

THE FINAL CALL



TO REPENTANCE

BY EVA ZARLEY

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By Eva Zarley
The Final Harvest Ministries

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
PART 1: To the Believing Body of Christ:	10
To the Church of Jesus Christ:.....	10
To the Denominational Leaders:.....	11
To the Evangelists and Ministries:.....	22
To the Planners and Builders of Church Structures:.....	29
To the Churches:	36
To the Pastors:.....	49
To the Sheep: The Individuals of the Body of Christ:.....	64
PART 2: To the Unbelieving World:	89
To the Nations:.....	90
To the Unbelievers: Atheists, Skeptics, and Opposers of the Gospel:	93
To The Wicked in General:.....	95
To the Leaders and Lawmakers:	97
To Teachers, Professors, Universities, and other purveyors of “knowledge”:.....	99
To the Unrepentant:.....	101
To the Repentant:	105
The Final Call to Repentance, a Prayer:	107

Introduction

Over one and one-half years ago, in 2006, I heard a call from the Lord to write a book, “The Final Call to Repentance.” It was a very hard word about the need of the Western Church to be cleansed and purified, in preparation for the judgment of America, and other Western nations. God is about to cleanse the Western world for the many sins that are rampant, both in the worldly realm and in the Church. Judgment begins in the house of the Lord, however, so it is the Church who is first addressed and called to repentance.

It was a very difficult message for me to write. It took months to complete and a year to get around to establishing a new website to post it on. Those who know us best know that Vic and I usually share the message of non-judgment and love among the brethren. Our previous website: www.JoyfulChristianLiving.com reflected that, as does most of our current site.

Although I believe God wants me to speak as a prophet, to call the nations to repentance and to warn of the impending judgment if we do not repent, I did not speak in first person as if I were the Lord, as Old Testament prophets did, and as do many who profess to be prophets today. That is because I feel unworthy to take such liberty. I am as guilty as anyone of many of the sins God has shown to me. It is with fear and trembling that I claim to speak on the Lord’s behalf, under the direction and unction of the Holy Spirit. What I have to share is a very strong message to the Church, the Body of Christ, and I desire to present it with all the humility that I can. Just because I don’t present it in the prophetic voice of first person, “Thus saith the Lord,” I urge all who hear to take it to heart and know it is of God and from God.

There are many claiming to be prophets, who run around with their endless promises and

proclamations. They declare “Thus saith the Lord” making general declarations of blessings that sound more like a horoscope reading, and I fear for them. Knowing that I would face a dreadful accountability before God if I speak falsely in His name, I give this sincere warning for the Western Church.

I have wept and struggled with God over this message. The Western Church is in grave danger of a coming judgment. Already God has allowed the foreshadowing of things to come. Be not deceived, things are swiftly gearing up for the tribulation and second coming of Christ. But I have not wanted to give this message. I have not felt worthy because of the sin in my own heart, and writing such a strong message has cost me friendships. I have rewritten it over and over to ensure that the tone was humble, without softening the message to the point that none would take it to heart. But it can’t be softened enough to be palatable to most folks because it is such a difficult word for believers. Nevertheless, God wants it said. Whether anyone believes or heeds me, God will do what He says He will do. He will reveal the truth in time, even to those who oppose my words, when He brings the things to pass that will shake his Bride back into HIS reality.

A prophet’s true call is not to be a fortune-teller to the people, giving them promises of prosperity or ministry, nor is it to try to forecast the next disaster to hit, and where, as is so often done these days. The prophet’s job, throughout scripture, is to point out the sins of the people, to proclaim God’s displeasure with His children, backing it with His Word. The purpose is to stir the people’s hearts, encouraging them to press on and repent so that God’s blessings can be restored to the people. Also, the prophet has the burdensome task of declaring what will happen to the people if they harden their hearts and refuse to repent. Neither the Lord, nor His true prophets take any joy in the fulfilled consequences of sin, which is God’s rod of correction.

As I write this, there are people whom I have loved dearly who will have nothing to do with me because of the words I have written. It saddens my heart, but I must obey God. It is Him that I will have to give an accounting to. I believe, like the Jews who anticipated worldly blessings from their “Messiah,” many have bought into the promise of an earthly king who offers wealth and success. They have rejected the Christ who assured them of suffering, persecution, trials and tribulations while on this earth. It should not be surprising that I should go through the pain of rejection for speaking the truth. Besides, in this painful process; I have been allowed to

better examine my own heart in the light of our Lord's Word.

(1Pet. 4:12-14) Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. [RSV]

The Lord took me to Jeremiah 26:12-16 and showed me where even the officials of wicked Judah, who despised what Jeremiah said, had enough sense to not sentence Jeremiah to death because he had spoken in the name of the Lord. Then God said to me "But the people of My Church, who claim to love and belong to me, attack anyone who claims to speak in my name, unless they prophesy peace, safety and prosperity. They reject anyone who speaks against sin, and calls for repentance and proclaims My judgments upon those who don't heed the warning. Of course you will be rejected. It has always been this way among my covenant people, Israel, and it remains so among my new covenant people, the Church."

So I come before the body of Christ, writing few words from my own perspective, for I am nobody. I write what God has instructed me to write from the perspective of the Word, and all of it is in alignment with the whole counsel of God. Although I use and refer to scripture throughout this book, exact quotes will be in red and notated. It is God who has compelled me to speak strong exhortation and rebuke and warn of severe judgments--just as the prophets of old were made to speak harsh warnings to the people of ancient times.

In a spirit of prayer, I have written what follows. If something sounds self-righteous to you, know that I don't intend it that way on my part, but since I am acting as God's spokesperson, and since God IS righteous, realize He has every right to declare His holiness in as strong a manner as He likes, and I must obey, regardless of what anyone else says against me. Therefore, if it angers anyone, they shall have to search their own hearts and take it up with God, since it is He who has spoken and not me. It will be God's Word you are rejecting, not my words.

America is about to receive terrible judgments as a result of her failure to repent of

wickedness. We have been taken down the path of destruction by leaders at every level in government, education, religion, and business. God has either been outright forsaken and denied, or else a man-made God has been created in the minds of most citizens. Be prepared to go through a fiery cleansing via economic and natural disasters. There will be even more floods, earthquakes, fires, droughts, storms, financial collapses, famines, wars and rumors of wars to come in our near future because we have not repented of evil. It will rain on both the righteous and the wicked alike. But for those who remain steadfast and true to the Lord, He will carry you through and preserve your soul. This is a warning and a call to repentance.

(Eze. 3:19) But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you will have saved your life.

[RSV]

(Eze. 3:21) Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and you will have saved your life."

[RSV]

(Eze. 33:1-7) The Word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman; and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, then if any one who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes, and takes any one of them; that man is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand. So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me." [RSV]

In love and humility and dread, I deliver these words of warning from the Lord. None of us are without something to repent of, before the Lord. We must all agree to come against the heresy and apostasy within ourselves and the Body of Christ, that has rendered the Church to a worldly and selfish state, crippling Her of having full power. God is warning us to repent, while there is still time and grace. God is preparing a pure Bride, whose devotion to the Groom will be strong enough to endure the judgments that WILL fall upon unrepentant nations. In Her love and strength, the last days Church will bring in the final harvest of souls, before Christ's return.

