

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

A FAITHFUL REMNANT

Introduction:

1. God has always had a faithful few – a remnant who remained loyal to Him.
 2. This has been true in every age of the world.
 3. It remains true in the Christian Age (Matthew 7:13-14).
- I. The Faithful Remnant in the Old Testament
- A. At the time of the Flood, Noah’s family was the faithful remnant (1 Peter 3:20).
 - B. In the divided kingdom, Judah was the faithful remnant (1 Kings 12:16-17, 19).
 - C. During the captivity, there was a faithful remnant.
 1. When Israel was taken captive, Judah was the remnant (2 Kings 19:29-31).
 2. When Judah was taken captive, the remnant was taken captive with them (2 Kings 21:12-15).
 3. However, a faithful remnant was allowed to return from captivity (2 Chronicles 30:6; Ezra 3:8; Isaiah 1:9; 10:20-22; Micah 7:18-20).
 - D. This doctrine of the remnant carries over into the New Testament (Joel 2:32).
- II. The Faithful Remnant in the New Testament
- A. Of the Jews, only a faithful few accepted Jesus as the Messiah (Romans 9:27; 11:5).
 - B. At the beginning of the church, only a faithful few were obedient to the Gospel (Acts 2:37-41).
 - C. During great persecution, only a faithful few remained faithful to Christ (Revelation 12:17).
- III. The Faithful Remnant in the History of the Church
- A. Initially, the persecution of the church by the Roman Empire was more political than religious.
 - B. However, as the church continued to apostatize from the Truth and to become accepted by Rome, the persecution became more and more religious in nature.
 1. Now, if the dogmas of the Catholic Church were rejected, one’s life was endangered.
 2. Ultimately, both the Roman Government and the Catholic Church became persecutors of pure Christianity.
 - C. Yet, there were those who remained faithful to the Gospel.
 1. In many cases, those who simply wanted to follow the New Testament were classed with the heretics of the day.
 2. Thus, many faithful were put to death.
 - D. Dr. Hans Grimm writes about one of these early persecutions.
 1. “By families and by groups Christians who were concealing themselves from the executioners settled in the inaccessible oases of Northwest Arabia, concealed themselves in the almost waterless wadis of the Sinaitic Peninsula, fled into the chaotic cities of the Nile delta...”
 2. “[T]hey emerged in the hinterland of Cyrenaika, on the island of Djerba near the Tunisian coast, and in the High and Lower Atlas mountains.”
 - E. Around 350 AD, a merchant named Priscillianus began teaching the simple Gospel in the Pyrenees.
 1. He and several other Christians were beheaded in 380.
 2. However, centuries later there were congregations in Portugal and France who traced their roots to his work.

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- F. By the year 422 there was a sizeable population of Christians located in the British Isles.
1. Germanus, a Catholic bishop, wrote that these Christians had rejected the doctrine of original sin and practiced the immersion of adults only.
 2. He also wrote that they did not recognize the authority of the Pope nor the hierarchy of the Roman Church.
 3. They also refused to practice the ritualism of the Roman Church in their worship services.
 4. When Britain was conquered by the Anglo-Saxons and then the Romans, most of these churches ceased to exist.
 5. However, they had been very evangelistic in their time, especially the Irish and Scottish congregations.
 6. Thus, the pure Gospel had spread into Germany where one Christian named Kilian had made a note on his Greek copy of the book of Romans at chapter three – “Faith, hid in the heart, makes man just.”
 7. This Kilian was murdered by order of the Duke of the Franks.
 8. It was not until the eighth and ninth centuries that the Irish and then the Scottish churches began to be assimilated into the national (Roman Catholic) Church.
 9. In fact, in the year 1390 in Celtic Hill Cliff in Wales, a building was built for the meeting of the church which contained a “great basin for immersion of adults in baptism upon confession of faith.”
- G. In 375, the church in Syria attempted to stand against error from both false doctrine and the forming “state” church.
1. A widow named Kallinike issued a public protest against these errors.
 2. In her statement, she appealed only to the words and deeds of the apostle Paul.
 3. As a result, she and her two sons were banished.
- H. Around 625, a man named Constantine was converted to Christ and began meeting with the churches in the catacombs.
1. In order to protect himself and the church, he encouraged the use of “codenames.”
 2. He became known as “Silvanus.”
 3. Ultimately, he was captured and stoned to death.
 4. Upon witnessing his murder, the governor of the region began to study the death of Stephen and became a Christian himself.
 5. He went by the codename “Titus” and became an evangelist in Galatia and Cappadocia.
 6. In 624, he was captured and burned alive.
 7. Following his death, there was a period of relative peace for the church in this area.
 8. During this time, they began to be called “Paulicians” by their enemies for in every argument they relied upon the writings of Paul as their standard.
 9. However, they called themselves simply “Christians” and “brothers and sisters.”
 10. Following a debate between this group and a Byzantine monk, he wrote concerning them:
“Only the New Testament was accepted among them as rule for faith and church practice; they rejected the worship of the Mother of God and of the saints, even of the great martyrs...; they do not consecrate a special worship to the Archangels or to Elias, have no church feasts at all; each Sunday they assembled in places of prayer which are not worthy to be named thus, since they have neither altar nor wall for pictures of the saints, nor a place for keeping the holy vessels; they use neither incense nor chrism oil. They despise and scorn the baptism of the church and say that infants have no faith. They recognize neither the jurisdiction of the Patriarch at Constantinople nor of the Patriarch of Antioch and Jerusalem and have no respect for the schismatic church of the Armenians. They are proud of the fact that their churches are small and poor and that their evangelists live only

