

CHURCH OF THE  
G E T E R N A L

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” – Matthew 24:14

January 10, 2005

Dear Brethren and Friends:

We are indeed living in dangerous times of uncertainty and ever-increasing suffering and disaster. The most recent tragedy in Asia has shown how quickly everything can change in this world. Many thousands of people, including vacationing tourists, seemingly enjoying peace and tranquillity, were wiped out within minutes. Truly, as the Bible predicts, when man says, “we have peace and safety,” sudden destruction comes upon him (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:3). When I listened to explanations from theologians and other “experts” of this world, as to why the terrible disaster struck in Asia, little, if any, understanding was expressed. Man, being cut off from the true God, just does not comprehend that this is *not* God’s world. Man, under Satan’s influence, has abused this planet for about 6,000 years, and the combined efforts of the devil and man have produced misery and pain in magnifying proportions.

We, in God’s Church, must not become emotionally affected to such a degree by the trauma that is all around us, that we lose our clear focus as to why we are here. Of course, since we are living in this world, we cannot be indifferent to its trials and troubles. We grieve with those who have lost their loved ones in catastrophes and natural disasters; we share their pain, and we long for a better world to come soon. *But we must not lose hope.* It is human to despair and become discouraged. The Bible records that God’s servants were not immune from those feelings. At times, the Biblical giants of faith rather wished to die than have to continue to endure the misery of this life. Moses felt that way (compare Numbers 11:14-15), and so did Elijah (1 Kings 19:4, 10). Job, Jonah and Jeremiah occasionally questioned God’s actions, thinking He behaved unrighteously. Jeremiah even said to God: “Yet you have failed me in my time of need... Your help is as uncertain as a seasonal mountain brook—sometimes a flood, sometimes as dry as a bone” (Jeremiah 15:17-18, *Living Bible*).

In times of discouragement because of trials—when we might question why bad things happen to innocent or even to righteous people—God is there to offer us hope. He does not forsake us, as long as we don’t forsake Him. When Jeremiah argued with God, complaining about His apparent lack of help and His seeming failure of intervention or of preventing evil, He simply told him: “Stop the foolishness and talk some sense! Only if you return to trusting me will I let you continue as my spokesman. **You are to influence them, not let them influence you!**” (Jeremiah 15:19, *Living Bible*). Yes, the “wisdom” of this world CAN influence us, if we are not careful. God wants us to think as He does. Even in the midst of traumatic problems, God’s thoughts are those of hope and peace. He tells us in Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

All those people in Asia who died in terrible tsunamis, caused by a huge earthquake, DO HAVE a future! God WILL bring them back to life—under better circumstances, and in a much more peaceful environment. Insofar as we are concerned—those whom God has already called *in this life* to qualify for His Kingdom—what an AWESOME hope and future He has prepared *for us!* Christ, the hope of our glory, lives in us (Colossians 1:27). Our hope is not limited to THIS life. We are looking beyond our limitations and embrace the hope of an ETERNAL, glorious life (Titus 1:2). And we can be ASSURED of that future. We can KNOW that God Who has called us will see to it THAT we qualify! Our success is guaranteed—as long as WE don’t give up.

Let us remind ourselves, in these times of terrible uncertainties, pain and suffering, of some of the unbreakable, POSITIVE promises of God. These promises leave no room for doubt. God takes it for granted that we will succeed—as long as we let Christ live His life in us. Peter confirmed this fact. In his second letter he wrote that God’s “divine power *has given us* all things that pertain to [eternal] life” (2 Peter 1:3). If we do our part, we will not stumble (verse 10), but God *will supply* to us ABUNDANTLY an entrance into His Kingdom (verse 11). Having God’s mind, and knowing His thoughts toward us, Paul could confidently say: “He who has begun a good work in you WILL COMPLETE it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). He went even further by stating: “There is therefore now *no condemnation* to those who are in Christ Jesus, who... walk... according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). In Ephesians 1:11-14, Paul pointed out that we have *already obtained* an inheritance (verse 11), and that we are *already sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is a *guarantee* or a PROOF of our inheritance (verses 13-14).

How did God *begin* His work *in us?* How much preparation was necessary? The awe-inspiring truth is perhaps too difficult for our human minds to comprehend, and that may be the reason why one may be tempted to “interpret” the following passages in a more “humanly acceptable” way—but let us just read the inspired words of the Bible and ACCEPT, in faith, what they say.