If America does not repent and change her course VERY soon, the judgments God has sentenced upon her will come swiftly. She will be stripped of her glory and will become a proverb and a byword among the nations. This applies to other nations as well. In fact, the godless European Union is gaining strength by the day and may soon replace America as the major economic power of the world. Our financial ability to support our military strength could easily be depleted if we continue to try to police the globe, whose volatile nature is ever-increasing.

A widening gap between moral values is causing our nation to teeter on the brink of an all-out civil war, where the factions have no geographical boundaries. Therefore the entire country will be the battleground. A deluded American government continues to operate in greed and irresponsibility, at the expense of the working class citizens, seemingly ignorant of the growing unrest among the people. Americans find their financial struggles continually worsening with excessive taxation, rising costs of fuel, resulting in inflation on all fronts. Crime is continuously on the rise, immorality abounds, and the violent deaths of unborn infants bring a cry of outrage, blood and injustice upon our land. Terrorists look for any crack in security they can find, in order to destroy our nation. Despite many disasters both here and throughout the earth, we still forget that only God's mercy holds back the winds, floods, earthquakes and fires that could bring us to quick ruin. Americans rest in a false sense of security that is ludicrous, in the light of how fragile and vulnerable things really are.

In the midst of all this, the Church, the one voice that should be a beacon of light and hope at this crucial time, tends to drink the wine of prosperity and indifference. Materialism, ambition and selfishness abound within the hearts of the individuals, as well as the various "churches," and sin abounds on every level of many who profess to be in the Body of Christ.

God is issuing a “Final Call to Repentance” for His Church. It will be the Bride’s last chance to get Her act together and BE the Church Jesus Christ has called her to be. He is coming for a pure Bride who loves as He taught us to love and lives unselfishly as He taught us to live, for the sake of the Gospel and the final harvest of souls in these very last days.

*Hear and pay attention,
Do not be arrogant,
For the Lord, has spoken.
Give glory to the Lord your God
Before he brings the darkness.
Jeremiah 13:15 & 16a [NIV]*

PART 1: To the Believing Body of Christ:

To the Church of Jesus Christ:

Judgment begins in the house of the Lord. Therefore, the first part of this work approaches the sins and need for repentance of the Church. This is broken down into each group being addressed. May all who read this be blessed with wisdom, understanding, discernment, and anointing to hear what the Holy Spirit of God is saying to His Church. May all who read this be stricken with a holy repentance in their hearts, for any area in which they are in error or sin. May each of us, who are called by His name, see the folly of our ways and be granted the mercy and grace to repent.

To the Denominational Leaders:

It is not the will of the Lord that His church be divided. There is but one Church, one body, one Spirit, one God. The apostle Paul clearly spoke against this division.

(1 Corinthians 3:3 & 4) For you are yet carnal. For in that there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are you not carnal, and do you not walk according to men? For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal? [MKJV]

There was not to be division among the Body of Christ. We are not to even boast of one teacher over another. Paul struggled to keep unity in every way among the believers in the early Church. We are in rebellion to God when we work to keep division established among the body of Christ. The division of the Church into “denominations” should have never happened, for we were called to be one body with different parts, only. There is no excuse for any group to proclaim to have the truth more than any other. There is only one truth and every member of the body of Christ must be established on that truth, alone.

While some denominations were formed in rebellion, or to cater to false winds of doctrine, many denominations were formed as a result of a revelation from God to a devout believer, and were intended to draw the Church back into repentance and purity of faith. Such movements were God’s attempt to correct the Church of the spiritual laziness and false teachings which often crept in, leaving Her without spirit and power, and woefully steeped in traditions of men. Those unwilling to be corrected and preferring to keep their status quo, remained as a pre-existing denomination, while the fresh movement of the Holy Spirit had to rename itself to establish its position as a revived movement. They were driven to form a new denomination, usually because the previous one refused to allow them to practice what the Holy Spirit had told them to do. Thus, the old one has grieved the Holy Spirit and often tends to remain a stagnant monument to a past movement of God or a stubborn tradition. Today the many divisions already exist, but leaders should encourage the establishment of a whole, single Body of Christ, acknowledging that all are part of the Church and no particular group of believers should be

excluded, criticized, or exalted. Jesus has one Church, and it is not made up of a single denomination. All the denominations need to repent of such “nationalism” and its resulting spiritual deadness, and be refreshed and be revived by the Word and the Holy Spirit.

(Jude 1:19) It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. [RSV]

I like this verse in the New International Version, too:

(Jude 1:19) There are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. [NIV]

(James 3:14) But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. [NIV]

Furthermore, all denominations must not hold those teachings that are particular to their group as a banner to their superiority, condemning other denominations. It is spiritual pride that causes a denomination to make and uphold a name for itself. There are basic truths in the Word which matter. We must agree to proclaim Christ and Him crucified, the atonement for sin accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cruel cross, our eternal hope through His resurrection, and the sending of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit who communicates God’s will and empowers the believers. Beyond that, all other teachings are not so important. Arrogance and pride is the usual spirit that causes denominations to think they alone have the full truth. Repent of any encouragement of this abomination of divisive behavior. We should allow one another the freedom to worship and serve God in the way each of us feels the Spirit leading, and do not judge how others worship and serve Him. To encourage division within the body of Christ is to try and hold on to one’s own hierarchy, which is not under submission to God’s truth, and it is rebellion to Christ who certainly desires unity of His Church. Furthermore, you are contributing to the cause of the enemy of the Church, Satan, assisting him in his tactical plan of “divide and conquer.”

(Eph 4:4-6) There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. [NIV]

There is a Pharisee spirit among many leaders of denominations and those of this spirit glory in their ranks. As heads of their denominational realm, they strive to keep it all going at any cost. This sort of power and authority goes beyond any example of headship of the twelve Apostles and early church fathers. Instead, it takes on the nature of the business world, running the denominations and their “churches” like corporations and paying huge salaries to those in executive positions. Paul, himself, made tents for his living, not wishing to be a burden to the Church. Yet, many of today’s Church leaders enjoy wealth and privilege within the hierarchy of organizational levels of status. Sadly, such would crucify Christ anew, if they thought He threatened their security and prosperity. There are men who enjoy the respect and patronage of other men more than they love God. Hear the Word of the Lord, for He shall destroy these divisions and organizations with their many titles.

Such will lose their position of honor among the ranks of their denomination, when it is ripped out from under them. God shall put an end to the practice of hirelings, those who “serve” for great financial gain and for honor among men. As persecution of the Church increases, it will be unbeneficial and even dangerous to pastor a fellowship of Christians. When that happens, those who are in it for gain will vanish. Which of us will still want that lofty position, if it means poverty, humiliation, and might possibly cost our lives? A day is coming when leadership of the Church will not be something to be desired or coveted by any carnal man. The worldly benefits will cease, and with them, any appeal to the flesh. This will be a healthy change for the Church, weeding out wolves in sheep’s clothing, and making God’s people more honest and better able to reach the skeptical lost, who are weary of hypocrisy.

(John 10:12-13) He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. [RSV]

In truth, there is only one true Shepherd and that is Jesus Christ, but there will be others in the days ahead who will prove they have the heart of our Lord and will care for those who are the Lord's regardless of what it costs them. But these will be equal brethren, not men established and paid as "the leader" and given a title of rank and authority by men.

