it did begin. The **first vertical line**

marks the point where the believing remnant in Israel was publicly constituted the Church of God. It is marked **(2) ACTS 2 - PENTECOST**. **(3)** The dotted lines continue the nation of Israel as "Israel after the flesh" after the day of Pentecost. At Acts 2 the chart shows the 120 believers as the beginning of the Church of God of the Acts period. This number grows constantly **(4) from Pentecost to Acts 28:28**, and is illustrated by the expanding lines on the chart. All whom God saved from Pentecost to Acts 28:28 were added to the Church of God. At **(5) Acts 28:28** the lines cease to expand and begin to rapidly diminish; **for at that point God ceased to add those whom He saved to the Church of God**. He began a new out-calling and any whom God saved after Acts 28:28 were added to the Church, which is His body. This is illustrated on the chart by **(6)** the expanding lines, which begin at that point.

When God ceased to add those whom He saved to the Church of God it began to pass from the earthly scene. This is exactly what would happen to any body of people if no additions are made. The army of any country would soon be no more if all enlistments would cease. This diminishing group we have designated on the chart as members of the Church of God after Acts 28:28. It is with this group that we now wish to deal specifically, and in due time will answer the persistent question - What happened to the members of the Church of God after Acts 28:28?

The questions on the mind of these people were, What has happened? What does this mean? What now? What shall we do? The pronouncement that "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles" did not place these people in the new out-calling that God began there; but it did place them under a different administration, and they did not know what to do in view of the altered conditions under which they must live, walk, and serve.

The question of conduct was the most important and God did not forget the needs of His beloved people whom He saved and called in the Church of God. There was nothing in the Scriptures to guide them, so through the Apostle Paul God sends letters to Timothy and Titus in order that they may instruct the members of the Church of God as to conduct in view of the dispensational change at Acts 28:28.

An illustration of this may be found in the new wage and hour law, which recently became effective in this country. This law brought in a radical change, and businessmen discovered that they were operating under vastly changed conditions. However, the wording of the law was so general that nothing seemed to be specific or clear and many businessmen did not know what to do. They complained that there was no one to tell them what to do, and insisted that they were faced with the necessity of walking according to the law without being able to discover just what the law required.

Acts 28:28 brought a radical change of administration, and those who were believers found themselves forced to live under vastly changed conditions. If they had suddenly found themselves in the great tribulation, Matthew 24 would have instructed them as to conduct, but they were not in the great tribulation. They had suddenly found themselves under an administration that was not the subject of revelation or prophecy. However, they were faced with the necessity of rearranging their spiritual affairs, and of walking well pleasing to God. And He did not leave them without a revelation concerning what to do.

It is our position and contention that 1 Timothy and Titus were written to instruct the members of the Church of God after Acts 28:28 so that they would know how to live,

walk and serve under the altered conditions brought about by the salvation of God being sent to the Gentiles.

At this point in our studies a brief examination of 1 Timothy is in order for the purpose of showing how it fits into the teaching presented this far in these articles. This examination will touch only certain obvious features but the reader is urged to examine the entire epistle in the light of these studies; also to examine these studies in the light of 1 Timothy.

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## ***THE EPISTLE OF 1 TIMOTHY***

**1:1 Paul, an apostle.** An apostle is one who has been sent officially with authority for the execution of some task. He is an apostle until the task is complete. Here, Paul has been sent officially by the Lord Jesus Christ with authority to tell the members of the Church of God how to conduct themselves.

**The Lord Jesus Christ our hope.** The purpose and force of this simple statement is apparent. When the gifts and outward signs disappeared many thought that their hope had vanished. Not so with Paul. No matter what else had disappeared, he still had the Lord Jesus Christ and this was his hope. A parallel is seen today among those who would feel without hope if they were stripped of the outward rites and ceremonies that make up their religion. We who have been stripped of all such can say with Paul - Jesus Christ is our hope.

**1:2.** Every epistle before this had been addressed by Paul to churches, except Romans. This is the first epistle addressed to an individual.

**1:3-7.** When Paul went into Macedonia he requested Timothy to remain in Ephesus and deal with certain persons because of their erroneous and confusing teaching. He makes the same request in this epistle. Teachers had sprung up who did not understand their own words, or just what the things were about which they made such confident assertions. It is evident that the authoritative teachers (*didaskaloi*) had disappeared. Accuracy had been replaced by uncertainty,

**1:8-11.** This sets forth a new use for the law. No longer is it a rule of life that God's people might become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6). Acts 28:28 was the end of the law. As it is a part of all Scripture it takes its place as a ministry of conviction and reproof, intended only for the basest of men.

**1:15.** This revelation greatly enlarges the scope of revelation concerning Christ coming. Compare Matt. 15:24. It breaks down any bounds in which salvation had hitherto been confined.

**1:19-20.** Some had made shipwreck of their faith. Among these was one Hymenaeus. It seems that he was attempting to explain the dispensational change by teaching that the resurrection was past already. This was not true, and it overthrew the

faith of some. See 2 Tim. 2:17-18. .

**2:18.** Paul's first exhortation as to conduct is that they shall engage in unceasing prayer. They shall pray for all men, for kings, for those in high station. Men are instructed to pray everywhere. It will become increasingly evident that prayer assumes a place of vital importance after Acts 28:28 that it did not possess before. As long as there was the gift of healing, knowledge, wisdom and teaching; prayer for such things would have been akin to unbelief. They had no right to despise God's gifts by ignoring them. But now they are shut up to prayer and prayer alone.

