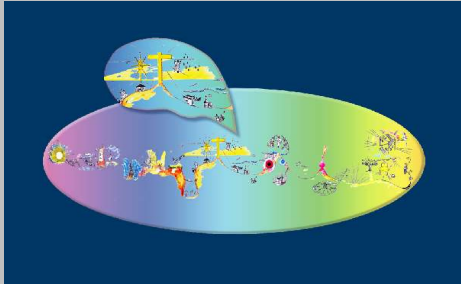


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## Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

*All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!*

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HULDAH MINISTRY

# LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

## [ APOSTASY FROM THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL ]

*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

*Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.*

*Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."*

*In a large house there are articles not only of gold silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

2TIMOTHY 2:8-21.

Paul, imprisoned and chained like a common criminal under Emperor Nero in Rome, wrote an epistle to Timothy, a part of which was quoted above. In it Paul was very concerned about guarding the true gospel, which he sometimes called *'my gospel'* in his epistles.

It is the *'resurrection'* that Paul put focus on in the quoted passage. After reminding Timothy of the fact that insight should be sought from God in order to understand Paul's gospel, he made it clear that his suffering as a criminal in a cold dungeon was to guard the true gospel for the sake of God's elects' salvation. The basics of the gospel are both Christ's hundred percent "deity" and His hundred percent "humanity". The former is proved by Christ's resurrection after death and the latter, by His descent from David.

Christ's deity was well explained in the messages to the crowd by Peter on the day of Pentecost: *'Jesus of Nazareth...was handed over ...to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me ...Seeing what was ahead, he (David) spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God... For David did not ascend to heaven and yet he said, "The Lord (Yahweh) said to my Lord (the Son of David, the Messiah): "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." ' (Acts 2:22-36, Lines added). Quoting Psalm 110:1, Peter interpreted that David, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had recognised his descendant to be not only superior to himself but also sovereign and divine. Accordingly, his descendant was not only to be resurrected but also to be exalted to God's right hand, in sharp contrast to David's decomposed remains still being laid in his tomb in Jerusalem even to this day.*

Thus, having accomplished the salvific work for man, Christ has since sat enthroned in the place of honour beside a king, second in authority to God the Father, until God makes Christ's enemies a footstool for His feet. Returning to the Epistle by Paul, Paul's strength of enduring suffering for Christ and for the sake of His chosen ones' salvation solely lies in an assured hope of the resurrection after Christ as the first-fruit, which is sung in *'a trustworthy saying,'* i.e., in an early Christian hymn in the quoted passage. Enduring suffering and trial for Christ in "this-worldly down-to-earth kingdom", and dedicated effort by Christ's followers to the end would satisfactorily be rewarded with eternal glory when He returns. After encouraging Timothy to follow the three good examples as a committed *'soldier'*, a law-observing *'athlete'*, and a hard-working *'farmer'*, in the preceding verses of the quoted Epistle, Paul moved on to warn him of the spreading heresy of Gnosticism. Two leaders *'Hymenaeus'* and *'Philetus'* were such heretics and some had already been influenced by their false teaching and wandered away from the truth. Their claim was a denial of the bodily resurrection, in that they interpreted the resurrection allegorically and spiritually but not literally.

Paul dealt with this kind of false contention in another of his Epistle to 1 Corinthians: *'But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ...And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.'* (15:12-19). In this passage, Paul's emphasis on Christ's resurrection on the third day after death as "historical fact" is shown by seven repetitions of the same verb form that expresses the certainty of His bodily resurrection. The word of truth, that is, the gospel of our salvation should correctly be preached so that none of those who listen would be ruined and their faith destroyed. This is Paul's appeal to Timothy who was invited to join him in suffering for the true gospel by the power of God.

