

INTRODUCTION

My original idea for writing a religious book was to express my opinions about the problem of women speaking in the early church. Many years ago my wife and I visited Greece and heard the tour guides expound about Corinth, Greece and its history during the New Testament times. This whetted my curiosity to know more about the church during the Apostle Paul's time and what happened to it since that time.

As I researched the available material about the history of the church, I soon realized a more realistic view of the operation of the early church was needed before you can adequately discuss the women's issues. In my opinion not enough information has come forth concerning the workings of the Holy Spirit and the public presence of the early church which greatly affected what Paul said about the women.

Prior to 1994 it would have been very difficult for an ordinary man like me to do research about the Church Fathers. In 1994 Hendrickson Publishing Co. published three sets of volumes that compiled the English translations of the Church Fathers from New Testament times to about 500 A.D. Before this publication it was very difficult to know what these church leaders wrote about the Holy Spirit and the church. In fact, I had to have a Latin translator translate Priscillian's writings for this book.

Several major eye openers occurred to me during my research. First and foremost was the importance of the "democracy" to the beginnings of the early church. Second was the historical significance of the word "ekklesia" which was the Greek word translated "church" in the New Testament. Third was the apparent influence the Judaizers had on the early church and how they altered the operations of the Church. Fourth were the events that affected the timing and reason for writing the various New Testament books especially the writings of the Apostle John which occurred some 30 years after the others. Then there were the writings of the Church Fathers all the way from Ignatius to Augustine which vividly showed the battle between the forces of Satan and the Holy Spirit for control of this thing called the "church".

You may wonder why a person like me would attempt to write a book about the church when there are no doubt hundreds already on the bookshelves. For a long time I have felt the Holy Spirit was never given adequate credit for its importance to the operation of the church. My Christian life has brought me to this point and it started many years ago when I was saved at the tender age of seven. There was never any question in my mind because that night at the revival services I sat on the second row instead of with my parents near the rear of the church. When the revival leader gave the call, I was right there to shake his hand. From then on, I attended church on a fairly constant basis; however, I was not perfect by any means. I always knew when I was doing wrong by that small inner voice in my soul.

I am a geologist by training and because I was in the oil business we moved to several locations. My family and I always joined the local Baptist Church and made many Christian friends around the country. While in Houston, Texas, I was confronted with the workings of the Holy Spirit by visiting some spirit-filled Christian groups. There I was, a successful businessman of forty facing more decisions in my Christian life and quite frankly, was not happy about the situation; however, I knew I was not receiving what I should from my Christianity because I knew enough about the Bible to know there was much more available to me

About this time, I received a vision from, whom else, the Lord. I saw a twenty mule team pulling a wagon through the desert. This picture was from a television show called Death Valley Days hosted by Ronald Reagan during his acting days. Jesus was driving this huge wagon and I was holding onto the rear walking along through the sagebrush and cacti. I was holding onto the wagon with one hand and my family, business and other worldly items with the other. At times, I would turn loose and have to run to catch the wagon. I was then confronted with the question, why don't you get up on the wagon? This meant accepting everything He (Jesus) had for me, including the things of the Holy Spirit, which I was not familiar with, such as the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. These Gifts are the same ones that are prominently displayed in the New Testament. I put myself along with my family and all my worldly obligations up on the wagon. (Incidentally, my wife was already there.) Jesus looked around nodded at me approving-

ly and snapped the reins at the mules. We continued on across the desert together and it's been a great ride since that time.

Because of this background I have made an attempt to show by this book "what the Church ought to be". I have gone through history showing what God did through His Holy Spirit for His people and what He meant to leave for his people after He paved the way for the redemption of mankind back to Himself through his Son Jesus Christ. What he left for mankind was the most powerful entity. It was to show the world His power and His love at the same time. This entity, called by Himself, His ekklesia, was set up to win the world possibly in that generation. We will never know because it didn't happen because of man's weakness and unbelief. But, alas, what God wills and what mankind does has often not been the same thing. Through history man has messed up God's will many times. However, what we do know is, this potentially powerful entity, His ekklesia, His Body of Christ, continues to be available for us today.

My visions from God always involved powerful images such as the twenty mule team pulling a wagon. In keeping with this motif, the vision He gave me concerning the ekklesia-Body of Christ was that of a 747 jet airliner. What Jesus left for His people was analogous to the 747. It has to have a relatively short but smooth road, something like 8,000-10,000 feet of runway and wheels to roll on this road. It also must have power to attain a great speed. Then the 747 must have something you can't readily see and that is an air-foil wing that provides the lift necessary to leave the ground and soar into the air.

The ekklesia, the basic unit of democracy provided the runway because man has to be able to express the revelations he receives from God. Jesus' salvation makes us God's people and this puts the wheels under the plane. God is always willing to provide the power and the Holy Spirit, through His Gifts to the Body of Christ, provides the unseen lift of the wing's to put the 747 up in the sky.

By his own wisdom, mankind through history has impeded this procedure. For the most part he has been satisfied to stay on the ground with only the wheels for transportation. When this happens, the air-foil wings must be removed in order to travel the roads.

I know this sounds absurd; however, the early ekklesia- church used the air-foil wings and saw that they worked to perfection. But early on there were those who wanted to stay on the ground. The Judaizers who held onto the Law and Temple took away the air-foil wing (Holy Spirit) and several books of the New Testament were aimed at this problem. The Apostle John saw this and tried to put the air-foil wings back on the 747 with his writings. Since those days the battle has been continuous between those that want to fly and those that want to keep the 747 on the ground.

My study has found that you need the runway first, the ekklesia-church, that Jesus knew would work because of the democracy. Man has to be free to express the revelations he receives from God. These revelations are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and they will provide the lift and God will provide the power. I hope this book shows you "What the Church Ought To Be". We need to turn it loose and let it fly!