

Letter by Lecil Sullivan

Later Workers

Letter by Lecil Sullivan

December 3, 2012

Lecil Sullivan's Letter to Family Explanation of Beginning of Workers in Ireland

1623 Robbins Rd.
Grand Haven, MI 49417
December 3, 2012

1 Cor. 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

You may have heard people say that this fellowship we cherish so highly was started by certain men in the late eighteen hundreds. Let me say assuredly that this fellowship we love so dearly was not started by any man. It is not the work of man. God planned this before He laid the foundation of the world, and in His faithfulness He has kept it the same throughout the ages.

It would be disheartening to read some of the Scriptures about times when God's people rebelled against Him and about how they strayed so far, far from his righteous Commandments, times when God's lamp of truth burned very low. However, it is encouraging to find that when they turned to the Lord and cried to Him in their distress, **he heard them and raised up someone** (He worked through faithful men and women) to deliver them and get them back on the right track. Time and again this happened.

Two of these instances are outstanding, and show that things were not always well with God's people as a whole. One of these is recorded in the first part of Samuel. No need to write much about it, but the priests had become very, very corrupt. God raised up Samuel to set things straight and revive the true plan of God. It had not changed.

Years later, and after many disappointments to God, there is another occasion recorded that shows just how far they had gotten from the True and Living God. In II Chronicles 15, the prophet Azariah's words to King Asa, give us a little glimpse into that era. Vs. 2, "... The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season, Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law." God used King Asa to replenish the oil and relight the golden candlestick in the House of God. He helped the people to return to God's true form of worship. No change from that which was from the beginning. Simply a renewal.

Now, let us come to our day. Part of the following was told me by one who was there from the first. The rest is from others who soon followed after. Some of these people were still "hale and hearty" in the early 1950's when I was first learning of this faith. It was very encouraging and refreshing to have fellowship with those faithful souls, and to hear of their marvelous experiences.

A little over a hundred years ago a small group of Bible-reading-men in Great Britain began to compare the form of worship they were practicing to the teachings of Jesus. They all agreed that there was a difference. If, as in Heb. 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever", they reasoned, why should it not be the same in our day as He presented it when He was on the earth? Why not the same teachings the apostles and those early Christians followed? They earnestly considered these questions among themselves.

These men made a diligent search of the Scriptures. They noted that soon after Jesus started preaching the gospel, He began to establish a New Testament ministry. He called men from their homes, families, occupations, and all earthly possessions, to follow and learn of Him. His promise to them was that, if they did this, their Heavenly father would supply all their needs. After the first disciples had been with Jesus for a time, and learned from Him the truth of the gospel, He chose twelve from among them and sent them forth, two together, to relate to others the wonderful "Good News" He had imparted unto them. Later seventy more were sent in the same manner.

The men pondered these things and discussed their findings at length. When it was brought to a personal level, they agreed that, "If I am going to preach the gospel, I should follow the teachings of Jesus." Some of them acted on this. They began to pair off and go forth two and two, proclaiming the wonderful gospel story, like the Lord had sent those first apostles. One of these was a well-to-do farmer. He had a nice home, a fine farm, and equipment. He sold it all and gave away the proceeds. Though it amounted to a great deal, he did not at all feel that in doing this he was giving up more than any of the others. Matt. 19:27 Peter said, "...We have forsaken ALL and followed Thee..." Whether they had little or much to give, it was their ALL. In a brief time many young men and women could see the "fields white unto harvest" and were moved to joyfully, willingly yield themselves to the work of the Lord.

Many of the people who listened to them, were elated to hear what these hearty souls were bringing forth from the Scriptures, and they believed the messages which came flowing from the sincere, earnest hearts of those who had made themselves poor and homeless for Jesus sake. Those people eagerly and gladly supported their work, and that was the way God had supplied the needs of

those first apostles – as in Luke 8:3 "...ministered unto Him of their substance". It was soon evident that, "This is working, just as it did in Jesus. time. It hasn't changed."

(There are some in our day who criticize – even ridicule – this kind of ministry. **This question comes to me, "Was God wrong when He first planned this? Did He later have to change His mind and decide that a different way was better?"** Not at all! Ps. 18:30, "As for God, His way is perfect...")

As the number of "believers increased, another question arose. How shall we worship? Several references were found in the Bible of the church meeting in someone's home. "Church" here referring to the people, not a building. So the people would go to a home to worship. But what would the procedure be? What the order?

They found that in Acts 20:7 "...upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread. Paul met with them. In 1 Cor: Ch's 11, 12 and 14, Paul gave quite explicit instructions concerning what should and should not be, when the Lord's people came together to worship. He stressed, "Let all things done unto edifying". Ch. 11; beginning with Vs 20 one of the first things he mentioned concerned the "breaking of bread". This was the most important part of the meeting. It was to be done with reverence, in remembrance of the Lord. Paul cautioned them, sternly not to partake of the bread the cup casually or carelessly, lest they "eat and drink of damnation unto themselves".

Then further, Ch. 14:26, "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a Psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, etc..." Ch. 14:31, "For ye may all prophesy, one by one, that all may learn that all may be comforted." Ch. 14:3, "... he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Clearly, not just one person did all the "preaching". Each one could have something from the Lord to offer, which would be food for the soul. Something from the Scriptures or personal spiritual experiences, which would be edifying, encouraging, and comforting for all.

Some of those young "servants" and "handmaids" of the Lord took Matt. 28:18-20 seriously – Jesus' last instructions to His disciples before He ascended into heaven, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Their eyes saw beyond their own coasts, and soon they were traversing the oceans, going to distant lands. They took to those countries the same message Jesus gave to his first disciples, guiding them into the same fellowship that is now so dear to us.

Now, the men afore mentioned, did they all continue in the faith? Sadly, no. But from what I gather, there were only a few who turned aside. I heard of only two. There may have been more. Information was sketchy on these. The one I heard most about apparently did not deny the truth of the Gospel. As it was told me, he just got lifted up in himself, and sort of went out on His own. This sort of thing isn't strange to the Scripture. Some of Jesus' disciples turned back. There are many examples in the Bible of those who did much good for the kingdom, but had a poor ending.

Perhaps we could say that this man's life somewhat paralleled that of King Uzziah in II Chr. 26. Vs. 4, "...He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord..." Vs. 5, "...as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." From there it tells of the wonderful things this man did for the Kingdom. But then we come to Vs. 15, "...And his name was spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his own destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God..." Because of his grievous sin, God smote Uzziah with leprosy, and he died a leper. How sad.

I Jn. 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; V. 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His son Jesus Christ."

Was this started by men? Is it something that just came out of the human mind? You know my answer. Let us give all the glory to our faithful God.

Kind greetings to all,
With caring thoughts,
Uncle Lecil [Sullivan]