We are all instructed to study to show ourselves approved, so that we can rightly divide the Word of truth. But God is not pleased with the practices of qualifying leaders, pastors and teachers by way of certificates, degrees and titles, with which men vie for positions in denominational and church leadership. With such worldly credentials, many men and women alike, seek better opportunities for power and wealth, at the expense of the flocks. They negotiate for money and benefits, houses, car allowance and insurance, retirement funds and the like, and the poor man, unable to afford this "higher education," is often effectively excluded from leadership. This is man-designed qualification, which creates "professionalism" among servants of God and works to promote pride and corruption in the Body of Christ. The credentials God desires are the faith and humility of one who bows the knee or prostrates himself before the Lord his God in obedience. That is the person that it pleases God to use, not those whose credentials are professional resumes and Ph Ds.

(2 Cor. 3:1-5) Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. [NIV]

Repent of this abominable practice of demanding the completion of degrees in faith-destroying, scripture-degrading, worldly seminaries. This practice may have been started with good intentions and God may have blessed within their ranks over the years. It is not my place to judge, however, much of the present day fruit of it indicates it has carried on too far and too

long. These institutions have become worldly, often run by prideful and unbelieving men and women, who have placed their confidence in degrees rather than God. (I have read of atheist professors who teach theology in major seminaries and even atheist “pastors” of churches. How can this be? This is the result of applying the world’s ways to the Church. Flesh does not mix with spirit any more than water mixes with oil.) The Church must repent of establishing worldly standards by which we measure and reward pastors! With degrees, titles and a long list of letters behind their names, they justify their privilege to speak before the people. Study of God’s Word is good. Humility is good. Boasting of one’s worthiness on resumes is not. For God searches a man’s heart to determine who will best serve His purpose.

(2 Cor. 10:18) For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends. [NIV]

Let the Bride forsake these manufacturers of white-washed tombs and dying denominations of tradition. Come away from the Pentecostal universities as well, who, while they boast of faith and works, have many among their people who spend much time avoiding true repentance. Instead, they devote themselves to learning how to commercialize their ministries. Many of these institutions promote a materialistic prosperity that God’s Son and his faithful servants the apostles, never enjoyed. No servant is greater than his master. By what apostolic, scriptural example, did such entitlement and proselytizing rise in the hearts of those who would serve the Lord? All this hierarchy and prosperity teaching prods the carnal-minded to scramble for positions of power and authority and its accompanying salaries. But here is what Jesus told his disciples after the mother of the Zebedee brothers tried to establish them in a high position in the kingdom:

(Matthew 20:25-28) Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” [NIV]

Distribution of funds is corrupt in many ministries and “churches.” Hierarchy tends to distribute the tithes and offerings of the people in an unbalanced and unscriptural manner. They assign small portions to many of God’s sincerest servants, while giving large portions to themselves and those whom they favor. Such favor is often politically or “professionally” obtained, rather than God-inspired. Missions suffer, while organizers’ and leaders’ own salaries are increased. Humble, hard-working missionaries in depressed countries “pray in” every penny of support, food and supplies, while Western-minded administrators live in luxury comparable to any corporate CEO.

There are denominational leaders who need to repent of launching official “stands” or edicts for their particular denomination that is contrary to God’s Word. They vote upon and issue rulings to the churches, for religious practices and doctrines, more in the spirit of politicians, lawmakers or corporations, rather than in the Spirit of God and His holy, declared Word. Church leaders often hold meetings and weigh the cost of their decisions, based on selfish concerns, such as financial loss or gain, or out of fear of the worldly public, rather than seeking the absolute will of God. They will officially compromise the integrity of the Bride to preserve their popularity with the masses.

(James 4:4) Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [RSV]

Denominational leaders need to risk everything to stand for the truth. God will no longer exercise patience, while denominations disgrace His holy name by condoning sin. God will not allow His Church to keep indulging sinners within the Body, while they continue in unrepentant wickedness. Slaughtering infants is wrong. It is murder, and every single body of believers must make that statement. The practice of adultery and fornication must not be tolerated within the body of believers and leaders, and this includes pornography, for Jesus made it clear that “just looking with lust” is the same to God as the act itself. It is shameful to find sexual sin running rampant, not only among the believers but among the leaders as well. Practicing homosexuality

is unacceptable to the professing Christian, and certainly not to be allowed in Christian leadership. That must be said, because the Word of God is clear about it, but unlike many Christians, God does not single them out as “worse” offenders than any others. Those who crave sexual immorality of any kind, must be lovingly but firmly told they must repent and believe that the Father can and will deliver them from that sin.

(Gal. 5:19-21) The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. [NIV]

We *all* had better cry to Jesus for mercy and repentance, before that terrible day of the Lord, seeing that all these things are abominable practices in the sight of God. Biblical stands must be made kindly and gently to sinners, but they cannot be compromised. Sin must be firmly rejected first in ourselves, (*get your log out*) and then in the Body, (*so you can help your neighbor with his splinter.*) Leaders must set the example for the Church and the world by not giving in to temptation themselves. Do not condone sin in your own life while condemning it in others. How dare we accept mercy for ourselves, while we unmercifully judge another?

We are not to treat any one sinner as if he or she is worse than any other. Equally wicked in the sight of God, are the gossipers, slanderers, busy-bodies, revelers, gluttons and drunkards among us, so don't think that He singles out any particular sin as being more evil than others. One's lying tongue and slandering gossip cost just as much of our Savior's blood as that person who commits sexual perversion. No body of believers has a license to display hate against anyone because of the type of sin they commit, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Hating and bashing one type of sinner while seeing another as more forgivable or acceptable, is a gross misunderstanding of the heart of God. We must repent in sincerity so that we can humbly lead others to repentance.

(Luke 18:9-14) To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to

pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." [NIV]

There have been Christian leaders who, after falling into sin from their lofty rank, have enjoyed the blessed peace of forgiveness and restoration. For this, we are thankful to our merciful God; the cross of Christ has made this possible. But the damage to the kingdom, as a result of their lack of resistance to temptation, is great. Surely souls have been lost, because they have seen wicked behavior in those whom God had called to be holy. Sinful preachers and evangelists have done more to profane the name of God and desecrate the cross, than any heathen evildoer, and they have been the prize tools of Satan, himself. Repent of defiling the sacred blood of Christ and trampling the cross of Jesus underfoot. We are all called into a holy priesthood. Those given higher positions of authority, whether by God or by men, will have a greater accountability. Make no mistake, God will clean you up or take you out. Unless repentance occurs, judgment will come upon those who do these things. The continual and deliberate practice of sin among those who profess to belong to Jesus will disqualify those who would have otherwise heard, "Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into thy rest." Jesus said many will say to him, "Lord we prophesied in Your name." But He will reject them. God has been patient, but He is about to bring His wrath upon the earth for these very things.

(Eph 5:6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [RSV]

The Church must stand against sin, yet in the process exhibit the fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, humility, etc. We want to forgive ourselves and those whom we

have loved and adored when sin enters in, but we want to rail at the lost who don't understand that the things they do are wrong. We want to forgive our own and condemn the unsaved. A skeptical world full of people whose only understanding of Jesus is what we proclaim, are watching us. It is time we become mature citizens of the kingdom of God and do what Jesus told us to do, love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. But because evil abounds, the hearts of many have waxed cold. We have become a bunch of selfish, materialistic, unloving noisy gongs. A dear woman, explaining why she didn't attend a church, recently told me, "I love God, but I don't let the churchy people get in the way of my relationship with Jesus and misrepresent Him." People need fellowship with believers who don't have an ambitious, organizational agenda or a selfish heart. It is not about our pastor, our "church," our ministry, our denomination, our programs or anything else. It is about Jesus, the Christ, who gave up His life so that all mankind could be reconciled to God and have restored to us what was lost at the Fall in Eden.