Thanks to God and His grace, however, despite the spreading heresy, *'God's solid foundation'* continually stands firm. Here, God's solid foundation is the church, i.e., Christ's true followers. While each individual belonging to her is sealed secured in an intimate relationship with Him, the church is to be expected to respond to Christ with responsibility: *'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'* In reality, the church, Christ's big community contains various

articles in it, ranging from precious, solid gold and silver to weak, fragile wood and clay, in other words, from some for noble purposes to some for ignoble. Yet, encouraging is the fact that none of the article has yet been completed as God's vessel, and each will have ample opportunities to be **'an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work,'** by willingly cleansing oneself, and keeping detached from **'godless chatter'** of no value. Keeping yourself from foolish and stupid arguments which produce quarrels, and instead, fleeing evil desires and pursuing **'righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart,'** are all recommended to the Lord's servant. As Paul suggests, instead of quarrelling, the opposite, gently instructing them might produce a fruit that **'God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.'** This closing message of the passage gives us a good indication as to how biblically to deal with those who have corrupted and debased the true doctrine of Christ and His apostles by speculations, philosophical prejudices, presuppositions according to allegorical expositions and ideas. Paul repeatedly warns us of the foolishness of being involved in stupid arguments, and also being led to quarrelling about words.

With regard to the various articles in the church, whose equivalent in the Hebrew Bible is **'the house of God,'** the passage reminds me of verses of Isaiah 22:20-25. In Isaiah 22, there are two prominent leaders nominated to be in charge of the palace, i.e., the house of Judah. The first was **'Shebna,'** but he failed in remaining faithful to the Lord by misusing his authority and his status to satisfy himself; boasting of his splendid chariots, building up his own graves on the heights, and chiselling his name in the rock as his resting place. In the end, he was deposed from his office and lowered in position. The second was **'Eliakim'.** He was summoned to be a father to the house of Judah and fully promised a seat of honour for the house of his father in order to reign over various vessels, from the lesser to the larger: **'I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no-one can open. I will drive him like a peg into a firm place.'** However, in spite of all expectations and privileges given from God, he, too, was prophesied to fail in ruling his large house appropriately, and the peg once driven into a firm place is to be driven out to fall with all the load hanging on it. His failure implicitly speaks of the enormous difficulty of ruling over a house of God where there are various vessels coexisting and mingled together. Likewise, it would be almost impossible to make the church completely united and one in the Lord without division under human leaders until **'that day'** comes when human rule will come to an end, to be replaced by the only true Shepherd, our Lord's sovereign leadership. This will be the day Christ returns and all His true followers will triumphantly be clothed with brand new resurrection bodies. Until that day, the true followers of Christ are encouraged to be continually faithful to Him and His true gospel with the responsibility of cleansing themselves, enduring through persecutions.

The message above is very relevant today when the credibility of the Bible is being increasingly questioned. Critics continually claim that the Bible is full of fiction and unfulfilled prophecy, and even more astonishingly, an increasing number of Christian leaders are calling its history, reliability and authority into question. There is a recent trend for theologically trained pastors and church leaders to emphasise that there is no historical evidence of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension and so on, but it is faith, they say, to believe in what is unknown and what we cannot make certain of whether or not they literally happened. Their standing on the issue is coloured by scepticism and their interpretation of the ancient miraculous events caused by God's intervention to the nation Israel recorded in the Hebrew Bible is that they are allegorical fables. Surely their pedantic exposition of the Bible contradicts their self-professed faith in Christ. If they do not regard the Bible itself as a God-inspired historical and infallible book, how can they believe in Christ whom the whole Bible testifies? Concerning their attitude towards the Bible, two things are worth pointing out. First, it is futile to seek other man-made sources to prove the validity of biblical statements and to put more trust in other sources than the Bible itself. Secondly, the famous biblical statement about faith: **'Now faith is being hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.'** (Hebrews 11:1-2) should be applied to future events that are still unknown for us, but should not be applied to things that have happened already in human history. Accordingly, true faith is to believe that what is written in the Bible to have happened in the past is **"historical"** with respect of the authenticity of the Word of God, and also, to believe that what is prophesied in the Bible will assuredly take place in the future because God is continually faithful to His Word as He always has been in the past, whether or not

we sinful men are unfaithful to Him.

