

June 7, 2016

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As we draw to the close of this age, what stands out for each of us? We live in a world that, as we watch each day, gets further and further away from God. This was pointed out in the first chapter of Romans where Paul tells us, in verses 19–32, that when people no longer want to retain God in their thoughts, then their debauchery and subsequent downfall is imminent. Truly, in a relative sense of the amount of years since the Bible was written, our time is short. If we truly think about it, 6,000 years is not that long a time, but the amount of progress that has been accomplished in just the last 50 years is staggering. We see that because God gave us creative minds, humans can do almost anything they put their minds to. We know that at the tower of Babel, God had to stop those people from continuing what they were doing. God rightly said in Genesis 11:6: "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them." But when Satan is in the mix, this element of human creativity takes on a dark twist.

With all of this in mind, how do we look after each day that we are granted? One thing that constantly stands out for me is that each of us has been called at this time and age. For me it is truly a mind bender. At any point in the history of man, anyone of us could have been born, theoretically speaking, and yet now is the time that we are alive and have been called. More importantly, we have all been called in this day and age because God believes that we can make it to the very end, and because He believes that we can use the gifts that He has given us to complete the Work that we have been called to accomplish. The Bible tells us that even before time began, God had predestined to call us now (Ephesians 1:4-5, 11; 2:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 8:28).

Do we ever stop and wonder why God has chosen us? Think about the individual that you are. Possibly you are not rich, and you may even be in constant pain or have serious illnesses. Maybe your family is in the church, maybe they are not. Do we ever stop and doubt ourselves, our God-given gifts, talents and abilities? Do we find ourselves questioning God's purpose for us? Do we wonder: "Why me?" "Why do I have to go through what I am going through?" But if we properly look at any situation we go through, instead of becoming discouraged, we can learn to become what God wants us to be. We must be learning to lean fully on God. To trust Him and to let Him be our guide. But to do all of this, it takes an attitude of humility.

Once again, I am drawn in by the complexity and mind-blowing thought that we are witnessing the collapse of mankind. We are seeing things that were prophesied many millennia ago. Many people through the centuries have longed and looked for this very time, culminating with the return of Jesus Christ. And yet they were granted their time here on earth, and then they died at their appointed time, without having experienced what we may be witnessing soon. We are here now. What does it mean for each of us? At times, I find it hard to live on the edge of my seat and also live day by day as if there was a lifetime ahead of me. I think this is a common thing that we face as Christians.

People at Christ's time were looking for a Messiah who would save them from the occupying Roman force. They were blind to the truth that Christ wasn't there to overthrow that ruling kingdom at that time.

Even Paul thought at one point that it was possible that Christ would return during his lifetime. He later came to understand that this would not be the case. But how did those thoughts affect each

of them? Does the knowledge that Christ indeed will be coming back and possibly in our lifetime motivate us?

Our opportunity to do a part in God's Work is now! I love the simplicity that Paul brings out in Romans 12:5-21. He very clearly lays out that each gift and each service is truly meant for the betterment of others. There is nothing that we have that God can't replace. We must be on guard that we don't find ourselves self-confident, proud and haughty. The attitude of the self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees was the opposite of what we should be today. In Matthew 3:7-10, John the Baptist openly rebuked the people who were fakes. They were supposed to be the spiritual leaders and guides at that time, but they relied on old traditions; they were unwilling to grow, unwilling to bear fruit. John told them that God could raise up people for Himself. And God can still do this if need be. We can be reminded of God's talk with Elijah. He said that He had reserved 7,000 people for Himself (Romans 11:1-4). So many times people come and go because they are not rooted and grounded in the Truth and are offended in some way, or find some "reason" to leave. And it is heart-breaking to see it happen. But this must not deter us. God does and will provide the people He needs to accomplish the goals He has in mind. But continuing on, in verses 5-7, Paul reminds us that it is by God's gracious choice that we have been called NOW. Our time is now. We should be praying that God opens the doors that He wants us to go through in regard to the Gospel being preached and how to best accomplish this at this time and age.

We are all one body as Paul spoke about many times (compare Romans 11:16-24). If we are not careful in our actions, in how we handle the gifts God has granted us to serve Him and others, then He will replace us. His plan will stand. It is taking shape. We need to decide what side of the fence we want to be on. As members of the Church of the Eternal God and its international affiliations, we all have many different hats and work to serve each other in love and edification. Though we are small, our opportunity is great IF we remain close to God! Think about how many times Paul called to remembrance in his letters the faithfulness of the early churches. And even though they endured great trials and often times their gifts were small because they were not physically rich, Paul encouraged and thanked them for their tireless support and dedication in helping to get the Gospel message preached to the known world at that time.

Brethren, we cannot know the time of Christ's return. This knowledge lies solely with the Father. When He determines that the called-out people have been making the right choices in overcoming, that prophecy has advanced enough, that the time is right, then He will pull the plug. But the prophecy of the ten virgins explains that many people, in waiting so long, have been lulled to sleep. Their zeal has dimmed. Now more than ever, as we see Satan doubling down to work on destroying God's people, we have to make the extra effort to really push forward and stay even closer to God. We cannot allow anything to deter us from our destiny. Let's work to encourage each other on towards the goal. Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:11-24 are so rich and meaningful, especially at this end time.

Thank you all for your continued support and prayers. As we move forward in God's time line, we all need God's Holy Spirit and power to make it to the end. Let us never think a service, no matter how small, is not useful. We all have the opportunity to serve in some way. Let us do so with full assurance that we can and will make it into God's Kingdom, because He has called us to succeed. I believe it is just a matter of how much we really want this.

In God's service and with brotherly love,



Kalon Mitchell