Denominationalism is eroding the purpose of the Church. No denomination has all the truth, but each has much to contribute to the Body, and all have something to repent of. Some are strong in studying the scriptures but weak in things of faith and of the Spirit. These are often found resisting the Holy Spirit of God, therefore they lack power. Others are strong in practicing faith and gifts, but are lacking in scriptural background, therefore, they are easily swayed by every wind of doctrine and more prone to fall into error. Some are strong in love and charity but weak in discipline, others are strong in discipline but lacking in love. We all still have much to learn. Stop criticizing and back-biting other groups! Unite to further the cause of Christ, which is to love God and one-another, and spread the Gospel to every corner of the earth.

(Eph. 4:2-3) Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. [NIV]

But let's get clear on what the Gospel is and is not. It is good news. It means reconciliation to God and forgiveness of sins. It is help for the poor and love for the enemies and liberty for the captive and healing for the sick and broken-hearted. It is NOT, give your heart to Jesus and join our church, pay your tithe and help build and maintain our social club or lofty

ambitions. It is NOT, do what we do and do as we say or get booted out of our fellowship. It is NOT paying homage to the pastor, exalting him and supporting the building of his kingdom. It is NOT sitting quietly in a seat every Sunday, passively listening to sermons over and over, rarely getting a chance to interact with the Holy Spirit in way that produces a life-changing revelation of one's function in Christ.

The goal of the Church is not to make a name for a particular denomination or church, but to glorify Christ Jesus. We must stop accusing other groups of heresy. If they preach the forgiveness of sins through the blood sacrifice of Jesus, and our hope through His resurrection, and His deity, they are your brethren. If they are in the practice of loving God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and their neighbor as themselves, they are practicing the holy faith. Our denominational dogmas won't be allowed in the eternal kingdom, therefore we should not harbor them now.

(Philippians 2:3-4) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. [NIV]

(Philippians 2:14-15) Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe. [NIV]

Those who do not heed this warning will be taken from the service of the Lord by His own hand. This division is hindering the work of the Gospel, and discrediting the Church in the presence of the heathen. Denominations that have stood for centuries are about to crumble. Even now, the Lord has blinded many of them and taken away their light. A growing number of vacant buildings stand as a sad testimony to their ruin. There will be many more. Denominations that were once great beacons of light, their birth spurred by a revival of faith and revelation, have either lost their luster to traditions of men or they have fallen into sin and compromise of the truth, in order to keep pace with society. Steeples of once-thriving churches stand like tombstones, marking the place where the rotting body lies. In fact, many churches have more members in the graveyard out back, than in the building. The numbers of those who are

spiritually alive keep dwindling.

Those who repent will be blessed and their anointing will remain and be increased. These will partake of the final harvest of the Church and will be a sign and a wonder and do great works in the name of Jesus, in these final days. These will not be put to shame on the day of the Lord.

To the Evangelists and Ministries:

The Lord has several things against the evangelists of today. A number of them are charlatans and perpetrators of every wind of doctrine. Some tickle the ears of the people with prosperity messages. Some pervert the Word to give themselves a particular edge. There are countless traveling evangelists and “faith healers,” each with their own hook, in order to make a name for themselves. Some proclaim to be prophets, but they perform for hire or to sell books and their prophecies are not true, nor do they bring repentance into the hearts of those they speak over. Such men have made a circus out of gatherings, going on about their communication with angels and all manners of “visions” and “heavenly appearances they claim to have had, with which they attempt to validate their false teachings. Those who are careful to test the spirits are accused of skeptical unbelief.

(Colossians 2:18) Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. [NIV]

Others are purely motivational speakers and their messages are worldly, carnal interpretations of the Word of God, an unholy mixture of the Word, psychology, and humanism. Few are bringing the full truth to the people. Some are little more than money-grubbing extortionists.

God is not pleased with the practices that are often used to get more money. I have witnessed an evangelist who actually held a sort of “offering auction” to urge more money from a congregation. This man employed extortion practices that were so shameless and blatant that I had to walk out to keep from myself from publicly calling down the mammon-worshiper. (The pastor should have called him down, and never let that man return! He was unquestionably a wolf, devouring the sheep.) Others have promised financial gain and blessings in proportion to the giving of the people, promoting wrong motives in the Body, for giving. Still others have actually threatened that bad things will happen if the people don’t “obey God” in the amount they are to give. I saw one woman fall to pieces, weeping because she had been late arriving and missed this same evangelist’s first collection and thereby missed the “special double-blessing”

he had promised to those who gave substantially to the initial offering of his service. (He took several offerings during his “service,” in addition to selling a homemade “How to” workbook on witnessing, at a ridiculously high price.) This is wickedness at its worst! Was not the anger of our Lord kindled against those who made His Father’s house a den of thieves?

(2 Cor 11: 13) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. [NIV]

Some charge exorbitant fees for their “services.” They are professional speakers or entertainers, rather than true messengers of God. They use worldly methods of self-promotion and fund-raising, marketing their gospel and “service,” like common products. People are classified into “levels” by clever names in accordance with the amount they give and often rewarded with “token gifts.” Many such evangelists and ministers invest their excess profits in the stock market, unaware that such investments often support companies involved with immoral products. Such are a shame to the eternal Gospel of Christ, and have caused the world to reject the truth that could have saved their souls.

This commercialism of the sacred, holy sacrifice of Christ the Lamb is evil in the sight of God. The blood of those souls, who refused the Gospel because they were repulsed by such greedy behavior, shall be upon the hands of such evil doers, as well as those who followed after them and supported them. To them, the apostle Paul would say:

(2 Cor 11:4&5) For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those “super-apostles.” I may not be a trained speaker but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. [NIV]

(1Ti 6:3-5) If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and

understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. [NIV]

Evangelists are supposed to rely upon God, having faith that He will supply the worker's needs by way of the Church, only when preaching and working for the Church consumes all their time. Manipulating people to give is not exercising faith and trust in God. Also, while it is popular to quote "A workman is worthy of his wages," Paul also reminded the Church that he made tents by trade, and worked physically along with the body to earn his own keep, so as not to be a burden to the church. He said "those who don't work, don't eat." Many evangelists breeze in and out of town, and their followers gather in adoration, treating them like royalty. I wonder if it wouldn't be more scriptural for an evangelist to call up a local body of believers and say: "I have a message from the Lord, by the way, is there any work I can do for you while I'm here? Could I clean your carpets, paint some trim? Mow the grass? I will be glad to be at your service while I am in the area." What was Jesus trying to tell his disciples when He washed their feet and said, "If you would be great in the kingdom, be a servant of all"?

