

CHURCH OF THE
G O D

“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

June 6, 2005

Dear Brethren and Friends,

What a great opportunity we have received from God to be involved today in the most important task on earth – that of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God in all the world as a witness, and of personally overcoming and growing to become ready for the establishment of that Kingdom here on earth, when Jesus Christ returns in a few years from now.

NOTHING must be more important in our lives. Even though the task may sometimes seem overwhelming, we must always remember that we are involved in GOD’S Work – and GOD will give us the strength and power to do what He expects of us.

God offers us the priceless GIFT of His Holy Spirit to successfully complete our mission – and to complete IN US what He has started (Philippians 1:6).

A few weeks ago we kept the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. We will be keeping Pentecost in a few days’ time. This is a most important Feast day for its meaning and application by those whom God has called at this time.

Having examined ourselves, kept the Passover and put sin (leaven) out of our lives, not only for seven days but as an ongoing process, Pentecost moves on to the next stage of God’s Master Plan – that of the giving of the Holy Spirit. That original Pentecost nearly 2,000 years ago, when the New Testament Church was founded (Acts 2), must have been truly awesome. Imagine hearing the apostles speaking about the wonderful works of God in many languages (Acts 2:4-13); Peter instructing the crowds to repent, be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38); and three thousand people responding and being baptized!

Down through the ages, God has called and placed into His Church many people right down to this present time. We have the unique opportunity of understanding God’s plan for mankind through the power of His Holy Spirit. But how well are we using God’s priceless gift?

The fruit of the Spirit is clearly listed in Galatians 5:22-23, where a total of nine characteristics of that fruit are shown. In the three previous verses (Galatians 5:19-21), there are seventeen works of the flesh listed, almost twice as many more negatives than positives. This shows that there is a lot we need to overcome – but it also shows that with the help of God’s Spirit in us, we CAN overcome the works of the flesh and REPLACE them with God’s very divine nature. In verse 22, the first characteristic of the Holy Spirit is that of love, which is an absolute necessity to have, if we are to follow the instructions of Christ. But what about the rest of them? Peace is an interesting subject and the one that I want to concentrate on in this letter.

We certainly don’t expect peace in the world. The Bible tells us that people will be saying, “Peace, peace! When there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14). But what about peace in the Church, the spiritual organism that includes all those who have God’s Holy Spirit? Do we love peace? Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). Can we include ourselves in that group of “peacemakers”? Peace, amongst other things, is the ability and desire to look for ways to cooperate and be on good terms with others, not accentuating differences. Fault finding, nit-picking, finger-pointing and even “majoring in the minors” are not the ingredients that promote peace. We may know Church members who may have different backgrounds, different levels of understanding and different personalities that may not necessarily complement our own personality, making it perhaps rather difficult, at first, to become close friends. Nevertheless, we are obligated to be at peace with them and esteem them better or higher (more important) than ourselves (Philippians 2:3).

We are told to “seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14). That is an active pursuit – not a passive one. We are also instructed “to pursue peace with all people” (Hebrews 12:14). Part of our training is learning to get on with others who may not necessarily, at times, agree with us. We need to put out all of the effort necessary to achieve that goal of pursuing peace, even though there may be those who respond negatively, or not at all.

Unfortunately, over the years, there has been far too much of the attitude condemned by Paul, which he described this way: “I am of Paul... I am of Apollos” (1 Corinthians 3:4). This attitude reflects the very antithesis of a peaceful approach as it encourages partisanship and, in some cases, exclusivity. There has also been far too much offence being caused (and grudges held in some instances) over inconsequential or minor technical matters that can be all-encompassing and take on a life of their own, while the weightier matters of the law have been neglected or overlooked (compare Matthew 23:23). Such an approach does not, and cannot by its very nature, lead to peace – a characteristic of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that we must develop.

We must remember that “the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). We are being judged by how well we are doing in our Christian life. John, an apostle of Jesus Christ whom Christ originally named, along with his brother James, as “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17), later became known as the apostle of love. This shows the electrifying effect that receiving and USING the Holy Spirit can have. John, through the power of the Holy Spirit living in him and inspiring him, promoted peace (2 John 3 and 3 John 14) which was a far cry from his previous worldly and aggressive approach. We should be easily entreated (James 3:17, *Authorized Version*) and at peace with one another, irrespective of corporate affiliation. God is not going to allow disagreeing and disagreeable people in His Kingdom where peace will be pre-eminent. If we say that we love God and hate our brother, we are liars (compare 1 John 4:20), and loving our brother requires that we live at peace with him.

We are exhorted to GROW in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). This shows clearly that we WILL be able to learn more as time goes by. The Holy Spirit is the instrument by which that can be accomplished. Learning more about pursuing peace with all our brethren, and succeeding in achieving that mission, must surely be so pleasing to God.

Following the Day of Pentecost, the next Holy Day in God’s calendar is the Feast of Trumpets. That day pictures a time when there will be an absence of peace on planet earth – so much so, that mankind would destroy themselves, if Christ would not intervene to end man’s destructive ways (compare Matthew 24:21-22, 27). In the wonderful world tomorrow that will follow, peace will be worldwide as will be everyone’s approach to others. We are told to pray always that we “may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36). We will only achieve this ambition if we learn to become peacemakers in the run-up to that time.

We need to do everything that we can to maintain and preserve peace with other members in the Body of Christ. If we do, and if we exercise the precious gift of the Holy Spirit, then we can be confident that Christ, at His return, will say to us: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21, 23).

God has “blessed us with every special blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:3-4). He has EMPOWERED us to do His work of preaching His gospel, and to overcome in this life. He has GIVEN US His gift of the Holy Spirit so that we can KNOW that, in USING His gift, NOTHING will be impossible for us (compare Matthew 17:20).

Let us deeply reflect on the tremendous value of God’s Holy Spirit, that is freely given to us, as we keep this year’s Feast of Pentecost.

With brotherly love



Brian Gale