Paul told us in the eighth chapter of the letter to the Romans: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are *the called* according to His purpose. For whom

He *foreknew*, He also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He *predestined*, these He also *called*; whom He *called*, these He also *justified*; and whom He *justified*, these He also *glorified*" (Romans 8:28-30). Just note these tremendous statements of fact: God *foreknew* US. God *predestined* US. God *called* US. God *justified* US. God HAS GLORIFIED US. Yes, this is correct. We are ALREADY glorified. That is, in God's eyes, it is as good as done. We read in Romans 4:17 (*Living Bible*) that God "speaks of future events *with as much certainty* as though they were already past." When Christ lives in us, and when we follow His lead, nothing can hinder or defeat us. Rather, "we come through all these things *triumphantly victoriously* by the power of him who loved us" (Romans 8:37, *New Jerusalem Bible*).

How long ago did God decide to call you and me? Paul tells us in the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians that God chose us "before the foundation of the world"; that we have been "*predestined... as sons*" (Ephesians 1:4-5). We are called the "elect according to the *foreknowledge* of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). Paul told the Thessalonian church that "God *from the beginning* chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit, and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). Paul stated in 2 Timothy 1:9 that God "called US with a holy calling... according to His own purpose and grace which was given to US in Christ Jesus *before time began*."

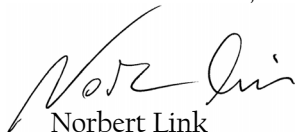
God carefully prepared both your calling and my calling to eternal life. The fact that God called YOU is not an accident. If YOU have been called today, *you have been preordained to inherit eternal life*—and only YOU can prevent that from happening. When God calls today, He wants the person to succeed. We read in Acts 2:47 that God added to the Church those who "should be saved" (*Authorized Version*). The *New Jerusalem Bible* refers to those called ones as people "*destined to be saved*." In Acts 13:48, we are being told that "as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Notice, the *appointment* to eternal life comes first, then the individual reaction of faith toward the gospel. The *New Revised Standard Version* states: "As many as had been *destined* for eternal life became believers." The *Revised English Bible* translates: "Those who were *marked out* for eternal life became believers." *Moffat* writes about all "who had been *ordained* for eternal life." Finally, the *Menge Bible* states: "And all, as long as they were ordained for eternal life, became believers."

God has called us, in this present time, to be successful. We read Christ's words in Matthew 25:34: "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you *from the foundation of the world*.'" They had responded to God's call and qualified for the Kingdom. But we read in Colossians 1:12-13 that the Father "HAS [already] qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He HAS [already] delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." As far as God is concerned, you and I *will* qualify. We *will be* there. Christ makes this point very clear, when He states in John 5:24: "MOST ASSUREDLY, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me HAS everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but HAS PASSED from death into life." He adds in John 3:36 (*Revised Standard Version*): "He *who believes* in the Son *has eternal life*; he who *does not obey* the Son shall not see life..."

Our names have been written in God's Book of Life (compare Revelation 3:5; Philippians 4:3; Luke 10:17-20; Hebrews 12:22-23). God has the confidence that our names *stay* in that Book. Only the names of those who commit the *unpardonable sin* will be erased from God's Book (compare Exodus 32:33; Psalm 69:28). Paul was convinced that he would be in the Kingdom. So were Peter and John. But they were not just talking about themselves. Rather, we read in 1 John 3:1-2: "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on US, that WE should be called children of God!... *we know* that when He is revealed, WE *shall be* like Him, for WE *shall* see Him as He is."

In times of great personal, national or even international tragedies, we can be influenced to question the wisdom of God. We can become discouraged, frustrated, unwilling to go on. But when we consider our great purpose and our awe-inspiring future, which has been GUARANTEED to us, we can get renewed strength to continue (Isaiah 40:31). After all, the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which SHALL BE revealed in US (Romans 8:18). Paul states in Hebrews 6:18-20 (*Living Bible*): "...Now all those who *flee to him to save them can take new courage* when they hear such assurance from God; now they can **know without doubt** that **he will give them the salvation he has promised them**. This **certain hope of being saved** is a *strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls*, connecting us with God himself behind the sacred curtains of heaven, where Christ has gone ahead to plead for us from his position as our High Priest, with the honor and rank of Melchizedek." With God on our side, we need never lose hope or confidence. We can *know* that we WILL succeed. A glorious future awaits us. God has told us so. Do we believe Him?

In Christian love,



Norbert Link