(2Th 3:8-10) We did not eat any one's bread without paying, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you. It was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If anyone will not work, let him not eat. [RSV]

Furthermore, all the believers gave all they had, which was then distributed to those among the Body who had need, not poured into visiting evangelists, expensive programs, buildings and professional salaries. Because ministries and churches are doing numerous such activities, they have an endless need for more money. The issue of tithing and extra offerings is a private thing between God and the believer. The tithe of Malachi is actually addressed to the people of Israel as part of their covenant with God. In the New Testament, tithing is not stressed,

however the pure-hearted gave all they had, as did the widow with her mite. If feeling guilt, gaining a financial blessing or impressing the pastor is one's motivation for tithing, don't bother. It is meant to be an act of love, obedience and faith to God. It is also something that the Holy Spirit will teach the believer, as He instructs all believers in all things. It is shameful for the minister to browbeat, nag and manipulate the tithe from the believers or the evangelist to resort to various promotional techniques to extract even more offerings. (This includes "suggested donations.") We must repent! Have enough faith that God will provide for the ministry! If God is behind one's work, He will fund it. Will He provide a palatial home overlooking the golf course and a Cadillac or Lincoln to drive? Usually not.

(James 4:3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. [RSV]

Some evangelists work independently because they have made ministry an idol. They love to be in charge and handpick "yes men" to assist them, rather than to have a group of trustworthy and biblically-grounded advisors (*such as mere, non-professional, plain old non-compromising brethren*) to help keep their doctrines in check. Others enjoy the limelight and the respect they receive from pastors and their congregations. They enjoy their position of stature within their one-man-show. Some are more entertainers than anything else and the true Spirit of God is not in them. They practice manipulation of an "audience" for selfish and worldly gain. They allow themselves to be lifted up as "God's man of the hour," gathering huge crowds who exalt the man or creature, rather than God, the Creator. Then, when they fall into the temptations of carnal lusts, everyone is dismayed, shocked or angry, and it brings disgrace, in the eyes of the lost, upon the holy Church and the name of Christ. The Word warns us: Be sure your sin will find you out! Those who preach for selfish gain will be exposed. I believe there are many who start out sincere, but their very rise to exaltation breeds a pride that makes them especially vulnerable. In their high-profile and busyness, they forget God, neglect prayer and stumble over the very cross they once preached.

There are many false teachers who have become purveyors of prosperity, despising the cross, saying the cross is replaced with the resurrection and therefore suffering is not applicable

to the children of God. They preach a “name it and claim it - kingdom now” kind of gospel which proves that, like the Jews in Jesus’ day, they expect a Messiah who is of this world, who will bring them mammon and power on this earth. The truth is not in them because they have not understood the whole counsel of God. They want a king who will give them all of their carnal desires. The lowly, humble Christ, they don’t know, nor do they want to know him.

(Phil. 3:7-8) But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ. [RSV]

(Phil. 3:18-21) For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself. [RSV]

The early followers of Christ and suffering martyrs of today, those who lost their lives and sacrificed everything for the sake of the Gospel, will stand in judgment against such men for their extravagant living and promises of great financial blessings and prosperity to those who patronize their ministry. These men (and women) fleece the sheep. They do not share in the sufferings of Christ. They do not know or care about the deprivation that is often borne by the true saints of Jesus Christ. Such people make a mockery of the cross, despising its shame and humiliation and they show disdain for those who have obeyed the Lord’s command to take up their own crosses to follow Him. They are not true servants of Christ, for no servant is greater than his master and Jesus had no place to lay his head. Yet these men (and women) live and travel in luxury. Extravagance is their way and they claim it is their just desserts, as a child of God. Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world, so how is it that anyone could associate worldly wealth with evangelism? Truly these have had their rewards here on earth and there will

be none for them in the eternal kingdom.

(Heb. 12:2) looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.. [RSV]

(Phil. 2:-8) Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. [RSV]

God is against the constant buying and selling that is occurring in the meeting places. This is an abomination to God. How is it that this is so overlooked by the Body of Christ? Did Jesus not make a whip of cords to drive the money changers, buyers and sellers out of the temple of God which was meant to be a house of prayer?? Ministers and evangelists will stand behind the pulpit of the sanctuary, offering “two for one” deals on their books and merchandise. I witnessed a presentation of Christian toys for sale from the pulpit before so much as a prayer was uttered among the congregation. Many think that it is okay to sell things in the vestibule, just outside the sanctuary, but the Lord drove them out from in front of the temple, the very place that was supposedly “designated,” by the leaders, for such activities. Repent of turning a meeting place of the Body into a place to merchandise goods. Repent of hawking wares from the pulpit. God is not pleased. It is to be a gathering for prayer and worship, not a marketplace. Do not think anyone who does these things will be spared of God’s correction. This is a warning. What Jesus did was a warning. Paul warned the Body as well, saying that he does not peddle the Gospel. Evangelists who have things to sell need to open a business, a store, a website, or set up a tent at the farthest end of the parking lot. But keep this commercialized abomination of peddling, out of the assembly of the Lord.

(2 Cor. 2:17) Unlike so many, we do not peddle the Word of God for profit. On the

contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God. [NIV]

Because many ministries are run like large corporations with executive positions, they pay large wages to their CEOs and operate just as any other worldly business. They spend more time holding board and departmental meetings, than they do in prayer. Such ministries consume large amounts of money for television time, marketing, analysis, sales, fund-raising, printing, presentation, wardrobes and other self-promotion. They hold large conferences, at a great expense to those attending, and it is all little more than a platform for “leadership teams” to showcase their motivational speaking expertise, entertainment skills, and raise more money for their ministry, a ministry which more often than not, supplies them with a life of luxury and privilege.

Those who attend such conferences are usually members of the body of Christ, who have often already received enough teaching of the Word that they should be out winning souls, by now, effectively teaching the Word of truth themselves. *(if only the “clergy” would give them an opportunity!)* Yet, the people continue to attend these conferences, still needing a message that will boost their “self esteem” or a seminar on how to “improve their Christianity.” It has very little to do with the lowly and humble example of God’s son to love the Father, love and serve one another, and bring souls to Christ. For many ministries, even those which may have started out sincere, their eventual purpose of existence becomes a mission of building or maintaining a worldly kingdom, in the name of the Gospel, as well as self-preservation, and so they compromise the most holy faith. The people become institutionalized zombies, trained to be chronic hearers but never doers, of the Word of God.

To the Planners and Builders of Church Structures:

This is not addressed to the architects and construction workers, who are merely workmen, hired to do a job. This call for repentance is for the pastors and elders who lead their churches into large building projects. God is not pleased with the constant construction of larger and more elaborate church structures. Anyone can get online and look up the mortgage insurance listings for the many loans for church buildings. It is staggering! These astronomical figures will boggle the mind with the sheer number of loans and magnitude of the amounts financed. We are talking about millions of dollars for single structures or additions. What precedent did Jesus Christ or the early Church fathers set for such construction? Jesus clearly told the Pharisees that God now intended our bodies to be the temple for the Holy Spirit of God, on the day He told them “destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” So it is not a valid argument to point to the construction of Solomon’s temple as a precedent for us to follow, in building a house of worship for God.

(Eph. 2:20-22) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. [NIV]

To the early Christians, the synagogue became a public place to witness to non-believers. The Church met in one another’s homes to worship. If a home was too small for a group to meet, then some of them moved to another home or even another area where the Gospel was needed. They all continued to help and support each other’s needs with the money collected. They did not invest it into excessive building funds. However, today’s “churches” compete for money to push their worldly buildings, projects and agendas. While little ones starve throughout the world, Christ’s Bride, whom He called to love and help the least of these, exhausts Her resources to undertake huge construction projects. How will we justify it before the throne of a Holy God, who cares more for children’s empty stomachs than He does for structures?