John Owen, a leading English Puritan pastor and theologian in the 17th century warned Christians of apostasy from the gospel, in which he puts it: "Without spiritual illumination, the doctrines of the gospel are open to scepticism. Sceptics pretend not to renounce or forsake the truth. But they talk about the truth and argue about it with a 'take it or leave it' attitude about them. They are indifferent as to whether it is true or not. Scripture, the Trinity, Christ and his offices, justification by grace and all the other great truths of the gospel are weighed and examined in the defiled, tottering scales of bold, irreverent sceptical discussions. They may be teachers of religion, but they show their ignorance of the fundamental difference between truth and error. They cannot see the glory, beauty and power of truth, so it is all one to them whether it is truth or whether it is error." (*'Apostasy from the Gospel'*, John Owen, The Banner of Truth Trust).

Recent confusion with regard to the Bible's authenticity might have been brought about by Dan Brown's book "The Da Vinci Code." While some Christians are said to have been spiritually stimulated to be prepared to give an answer to everyone and to give reason for their hope in Christ, others might have fallen into confusion and turned their ears away from the truth and turned aside to myths, precisely as Paul warned as a degenerate sign of the last days. In his book, Dan Brown presented the New Testament as unreliable and he denies Jesus' deity. Accordingly, if the New Testament is not historically reliable, our faith in Christ is not credible at all. However, thanks to God's preservation, the reliability and authenticity of the Bible can be evaluated from two points: (1) the accuracy of the New Testament documents' copies and (2) the accuracy of events' recorded in it. First, although none of the original manuscripts of the Bible has survived, it is a fact that the number, date and quality of the copies of the documents that have survived from ancient times are better than any other book that has survived from the ancient world. The New Testament has more manuscripts, and earlier manuscripts after the original composition. It is amazing to know the existence of some 5700 Greek manuscripts compared with 643 manuscripts from Homer's "Iliad". Concerning earlier manuscripts, to our amazement, the earliest Greek manuscripts of the New Testament are from between 25 and 150 years, while only a few other ancient books have manuscripts copied within 500 years of the original. The accuracy of the copies of the New Testament is said to be 99.5 percent, which means that if you cannot trust them, then there will be no other written sources from the ancient world that are more reliable. Secondly, the truth of the accounts recorded in the New Testament is attested by nine individual authors who were all eyewitnesses and contemporaries of the events that they recorded. Thus the New Testament was written between 55CE and 100CE, when many of the eyewitnesses were still alive. Furthermore, the diversity of accounts in the four Gospels rather confirms their authenticity.

As examined above, it could not have been easy at all for Paul to keep faith in Christ amidst the continual severe spiritual warfare and conflict he faced, in contrast with the majority of Christians today who find it easy to keep it. We should be reminded that we can easily slip into neglecting or forsaking the truth of the gospel and to turn away from the faith just as it had been a great problem in the early churches planted by, and directly taught by the apostles. For example, within five or six years after the establishment of the church in Corinth which had been planted by Paul and watered by Apollos, many had denied the resurrection of the dead. The church in Galatia had also, in a very short while, turned away from the doctrine of grace and justification by faith alone, and fell into a fallacy to seek for righteousness by works of the law. These past lessons teach us that we ought not to take it for granted that we are able to keep the faith just because we are Christians. Rather, we are reminded of the possibility that Christians today fall away easily from the true gospel after having received it. Peter, Jude, and John, and later, Christ in His revelation, also warned the churches of approaching apostasy, of the coming antichrist, and of the coming of the '*lawless one*'. Such apostatised conditions of the church seem not to have changed from the beginning to today.

#### **NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS-NEWS**

This month a money gift of £ \*\*\*\* been sent to MARY JANE in the Philippines. Her ministry of outreaching to both impoverished children in suburbs of Manila and mountain tribes of Damagaut has been expanding. The other money gift of £ \*\*\*\* has been sent to FREDERIC to support his ministry for salvation of his countrymen, Burundians. Pray for the Lord's assured guidance and protection upon both of them, their co-workers and their ministries so that His salvation will work out through them vigorously, especially where Christ was not known yet.