

Dear Current and Future Fellow Members in Christ,

What a dynamic time in world history we are now experiencing! Major and rogue nations alike are once again rattling their sabers, and we live under the specter of the possible threat of nuclear annihilation by fanatical terrorist states, and economic uncertainty at home is making it more difficult to provide for our families.

We are about to experience a historic national election that will no doubt have a major determination on our nation's future physical and economic security. But, that subject is better left for another opportunity for I am writing to you for another purpose.

During times of distress and uncertainty we can easily allow ourselves to become discouraged and dismayed. But, even though the world is living in an atmosphere of uncertainty, those of us who are called to a better Way should be drawing more strength and hope from our faith in God and Jesus Christ; for we know that as the Day of Christ approaches we also know that our redemption is nigh (Luke 21:28).

Now brethren, I do not yet believe that we are at the point in prophetic events when Christ's return is imminent. But, imminence is a relative term. Do we have ten years, five years, or twenty years before the beginning of tribulation and Christ's return? Only our Heavenly Father knows the day and the hour. However, one thing of which we can be assured is that as each second, minute, hour, and day passes the time left grows shorter and we must make full use of the time we have left.

We cannot allow ourselves to become discouraged by economic uncertainty or terrorists for those are the cares of the world. Common sense we must have and use but, we must instead, rejoice in the fact that we have been called to a *better understanding* that the vast majority of our fellow humans have not yet been given. We have a connection with God that others of the world do not yet have.

I know that many of you in the numerous churches and fellowship groups are fighting a hard and difficult battle, and at times may feel abandoned and become discouraged. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul, we “wrestle” against “principalities,” and “powers,” which we cannot see and that seek, eagerly, to destroy us. In the machinations of his twisted mind Satan desires, above all else, that each of you becomes more discouraged and despondent as each day passes. As the time for Christ’s return draws nearer, and hence Satan’s time on earth grows shorter, he will attack each of God’s people with all the more tenacity. Satan is hoping, in futility, that all of us will become so discouraged that we will give up on our hope in Christ. I say ‘in futility,’ because not *all* of God’s people will give up their hope.

Many of our brethren, with whom we once fellowshiped, are no longer with us and no it should be no surprise to us for we have been warned about a great falling away that must occur before the end of this age. I believe that God desires loyalty as a character trait among his people. Not just loyalty to Him, but loyalty to each other. As the Apostle John, and most beloved of Christ, stated, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his

brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

Sadly, Satan will succeed in drawing away some of God's people from the truth, and from the fellowship of the brethren, but Satan cannot lead away those who remain close to God in prayer, and who pray always that our Heavenly Father will reveal the truth to them in all events in their lives. As James stated in his letter to the churches, it is through resisting Satan that he will be driven away from you, and it is likewise by drawing closer to God that He will draw closer to you (James 4:7-8).

Many of you may not have a local fulltime minister but, regardless of the size of your local group, each of you has a dedicated leader in the form of a host or hostess. I know many of those hosts, and I know that they are dedicated to the care and protection of their groups and they are motivated by Christian love. I also know that each of those hosts has the need to feel your support and it should be a mutual supporting of the brethren.

Brethren, all of God's servants in the ministry need your support. The most useful and valuable support you can provide, aside from your presence at services, is the prayers that you can offer on behalf of God's ordained and appointed servants. The load on the shoulders of the ministry is great and they carry many burdens. The Apostle Paul considered it a great honor to serve God's church and to suffer the trials and tribulations that often best him, and so likewise does the present ministry. It is an honor and pleasure to serve God's people; however, we in the ministry must have your continual prayers to

strengthen us and enable us to remain strong. I beseech each of you to pray for the ministry always, especially during this time of year. It is difficult to stand alone, but with God's help we can all stand firmly in the steam like our Rock of Salvation!

But, setting ministers, hosts, and hostesses aside, you have a leader that no man can conquer nor discourage, and who will never forsake you. That leader is Jesus Christ of Nazareth; he is our soon coming Savior, King and Ruler! Each of us owes our eternal lives to our elder brother Jesus Christ, and we owe Him our undivided loyalty! Christ said that he desired that we treat each other the way that we desire to be treated, and the when we do it to one of the least our brethren we do it unto Him. I believe that we show our love of Christ when we show our love towards our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

And now, we arrive once again upon a time in God's sacred calendar when we are commanded to make our pilgrimage to the places where God has placed his name for the observance of His Feast of Tabernacles. What a wonderful gift God has given his people; we have divine permission to remove ourselves from the world's cares and troubles and renew our minds and Spirits in the company of those that are of a humble and likeminded spirit (Romans 12:1-3).

Many of us, through the blessings of God, are enormously thankful that we are able to travel to a specific Feast site. Others, out of necessity, must remain at home. But, regardless of our location during that time we can *all* know that we are still linked together as members of the Body of Christ through the Holy Spirit that identifies each of

us as a begotten child of God and a member of the Body of Christ. As members of the Body of Christ, we must remain loyal and faithful to God, Christ, and each other!

Brethren, as a minister of Christ I will stand up for you at every opportunity, and with God's help I will not ignore an opportunity to do so in the future. I am truly excited at the opportunity of being able to once again travel to Florida and serve God's people. I count this opportunity as precious for the time may soon come when we will not be able to gather together and worship our Great Creator. The occasion to amass ourselves in *true* Christian love, *support*, and fellowship may soon slip by us.

Not only ordained ministers but all of God's people have the ability to serve the brethren. The simplest manner of service is through our presence together each Sabbath, and we will greatly serve each other by our presence during the Feast. The opportunity to not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together," is an opportunity to gather strength from each other. Wherever God's people are gathered together in His name there also resides strength, peace and fellowship through His Holy Spirit.

To my many friends in God's church I say, don't allow Satan to discourage you. Remember to put on the armor of the fruits of God's Spirit. Be prepared for Satan to throw a dart or two at you as you prepare for the Feast. Many of you know what I mean. I too experienced such a minor trial last year just hours before leaving on our journey to the Feast. But, we overcame that hurdle and so will *you* persevere because we have God on our side!

When you arrive at God's Feast site remember to, "Salute one another with an holy kiss," and remember that I and all "The churches of God salute you!" May the hand of God shield you and may He fill you with His Spirit of love, service, and encouragement!

In Christ's Service,

Tom Griffith