(Matt. 25:45) “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ [NIV]

Extravagant church construction began when the emperor Constantine “converted” to Christianity and operated under the pagan influence of his former beliefs. He built magnificent edifices and basilicas, imitating the pagan temples, in an effort to rid him of his guilt over the murder of his own son and decadent life. His example of spending money on elaborate décor was followed by the Roman Catholic Church. Again and again as each successive pope, patronized and funded by wealthy families, constructed or improved upon these edifices, they perhaps sincerely, but misguidedly, were hoping to glorify God. Instead, it only served to glorify their own reign. Not only were the buildings of obscene magnitude and decoration, but they were filled with commissioned art, each a prideful tribute to the man who ordained it, and the family who financed it. Then it was christened with the name of one of the departed saints, (whose own life was one of poverty and physical lack, though spiritually rich). The reformation didn’t change things much. Many protestant denominations continued in this tradition of building structures that competed in splendor. Over time, it became a tradition, among the various denominations, to construct these magnificent cathedrals, (lavish in physical wealth, but often spiritually impoverished).

(Acts 7:48-50) However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me: says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?” [NIV]

This practice of building continues among modern church groups. I listened as a young architect expressed his frustration over a seventeen-million-dollar church addition. The design called for a massive glass front and the plans were faulty, lacking adequate support for the two-and-a-half story, glass panels. He could not get anyone on the architectural team, or the pastor, to listen to him. He knew the design would have to be altered at the last minute, costing the church a whole lot more money than originally budgeted. More money? I was still reeling from the

seventeen-million figure, for a mere church addition! Even a small church I attended years ago, which would have been extremely modest in comparison with today's average buildings, had high vaulted ceilings, which made heating costs very expensive and impractical. Furthermore, the light fixtures were so out of reach, a hydraulic lift had to be rented, merely to change a light bulb. Since the use of the hydraulic lift was costly, all bulbs were replaced at the same time, whether they had burned out or not, and the used, (but still good) ones tossed into the trash. Sadly, many churches stand abandoned or have been inhabited by ungodly businesses or individuals, as a judgment for extravagance and waste. Some of them remain unused by anyone, because their construction is such that no one can afford to heat, cool or maintain them. This is poor stewardship of Church money! God would rather we used that money to care for the needs of His children.

The main reason modern church construction is so expensive is because entertainment has become the main thrust and focus of many churches today. Now they are being constructed to cater to the needs of entertainers: popular bands, theatrical productions and conference speakers. Today's churches are designed to be auditoriums with a large, raised stage, using light and sound systems, capable of high voltage input/output. These are convention center quality set-ups, with theater seating. This is an entertainment-oriented society and perhaps it is a viable way to reach the lost. God is creative and He made us creative. It is certainly better to use one's creativity for the Lord.

However, I know the Holy Spirit is the One who reaches the soul of a man or woman and He can do it without the use of costly extravaganzas. About three thousand souls were added to the church in a single day, on the day of Pentecost. It was the conviction of souls, upon hearing the simple words of Peter, which he uttered under the power of the Holy Spirit. *Are such masses flooding to the church events and getting saved, to the point of justifying the expense of these grand productions?* The early church spent no money on production, yet large numbers were added to them daily. We spend thousands on a production and only a handful step forward to join the kingdom, in comparison. Surely something is wrong with this picture!

A nearby, large city supports about three or four actual community civic centers, which Christian groups once rented for their shows and events. Being in general public arenas, there was a greater chance for the lost to inadvertently wander in, and get saved at a Christian concert

or revival. Now these events can be held in the churches. This way, more profits can be kept for the host church and the performers. The problem is; how many lost people are going to enter a church to hear a concert? Could it be that entertainment for the “saved” is the only real accomplishment? Perhaps a bit of conviction occurs, to carry the believer through a few more days. Or does it just satisfy our lazy souls to enjoy entertainment that is “guilt-free” since it is “Christian.” Do we leave the arena, so greatly inspired, that we then run out into the highways and byways, proclaiming the Gospel with newfound fervor, compelling the lost to come in? We should, but how many of us do?

How does a single congregation manage the expenses of a concert hall that generally takes an entire large city to support? Is this good stewardship of the money of the Church? Perhaps if one auditorium was jointly built by all the area churches and shared, it would be more effective. But if each church fellowship has to have its own set up, this indicates a spirit of uncooperativeness, as well as being self-serving and costly. And if the Holy Spirit doesn’t come to your production, it is in vain.

One nearby church hosted an extravagant production where female members of the church were given a cosmetic (*physical-flesh*) “make-over” and each “contestant” appeared on stage by bursting through a life-size poster of her former self. This is not the work the Church was called to do, and it does not please God Almighty. This glorifies the flesh, not God. He is about to bring down all apostasy within His church. All worldliness is about to be exposed for what it is, as He pulls down and bankrupts such churches. This shallow version of the Gospel will not sustain souls in the end-times tribulation! We need to repent and cry out for God to have mercy on us! We have been asleep and deceived.

Gal. 5:13) You my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love. [NIV]

(Gal. 6:7-8) Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. [NIV]

There is a trend among churches is to build a first-class gymnasium for the congregation, even if they don't have a "Christian school" to justify it. While the Lord may have no objection to the concept of building a gym in order to reach out to lost youth and provide a safe, Christian environment for them to play in, and establish an opening to reach their souls, (*such as what the YMCA was originally intended for*) this is generally not what is being done among the churches. Instead each church is protecting their own children from the world and providing themselves with an exclusive and elaborate place for their own congregation to use, while keeping the pollution of the "lost" at bay. The competitive spirit and pride behind sports activities too often becomes dominant and these, however well-intended, sports events often wind up having little or nothing to do with presenting the Gospel, and therefore should not be the focus of the Church. While church teams in themselves may be innocent enough, if there are church members who spend more time playing softball for their church team, than praying or reading their Bibles, then it is safe to say we have missed our calling. Perhaps if the various churches could manage to save money by working together to build one or two community gyms for Christian witness, and if they kept their focus on Christ, rather than the sport, it could have a purpose. In all honesty, I have not seen many gyms built where spreading the Gospel was the accomplished goal, no matter how worthy the intentions. When the Church takes on building gyms and promoting sports, she has left her pure call. Which scriptures set the precedent for these things?

Seeking the holy presence of God, purifying our hearts through repentance and sanctification, or spreading the Gospel has taken the back burner, as we build huge church complexes with a multitude of services and accommodations for the members. There is a country club/social club mentality affecting modern churches, and it is a far cry from the direction established by the apostles. Recently, a Christian publication showcased a new church building that was too magnificent to describe. Its entrance boasted elaborate architecture and costly embellishments, showcasing an enormous sculpture by a prominent artist. The vestibule was larger than most entire church buildings. It had the look of a palace and was extravagant beyond belief. The time is soon coming when God will not endure the selfish indulgences of such churches. At a time when so many people are struggling to survive, it is unreasonable to expect members to support the cost of these structures.

The hate the world has toward us these days is not unjust persecution. It is

understandable repulsion toward our hypocrisy. God will bring our worldly, carnal structures and behavior to utter ruin, unless we repent. These kinds of churches will be purified or else they will become a bankrupt inhabitation for every wild creature.

