

January 18, 2023

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We find constant reminders that as true Christians, the very elect of God, we are living by different standards than other people in the world.

Having just experienced a deluge of "merry Christmas" and "happy New Year" greetings, along with the endless commercialism of these recent holidays, we will soon have to contend with even more. Valentine's Day and Easter will dominate the societies in which we live, and obedience to the God of the Bible will not even be considered!

As mature Christians, we know the Truth, that all of these false practices are inspired by Satan. We know that God forbids our participating in such worldly traditions, and we are warned, that even among us, there will be those who reject God's Truth in this regard—even turning back to embrace what they had formerly proven to be false worship:

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron..." (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

How can this happen?

It is because Satan is able to devour people through his deceitful doctrines, and it is because those whom God has called do not resist Satan. Resisting Satan is built on the foundation of God's Truth, and the key for us is to understand and prove the true doctrines of God; furthermore, we must "live... by every word of God" (Matthew 4:4). This is how Jesus withstood the temptations of Satan (Matthew 4:1-11).

Like Jesus, we also live in and face the world of the ungodly. We must test the actions of society by this godly standard: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is because there is no light in them*" (Isaiah 8:20).

We will be persecuted when we don't go along with those who live in rebellion against God, as we have been warned, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). But God tells us this:

"Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, You people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, Nor be afraid of their insults" (Isaiah 51:7).

The doctrines of the true Church of God are simply incompatible with those who practice lawlessness. It is becoming more difficult to openly preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Our opportunities on social media outlets are being throttled and censored. Brethren—especially in Europe—now face extreme penalties for taking their children out of school to observe God's commanded Holy Days.

An all-powerful Satan-inspired religion is beginning to emerge in Europe, and it will dominate the world (Revelation 13:8). It will seek to enforce absolute worship from everyone.

We have been called out of this world to follow Jesus Christ and to keep the commandments of

God. Great persecution will come upon the Church of God, and some will be more prepared than others, as Revelation 12:13-17, reveals. We also find that various elements of the scattered Church of God will not be prepared for what is coming, as the parable of the Ten Virgins relates in Matthew 25:1-13.

However, there is something we need to be doing right now if we truly believe the warnings from God:

“Watch therefore, and pray always that you 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).

Brethren, let none of us ever compromise with the true doctrines of God or ever turn our backs on His calling. Rather, let us keep the faith and grow stronger and stronger as we seek to please God!

In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dave Harris".

Dave Harris