**2:11-12.** It seems that with the absence of authoritative teachers, certain women attempted to assume such labors. Paul puts them in their proper place.

**3:1-13.** The gift of government was gone, authority no longer rested in Jerusalem, apostles no longer came to set things in order, and so the work of supervision became essential. It is difficult for people to get along without the things they have been long used to. The members of the Church of God had been used to much authority, and God here establishes that which will give them some supervision. If any man desired the work of supervision he desired a good work. The qualifications of the ideal supervisor are given. This work was essential to the members of the Church of God after Acts 28:28. No such offices were ever established for the members of the Church which is His body; we have no supervisors.

**3:14-15.** Here Paul states the purpose of this epistle. Timothy knew the Scriptures from a child. He had labored with Paul for more than ten years. Yet, Paul must write him so that he will know how to conduct himself in the Church of God. This would seem rather ridiculous if it were not for the fact that a radical change has come in and Timothy must be instructed. Paul writes so that he will have rules to guide him in the conduct of God's household. This household is identified as being the out-calling of the living God, the pillar and the foundation of the truth. This is exactly what the Church of God was.

**4:3-4.** The law established many prohibitions concerning the eating of food. See Lev. 11. And there is not a single word in the Word of God that removed these prohibitions before these words in I Tim. 4:3-4 were spoken. Galatians deals strictly with the relationship of the law to the Gentiles, but it did not take it away from the Jew as a rule of life. See Acts 21:24. It will not avail for someone to quote "For Christ is the end of the law," for it so happens that we know the whole verse, and we believe it all, not just a part of it.

These words of Paul remove every restriction against eating that was ever imposed in the Word of God. Any man can now eat pork or oysters, snakes or toads. He is not required to eat all things. and some things may not be good for him, but no one can forbid him to eat anything by quoting the Word of God.

**4:14.** This gift was a valuable one and it was to be used in ministering to the members of the Church of God. The reader will note that we do not teach that there was never a gift after Acts 28:8. There were gifts. but they were new ones, and not the sign gifts that were before that time.

**5:3-14.** To the nation of Israel, God had given responsibility of taking care of every widow. When the believing remnant became the Church of God they could not accept the blessings and refuse the responsibilities, so they had a widows roll. Acts 6 sets forth the

somewhat elaborate system, which they set up to insure the proper care of these widows. Seven men were appointed to take care of this duty. But now the Church of God is being closed out and will soon pass from the earthly scene. Paul sets up a program here which will cut the roll of widows until in time this responsibility is closed out.

First, only widows who were really in need were to be kept on the widows' roll. This would cut off many. Second, any widow that had children or grandchildren was to be supported by these. If the children failed to do this they had disowned the faith and were worse than unbelievers. This would make another big cut in the roll. Third, no widow was to be placed on the roll who was under sixty years of age. Fourth, the younger widows are to marry and raise families. Fifth, if anyone had a widow (like a man had a sister who was a widow) they were to take care of them so that the Church will not be burdened. These rules would cut the number of widows dependent on the Church to a very small number.

Paul's instructions that the younger widows are to marry is in direct opposition to his instructions given in 1 Cor. 7:26-27. This demonstrates the administrative change.

**5:23.** Paul's marvelous gift of healing is gone. He had it a few days before Acts 28:28. but it is gone when he writes to Timothy. He advises the judicious use of means for Timothy's ailing stomach and repeated infirmities. From this we learn that there was no gradual passing of the sign gifts. It was an abrupt cessation.

### To Be Continued

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## THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

The chart, which is enclosed with this issue will be referred to a number of times in connection with the articles on *The Unfolding of the Secret*. Additional copies are available if any should desire them.

\*\*\*\*In August it was our privilege to visit with friends in Buffalo, New York, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who rejoice in the truth of a rightly divided Word. They invited us to return again for conferences this fall.

\*\*\*\*There are times when the believer's heavenly character is put to a supreme test. He is **in** the world while he is not **of** the world. These two truths must be held without becoming mixed; neither truth can be denied. At the present moment the war in Europe is dominating the thoughts of most people. The radio and newspapers are filled with news of the conflict. Being in the world we cannot ignore it, and our sympathies and prayers go out especially to those believers who live in the warring countries.

Even in neutral countries the present conflict has moved into the throne room and taken the highest seat in the lives of the majority. If we are not very careful we will let war talk and war news usurp the place that we have given in our hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is especially apt to happen to those believers, who after being drenched with war talk for six days, go to church and find it is the theme of the preacher's message. We are

not suggesting that believers shall *try* to imitate the three monkeys and insist that they will see no war, hear no war and speak no war. We are *too* practical to suggest any such ridiculous attitude. However, those to whom we minister by the Written and spoken word can rest assured that we will continue to walk in the light of these words - "separated unto the gospel of God."

In our written or spoken ministry, any casual reference to the conflict now raging will probably be for the purpose of illustrating or emphasizing some Biblical truth.

\*\*\*\*From the very beginning of our printed page ministry we have been liberally and faithfully supported by those in the British Empire who rejoice in the rightly divided Word. Present conditions existing there makes the continuation of this support difficult, perhaps impossible. Some have already asked us to discontinue sending the magazine because of their present inability to give to the support of it. This we will not do, and if any wish the magazine to be discontinued they should give some other reason than their inability to support it. It will bring us real joy to continue sending the magazine to every friend of the truth in the war-stricken countries. In view of the present situation, friends in this country should take our needs to heart more than ever before.

**End, Vol. III, No. 7**