(1 Cor. 3:9-16) For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. [NIV]

The truth is there is no New Testament scripture that indicates the Church was ever to lay a single physical brick to build a building and call it a "church." According to Paul, we are the bricks that make up the building of the Church. Jesus is the foundation and the Church or the Body of Christ make up the rest, as they are developed into the image of Christ. The reference to building here is strictly in an illustrative or allegorical sense. No physical "building" was ever implied. We have gotten way off track.

Now I am not saying that God has never intended the construction of any church building that has ever existed. Perhaps in areas or times where homes were very small and the weather was not suitable for outdoor gatherings, God may well have inspired church communities to build shelters in which to fellowship and to worship Him and hear the Word. But the elaborate and costly structures, the towers on every corner, these monuments to the pride of man, will soon become tombstones of disgrace. God would prefer that the Church saw to the needs of one another, rather than strain the pocketbooks of the believers to support huge budgets. We must

repent of all this building super structures to make a name for our particular church! We must repent of building edifices that require millions to build and tens of thousands to maintain.

Wherever two or more are gathered in Jesus' name, He is there in the midst of them. If the Holy Spirit shows up to our assembly, we have all we need to worship and glorify God. If there are more people than a building, backyard or home can hold, perhaps it is time to form a new group and send them forth to branch out, with the blessing of God. It is not about seeing how "big" a particular group, ministry, building or fellowship can get.

To the Churches:

These are the main things which God has against the various churches of today. Too many of them are worldly, selfish, prideful and terribly lacking in love and genuine concern for the lost. Spiritual immaturity abounds. Most operate within the framework of a corporation or business, with the preacher appointed as CEO. (*Has this finally been said enough to make a clear point?*) Too often a pastor either reigns as a king over a little kingdom and the members are the subjects to whom he or she dictates, or he or she is a mere hireling, who simply compromises to keep as much peace as possible to maintain his or her income, and moves on when peace is no longer possible. Many well-intentioned pastors control the operation of the service, stifling the body of believers from being free to function in their gifts of worship and ministry. In this, leaders are usurping Christ's ability to be in charge and lacking faith in the individual's ability to hear and respond to the Holy Spirit. These leaders' hearts may be pure, but they are unwittingly continuing in a liturgical tradition instituted by Constantine, that is a far fall from the early church.

Many Western Churches are sick from the head to the tail. The thrust of many churches is motivated by a corporately selfish ambition and making a name for their "church." They operate in a closed community mentality, that wants more members, but only reaches out to the lost if the lost will come to them and measure up to their social and traditional standards. Many never extend their witness beyond the doors of their sanctuary. The members, pastors and elders are preoccupied with the health and success of their "church," or their "club." Leaders and members alike are possessive of their own sheep, often shunning anyone who would dare venture to another "club" or "church," as if that person just forsook their faith. Precious few modern churches bear much resemblance to the early Church established by Christ and the apostles.

We all must humble ourselves and repent of this mentality. If God has moved someone to another fellowship for any reason, that person is still in the body of Christ, and should be loved and respected accordingly. God often moves people, in order to take them through a particular lesson or through a new area of growth. Sometimes, staying in one place can cause stagnation and stunt one's spiritual growth. Yet many presume to play God by claiming to know what is best for a particular believer, discouraging them from change or even from stepping out to

minister on their own. The reason for this is self-preservation of that particular church. Members, elders and pastors alike, fear a mass exodus from their “church” that will reduce its income and cause its demise. But God uses change to bring growth and maturity to His Bride. He caused Abraham to move out, not knowing where he was going. Moses led the children of Israel forth out of Egypt, trusting God for their destination. God scattered the early Church, through severe persecution, to get the Gospel spread to a wider area. He is also going to drive the modern “church” attendees out of their secure sanctuaries.

Many argue that if there weren't a remaining, faithful core to support a group of believers, or “church”, it would crumble, and there is some truth to that, but let God be God. If a church is operating within God's will and according to His purpose, He will not let it falter, but will preserve and provide for it. He will send new supporters to replace those whom He removes. He will ensure that enough faithful members remain involved, to accomplish every good work He has ordained for it. If He lets the church dissolve, He has a reason, and He will work in each member's life to see that they survive, if their hearts seek after Him. He never leaves nor forsakes us. When we think a particular church is the only one that can be best for a person, we are operating in pride and distrust of the power and wisdom of Christ and the individual's ability to hear Him. None of us knows which church or fellowship is best for a believer, or where God wants to place that person. When we frantically try to manipulate members to stay put, it is more likely we are trying to ensure that the kingdom we've built or prefer, is adequately funded. It isn't likely that God would give any of us a personal revelation of God's will for another person's church home. Whether one is a sheep or a shepherd, repent of trying to control where people go to worship God. Membership to a particular group of believers in itself is a strange notion. We are all members of the one and only Body of Christ. So repent of all manipulation! If any of these many structures and their expenses is not God's will, He will tear them down and no mortal can stop it. If any of them exist due to His will, then the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Stop trying to be in control! A “church” is often not all that representative of the “Church.” We must take care that our passion doesn't become misguided into a carnal work, as opposed to just being Christ's Bride.

If a believer has prayed and hears a call from God to attend a different fellowship or denomination, such a one is not in rebellion. He or she is not a “traitor.” Such are still members

of the one true body of Christ. We must repent of church “nationalism,” repent of strife between bodies of believers, repent of slander and defamation of other denominations and their leaders and pastors. There was a pastor who was going to withdraw from participating in a multi-church, community revival because someone from one the “other churches” was making vicious accusations that this pastor was trying to steal members away. That accusation is ridiculous! God schedules the removal of a Christian to another church. What qualifies anyone to know which church is best for another? As the one true Church, which is about to enter into the final days of earth, we had better grow up and out of such petty thinking! Those who refuse to be unified into one Church, willing to work together for the common good of the eternal Gospel, will not be used in the final harvest of souls. Our lamp stand will be removed and our light taken away.

(James 3:16) For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every evil practice. [NIV]

The early church met in homes and would branch to form another group, if one group was too large to meet, or if they were called to expand to new areas. They were still part of the same church and Paul admonished them for any spirit of division, whenever it would erupt. They were only given names to refer to the area in which they existed. That was not meant to set the precedence for divisions into various churches. In persecuted countries such as China, Christians meet in small groups for safety, as did the early believers, then they will occasionally meet in large groups if an elder comes through the village. But they do this at great risk, as do many believers in countries where the practice of the Christian faith is forbidden. This is the whole body of Christ operating as one, which is what we are supposed to be doing. Yet even China and other countries are suffering the division of denominationalism as missionaries come, only to represent and draw converts to their particular denomination, rather than to Christ alone. This is causing strife and confusion among the brethren, rather than unity.

I covered this in the first section on denominations, but it bears repeating. The Church is NOT supposed to be collecting into camps, whereby we advocate one preacher over another, or one denominational practice over another. We are not to be striving with one another, accusing each other of heresy, sheep stealing, rebellion or not having the truth. We are not to be focused

on counting heads and offerings. The true way is a very narrow road and few will find it, Jesus told us. Why then, are we measuring our success as a body, based on the population of a church? If the church is full, should we assume we are doing something right or could it be that we have made the path broad, leading them to destruction? This possibility should have every pastor who enjoys a constantly full house, on his or her knees, praying for discernment and protection from teaching falsely.

