

April 19, 2004

Dear Brethren, Co-workers and Friends:

The people of God are truly well blessed. We have been given so many answers to the big questions—answers that even the most brilliant minds of this world today can't understand. The booklets that we produce are a gold mine of information and truth as they faithfully reflect our understanding of the Bible.

However, we can learn positively from some of the ways in which people in the world conduct themselves. Christ encouraged us to learn from the "unjust steward" (Luke 16:1-8), and He told us that the people of this world, in their generation, are even smarter or more shrewd than the children of light. That is why we are to be harmless as doves, but at the same time "wise as serpents" (Matthew 10:16). Recently, the Prime Minister in the United Kingdom as well as the President in the USA have been locked in debate over the validity of the war in Iraq. The term, "Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)," has become a phrase commonplace in the vocabulary of most people. In the UK, we are to have yet another inquiry, and the Prime Minister and other leading politicians on both sides of the divide, have toured the radio and television studios to promulgate their case. We are confronted with claim and counter claim.

Their zeal for the cause is admirable and is a quality that we can learn from. Zeal is defined as "earnestness or fervor in advancing a cause or rendering a service; hearty and persistent endeavor." Even in the many different corporate Churches of God, there is a consensus that we are now living in the Laodicean era—even if there is considerable disagreement as to what group or person belongs to it. The main characteristic of a Laodicean is a lukewarm attitude (Revelation 3:16)—an attitude lacking in zeal (verse 19). This lukewarm attitude amongst some or many of God's people is not the same state of mind exhibited by the proponents in the political arena on both sides of the Iraqi war debate. Rather, zeal, activity and considerable energy are eaten up in this ongoing saga.

In addition, the Democratic Party in the USA has been going through the process of choosing its candidate to take on President George W. Bush in the Presidential election later this year. Television pictures of their energy, vitality and excitement can be in stark contrast to the way that some Church of God people behave. Their zeal for the cause is certainly an area that we can try to emulate.

Of course, politics is full of Commandment breaking as it reflects the moral deterioration in society at large, with the Ninth Commandment suffering as much as any. Lying, or the making of promises, which are subsequently broken or "forgotten," is endemic in the human condition. We have historically seen and heard politicians who were "economical with the truth" as they vie for votes, public attention and general support. This is an area that we, as true Christians, must ensure that we don't slip into, however inadvertently.

Even a cursory look at current events clearly reveals a world that is ill at ease with itself in almost every aspect of its activities. Relying on our fellow man is an exercise in futility, irrespective of the promises of political candidates for the Presidency or their equivalent counterparts in the UK who have the same agenda—that of being elected or re-elected. The only real security we have is belief and faith in the one true God.

In the UK, politicians are never heard to mention God unless the word is used as an expletive. God, His ways and His Commandments are completely overlooked or ignored by mortal man who thinks he knows best. In the USA, God might be mentioned at times, but it is obvious that the real and true teachings of God have been forgotten. I recently heard a comment that said that in spite of 32 million laws having been passed, they had not improved on the original 10 (Commandments). This is a pithy and telling comment, acknowledging the fact that God's Law is far above any human concepts and ideas regarding the kind of law that should regulate our conduct.

For almost 2,000 years, there has been the expectation of a new world order with Christ reigning on earth as King of kings in the Kingdom of God, supplanting the current order ably led in defiant rebellion against God by the god of this world (compare 2 Corinthians 4: 4). At one time Paul felt that Christ would return in his lifetime (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Others believed this, too, down through the ages. And the church in our generation has had the same level of expectation. The fact that Christ has not yet returned has caused many to lose their zeal, although right now zeal is extremely important! It is now that we need to use all our energies and strength to continue. Paul encouraged all of us in this way: "... now is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11). Many, however, have decided to do the absolutely worst thing that they possibly could have done: They have failed to continue with the Christian way of life. In addition, scoffers which were predicted to rise up (2 Peter 3:3-4) don't help those who are still "hanging in there," struggling with their dedication to God and His way and who may be experiencing severe trials of one sort or another in their lives. But this is when God finds out about us. Are we in it for the long haul and are we sold on His way of life? Have we made such a firm commitment with God that we will NEVER give up—no matter what may happen?

Zeal can help us to stay the course. Mr. Herbert Armstrong said that he had to keep a prod on himself and the church by his sense of urgency. With such a sense of urgency it is difficult to become lukewarm. In recent years, many of the people of God have become lax in many ways. When viewing those zealous, dedicated and committed politicians and public figures, even though their agenda is only temporary and motivated by human desires, it is something that we can try to emulate on a permanent basis, and in a godly way.

Christ asked whether He would find faith on the earth (Luke 18:8) at His return. With events in recent years, shattering the church and scattering God's people, it becomes clearer why He had this in mind, and it is imperative that we stay dedicated to God and His way. If we have any traces of this lukewarm attitude, we must do everything in our power to eliminate them immediately.

It really cannot be emphasized too much that this condition which is roundly condemned in God's Word (Revelation 3:14-19) is not something that we must ever be found guilty of. Most politicians and leading figures in society are usually zealous and dedicated to their cause and endeavors. This is something that must also be at the heart of our Christian commitment. Anything less, according to Scripture, is unacceptable and the consequences are dire.

Let us all make sure that we receive a positive evaluation from Jesus Christ when He returns to this earth, irrespective of when that most wonderful event occurs. Will we all hear Him say to us: "Well done good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21)? These are the words that will be spoken to those who have zealously and faithfully endured to the very end. Will those words be said to each and every one of us?

With brotherly love,



Brian Gale