



United Church of God *an International Association*

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Dear fellow ministers and brethren,

This is my first letter to all of you as chairman of the Council of Elders. I am very humbled by the fact that the Council has given me the opportunity to serve them and each one of you, the Church of God, in this capacity. It is my fervent desire to carry out my responsibilities in a way that is first and foremost pleasing to God, Christ and the Word of God.

It is not an easy task in today's politically correct world to stand in the gap and declare the whole counsel of God and execute righteous judgment. I am constantly reminded of God's instructions to all of us in Leviticus 19:15: "You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor." And I am also continually reminded of Paul's words to the young evangelist Timothy: "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:1-2). It is the Word of God and the Spirit of God that convicts a person of the truth (John 16:7-19, Romans 10:14-17).

In our public proclamation we must deliver messages that are challenging and compelling so that people will be stirred to search the scriptures as to whether these things be true. As ministers we must deliver messages that motivate the brethren to hunger and thirst for the Word of God. We are familiar with God's warning against being Laodiceans. God implores us to be on fire and filled with zeal—fully committed to fulfilling the mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world and preparing a people for His Kingdom. It is ironic as we see many of the end-time prophecies being dramatically fulfilled before our eyes that people tend to retreat into themselves—thinking of *me* and *my*. We are warned not to withdraw as we see the day approaching. We must set our faces like flint, nothing doubting, and fight the good fight of faith. Note the warning of the apostle Paul in writing to a people who were becoming lukewarm: "Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).

The political leaders of the western world are forging a type of forced unity through enforcing political correctness. On the one hand, people are told that you are free to choose for yourself how you will conduct your life. But on the other hand, they are unwittingly being forced into a dictatorial totalitarian system.

For example, the liberal progressives insist that women must have the right to choose what they will do with their bodies. If a woman becomes pregnant, they demand that a woman should be free to choose whether she will have an abortion or give birth. The logical fallacy of

the freedom to choose position is that choices are made that affect others—oftentimes being a choice that results in life or death. If a pregnant mother chooses to have an abortion, she has made a *choice* for the unborn child. The child is killed in the name of freedom.

A tyranny of the peer group has now been developed for all ages. If a politician speaks out against abortion and or homosexuality, he or she is summarily cast out of the political synagogue. If a person stands up for righteous judgment and truth, he or she becomes a prey for the mass media. Note the words of the prophet Isaiah: “So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice” (Isaiah 59:15).

But God expects us to stand in the gap and boldly proclaim the whole counsel of God regardless of the consequences. God has not called us to fit comfortably into this world’s system. In fact, He beseeches us to come out of this world and separate ourselves spiritually from Satan’s world.

The prophet Ezekiel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit beseeches us to stand in the gap and not be intimidated by the people who would force us to be politically correct in the name of freedom. God through Ezekiel implores us to be bold at a time when men’s hearts are continually set on evil. Note the words of God as he commissions Ezekiel: “And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house. You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious” (Ezekiel 2:6-7).

As we face the period of time that is called the beginnings of sorrows in Matthew 24:8, we need to gird up our loins as the apostle Peter admonishes us to do in 1 Peter 1:13: “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (King James Version). God has drafted each one of us into His great spiritual army, and it is time to “endure hardness as a good soldier” (2 Timothy 2:3, KJV). These are critical, crucial times. These are tough, transitional times. Who knows whether God has called you to the Kingdom for such a time as this?

Please pray for the ministry and all that labor among us that we might stand in the gap and boldly proclaim the Word of God. Please pray for one another and the whole Body of Christ that each one of us might receive a crown of glory at that day.

In the service of God and His Christ,



Donald L. Ward