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from what sheltering believers give them voluntarily. They do not accept the false accusation that the heretic Paulus is said to have founded their sect, and say that they are not Paulicians, but Christians, and chosen of God.”

- I. In the early 800’s, persecution became so severe that Christians fled into the Muslim-controlled region of Kurdistan.
 1. So many Christians fled to this area that a city had to be built to house them – the city of Tephrika.
 2. The persecutors called this city Christianopolis.
 3. Historical estimates state that around 100,000 people were executed as they attempted to flee to Kurdistan.
 4. During this time, many decided to form or join a “Christian army” and raid the lands of the persecutors in order to free Christians who were taken captive.
 5. However, several groups of Christians held that this was sinful, saying that “the Holy Spirit who (you know) only takes from him and shares with us what Christ in his testament has revealed to us, will never demand of us that we ever fight with others with any but spiritual weapons; and Christ forbids us to battle, not only for the kingdoms of this world, but also for the kingdom of God.”
 6. Naturally, the Muslims agreed with this plan and encouraged the Christians to fight.
 7. Several congregations in Galatia and Phrygia were saved by this fighting force.
 8. However, in 871, as they were returning through the Taurus Mountains, they and their rescued brethren were ambushed and killed – to the last man.
 9. Upon the failure of the Christians, the Muslims tripled the taxes required of them.
 10. Their flocks, herds, lands and homes were taken from them by the Islamists.
 11. Then, the followers of Mohammed began killing the Christians.
 12. At this time, the Emperor of Rome made a decree that if the Christians promised to give up violence, they could return to the province of Asia Minor.
 13. About 80,000 did so, and 70 years later they were exiled to Thrace to serve as a border between Rome and the Bulgarians. (A small group remained in northern Armenia, hidden from both the Romans and the Muslims.)
 14. Many of those sent to Thrace were executed as heretics.
 15. Some fled from the persecution and established a church in the Ukraine in 1071.
 16. By 1115, they were found in northern Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
 17. By the 1200’s, the people had begun calling these groups the *Katharoi*, meaning, “the Pure.”
 18. But the Catholics, by means of the Inquisition, attributed to them various kinds of false doctrines and “unspeakable crimes.”
 - a. For example, they refused to acknowledge the clergy or the sacraments of the Catholic Church.
 - b. They preferred the New Testament to the Old Testament.
 - c. They rejected all confessions of faith formulated by religious councils, standing on the Word of God alone.
 19. Several congregations continued in the mountains of Herzegovina until 1942, at which time they were destroyed by the Nazis.
- J. Many other stories could be told of God’s faithful remnant and their suffering for their faith.

Conclusion:

1. Are you a part of God’s faithful remnant?
2. Are you willing to remain faithful – even unto death (Revelation 2:10)?