

March 25, 2017

My Dear Brethren in Nor Cal,

I have been away for several weeks and I pray that you are doing well and preparing for the Passover. Mr. Kubik's weekly communication to the church has been encouraging to me and please take the time to read this week's letter closely as we contemplate what Christ did for us through His death and resurrection. I also hope you are planning your schedules to observe the church-wide fast on Sabbath April 22.

Since I am away I thought you might appreciate a short update and along with this I have a Sabbath thought I wanted to share with you.

This past week has been busy addressing administrative matters associated with laying a foundation for growth in the French-speaking European areas – if God so wills it. This Sabbath, I am visiting brethren in Narbonne. Narbonne is near the Mediterranean Sea just north of the border with Spain and has a long and illustrious history dating back more than 2000 years, as a strategic port city to Julius Caesar, later as the capital of the only French province belonging to the Visigoth Empire and finally as a center of Jewish scholarship during the Middle Ages. A steadfast family spanning three generations remains faithful to the truth here in Narbonne observing Sabbath services in the living room of a family member, singing hymns to CD accompaniment and listening to pre-recorded sermons. The older members of the family have been faithful to the truth for more than 40 years.

As I consider this small group of faithful believers here in France and us few in the Bay Area, I am reminded of Paul's words in I Corinthians 3:6, "I planted, Apollos watered and God gave the increase". Each of us has been planted in a place and time according to God's direction – the plantings may be small, but God will give an amazing increase in His time. I was also reminded of Paul's words this week as I walked a street in Bordeaux. I took a picture and attached it here (the picture is 4MB in size so I hope you can see it). The scene is typical of central Bordeaux: narrow streets, all brick and stone with few plants. And yet in the sea of cold 18<sup>th</sup> century rock, someone found a couple inches of dirt to plant a shrub. Barely 4" across and hardly that high, it can barely be seen in the foreground on the left, in front of the black trash can. Yet as can be observed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> close-up photo, this little plant is being nurtured and as the years go by will likely cover the entire front of the person's home. That's vision!

God's vision for His church, no matter our circumstances, goes well beyond any meager analogy of this small plant in Bordeaux. God's church will triumph. Jesus told Peter, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it". As we prepare for the Passover on Sunday, April 9, let's stay focused on examining ourselves that we might overcome that which restrains us from growing into the image of Jesus Christ and being ready to rule alongside Him. There is much planting, watering and increasing going on, let's be about our Father's business.

In Christ's Service,  
Tim Pebworth  
Pastor, UCG Oakland and Petaluma CA Congregations