

Paul feels very much alone. It's nothing like his house arrest when he was first brought to Rome. The local saints visited him there and he was free to teach them. This time he is chained in a dreadfully uncomfortable, cold ("bring my cloak") prison. He's neglected by the local saints. Only a foreign visitor sought him out, Onesiphorus, a faithful brother who visited Paul often and refreshed him, probably physically, emotionally and spiritually. He was not ashamed to be visiting a prisoner, not fearful of the Emperor. Onesiphorus was the sort of man who looked after the needs of others (perhaps a deacon in Ephesus?). Paul pronounces a blessing upon his household which undoubtedly missed him while he was away in Rome. He blesses his house rather than he himself directly. The best thanks for a brother like Onesiphorus is to bless his family and household. (Or if he has died to call down blessing on his survivors.) But he apparently was not one who was gifted, as Timothy was, to teach and preserve the truth. Timothy is Paul's only solace, his only hope to salvage what they had built. Not only were the local Roman brethren neglecting him but he has the awful disheartening news from Asia (where Timothy had been left to instruct godly conduct in the house of God and hold the truth). All there, in the province of Asia, had turned away from him. He names two men particularly. Were they leaders of this departure or is he especially shocked that even they were among those who had laid aside the truth he had so faithfully taught for years among them? Note he does not say they had apostatized from Christ. They apparently are true saints of God. But they have forsaken Paul, that is, what he had taught. What did he teach that they forsook? Was that truth ever recovered among these assemblies in Asia (now Turkey)? The letters Jesus dictated to John to be sent to the seven assemblies in Asia address specific issues and problems in each of the seven. But only that at Philadelphia seems to have retained (or recovered) what all in Asia had forsaken. They speak to us today. Have we recovered and retained the truth of the New Testament? Especially that God used Paul to give us? There have been a number of international councils convened down through the centuries when controversies arose concerning the truth of Scripture. Most, if not all of these were concerned with preserving basic teaching contained in the New Testament regarding Christ's Person and His Atoning Work accomplished on the cross. These are the very basics of Christianity. Apparently, very early indeed, the saints more or less lost interest in some essential parts of Paul's teaching, such as ecclesiastical (church) truth, the truth of the pre-tribulation Rapture, etc. These may have been retained in very local remnants down through the centuries but the publically recognized Church did not keep or observe them. In fact, they gradually substituted erroneous teaching and practices completely contrary to what Paul had written us. By the mercy of God, the truth of salvation

by grace was largely recovered 14 centuries later in the Reformation although more recently many mainline Protestant churches have gradually forsaken this again. More recently, much ecclesiastical truth, and the truth of the Rapture, was recovered and widely publicized in a remarkable world wide revival in the mid-nineteenth century. These truths were (and still are) ignored, rejected and resisted by the established church. So those who did receive them are only a remnant that holds and attempts to keep and practice today, that which Paul had established so long ago.

Timothy is to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This grace involves all of the unique blessings we have in Christ as presented in the New Testament. What are these? Make your list. Some are listed on the back of this sheet. What truth do you hold and value and keep?

Timothy was to enlist help to preserve and spread the truth he had in Paul's epistles. He was to recruit qualified faithful men and charge them with the preservation and teaching of Paul's writings to others. This was not going to be easy for Timothy, but it is crucial that he undertake and succeed in his mission for the Lord. Paul coaches him for the tasks ahead. Various attributes are to characterize him, and other men of God. He is to be:

A good soldier, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

A faithful soldier, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

A qualified athlete, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

A patient farmer/grower, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits." One must work to eat, but the grower gets to eat first.

A thinking man, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding [and knowledge] in all things."

A devoted, godly, knowledgeable man, "**Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel**" (NASB).

A persecuted man, willing to suffer unjust disgrace and imprisonment, for Christ, "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds;"

A confident man, "but the word of God is not bound."

The list continues through this chapter and the next, with comments that enlarge on the path set before any of us who desire to be faithful followers of the rejected Lord in the midst of almost universal departure from what He died to create. As we study this fascinating epistle, the Apostle's lasts words, watch for the instructions, the warnings and the encouragement Paul gives us. We are not left helpless, lost sheep in the wilderness. Hang tough!

By Ron Canner, June 21, 2006

Important Scriptural Truth

Here are some examples of scriptural truth now lost, neglected, ignored, rejected, forsaken, by and large by the professing Church and many professed believers. Many hold some of this in their creeds and liturgy but not in practice. While true believers do hold to saving truth of the gospel and the basic truth that make one a Christian, other truth in Scripture is not so widely held, honored and practiced today. Creeds often supersede Scripture as a basis for practice.

Salvation by grace, not of works;
Salvation based on the substitutive shed blood of Christ on the cross;
The Spirit indwelling each believer;
The local assembly, the temple of the Holy Spirit;
The various free spiritual gifts from the ascended Lord,
 received individually through the Holy Spirit,
 and empowered by the Holy Spirit,
 to be used as directed by the Lord Himself;
Various spiritual gifts to be given liberty to function in the local church as directed by the Lord and
 not man's control;
The world wide unity of the Body of Christ also reflected in the unity of believers within each local
 assembly;
The priesthood of all believers not a select few,
 with authority to pray, worship and prophesy publically amongst the believers as led by the Holy
 Spirit when gathered unto the Lord's name;
The call to preach the gospel to lost sinners in the world and the liberty to go and preach without
 authorization of men;
The individual believer's direct access to God in confession, prayer and worship;
The individual believer's capacity to understand and receive the truth from God though the inspired
 scriptures as taught by the Spirit.

What scriptures would you use to support or discredit these beliefs?

What beliefs would you add to the list? Why?

What beliefs would you delete. Why?