(Matt 7:13-14) Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few. [RSV]

On the other hand, if there is no growth by way of new converts going on, we should be especially concerned because it is not the will of the Father that ANY one should perish but that all should come to the saving knowledge of Christ. If our growth is only coming from those who have transferred from another church fellowship because one church offers more physical benefits, activities or programs than another, we have work to do, because the fields are white and ready for the final harvest, and it is the lost we should be seeking. We work harder to make our churches more attractive to the desires of existing Christians, using worldly appeals such as programs that cater to the flesh. We lure the immature in Christ in this way, and thereby keep them immature as well.

We must repent of the indifference and hypocrisy that has turned off so many potential believers and led them to reject the Gospel and despise religion. The various church groups must repent of their isolationist tendencies. We must get out and compel the lost to come in and if they won't, we must go to them where they are, and share the good news of salvation, not the ill tidings of judgment, traditional religious bondage and division.

But first, we must ask God to fill our hearts with genuine love and compassion, for without that we are merely noisy gongs, unable to be a true representation of Christ to anyone. I have seen too many churches lure new converts into their ranks, only to hurt them and cast them back out with their indifference, petty strife or lack of love. How dare we ask God for fresh souls if we don't minister Christ's love to the ones He's already given us? Sometimes, when I recall

horror stories of how many Christians have unkindly mistreated one another, I can only shake my head and think, dear Lord, with Christians like us, Satan can relax! We'll do his work for him.

Even though the many expensive structures and mega churches are not pleasing to God, neither are some of the alternative "home churches." The Lord has this against some of these groups. They practice isolationism and exclusiveness that fails to demonstrate a concern for bringing in those souls who are not yet in the safety of the cross. They are content to dwell in unity with their own little group of believers and are not actively engaged in bringing more souls into the kingdom. If they are independent of a parent church, they are nearly impossible to locate. This can be good in a country where persecution is high and gathering forbidden. But the Western home churches should desire to make their presence known to a lost and dying world.

There are those who have secluded themselves because they find the behavior of those they deem spiritually lacking to be distasteful, and choose to avoid the fire that such people bring into their lives. It is very difficult for outsiders to even locate a home church and some home groups actually vote as to whether to allow a person to come to their meetings or join their group.

One such house church sent me a questionnaire to see if I qualified to be a part of their group! I soon discovered that after over 25 years of serving Jesus, loving Him with all my heart, walking in a radical and uncompromising way, I failed to meet the standards of this group because I wear jeans and occasionally, some light make-up. I didn't fit the fundamentalist mold of a quiet, head bowed, hands in her lap woman in a long dress and covered head, who is content to be saved through literal childbearing. (*Where does this leave an infertile woman?*) While I agreed with some of this group's reasons for rejecting the established "churches," they impose severe requirements and restrictions upon their members that are more demanding than the laws of the Pharisees in Jesus' day.

While home churches are better able to overcome the Constantine traditions that plague the structure building "churches," these groups are not immune to the fallacies common to any group. They run as much of a risk of falling into false doctrines as any "church." They tend to have no plan of distribution of tithes and offerings or supporting missionaries, so they are not as effective in meeting the needs of the Body, foreign missions or other outreaches. (*Although some*

large churches and ministries that are better equipped and organized to give aid and support, often fail to do so in proportion to the wealth they have.) Home churches are better able to help one-another within their own group, which is more biblical in principle. However, those who establish home churches, while they have many good changes and simplicities that do follow scriptural precedence more exactly, they, nevertheless, must take care that they don't become smug and prideful, thinking they have the only truth, and sit in judgment of their Christian brethren in the "big churches." For God is in control of all things at all times. He works within all avenues of men.

(2 Cor. 10:12) Not that we venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding. [RSV]

Some bodies of believers get very caught up in outward and religious expressions of holiness—demanding certain styles of clothing and appearance. Yes, the Lord loves modesty and Paul instructed women to adorn themselves with a sweet spirit, rather than jewels. Yet, if we require a specific type of garment in order for the converts to enter in, we are no different than the early, Jewish Christians who demanded circumcision of the Gentiles, before letting them in. Women wearing women's slacks, does not mean she is wearing that which pertains to a man. Men once wore gowns and robes as well. Shouldn't we all then, if we want to dress to show holiness, return to both sexes wearing robes? I used to wear only long dresses. But one day, as I was in the barn preparing my goats for milking, one goat chased another, who dashed between my legs to escape. The goat plowed into my skirt, effectively throwing me flat into the manure. *(Sorry, but to everything there is a proper garment!)* Once, while entertaining some brethren in Christ of another denomination, I made it a point respect their beliefs. I kept my hair pulled up, wore very conservative, plain dresses and no make-up, so as not to offend them. No problem for me, as I understand I can become all things to all people for the sake of the Gospel. But they left a pamphlet behind, as their only thanks for a weekend of meals and hospitality. It was about the proper dress of the Christian. As I read, my heart broke. They felt strongly about not showing any leg and that only *black* stockings, *(of which I owned none)* were acceptable leg covering.

Good grief and God have mercy! If we get caught up in such legalism, where would it ever end? We will find ourselves right back under the law. It is nothing more than man-created bondage.

There is no specific clothing required other than the robe of righteousness, which can only be provided to us by Jesus Christ. I believe that is the wedding garment that was missing with the man who was thrown out, in the parable of the wedding feast. God does not approve of scanty clothing, immodesty and a sensuous look. These are certainly not in keeping with the mature Christian, but neither does He require extra-long skirts, tightly wound buns, caps or suspenders instead of belts. There's nothing wrong with such dress, and it can certainly make one look chaste, but it does not make one's heart any holier. These are outward appearances and God is more concerned with the things that are in the heart. Jesus said not to be so concerned about what you should wear. It will be those who do not place their hope in the cross of Jesus Christ alone, and those who fail to circumcise their hearts and see to their internal holiness, that will be cast outside, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!

(Matt. 23:28) So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. [RSV]

(Rom. 2:29) He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God. [RSV]

Repent of having a spirit of religion. Don't be like the Pharisees of old, using God's Word as the authority to oppress brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a religious spirit that makes us more obsessed with the outward appearance rather than the heart. In this spirit we condemn a fairly new Christian brother, who might still be in bondage to tobacco, while some of us, who have walked with the Lord for years, are still struggling with self-control over our temper or with unforgiveness, or an inability to love. These are far more dangerous sins and in all honesty, they are areas in which I am still learning to overcome. That brother who smokes may have other issues that are more urgent for God to weed out, and that brother may have a more tender heart than some of us will ever have. We all have some area of unconquered sin in our lives, be it gossip, anger, gluttony, taking offense, being busy-bodies, etc., and we would do well to focus

on the areas God wants to change in us, rather than worrying about others. I have heard Christians who otherwise appear to have spiritual maturity, lash out a racist remark or speak out against another's weight or housekeeping. God wants us all to be free from all sin, so we can't dare assume for a moment that any of us are one bit more holy than our brother, just because his is external and obvious, while ours may be internal and insidious, well hidden from the scrutiny of others, but not from God.

Let God choose what to eliminate and when. It is His Holy Spirit that convicts and molds, not any of us. He is sovereign and in perfect control of the situation with each of His children. He knows what is in each of our hearts, something we can't know about each other. He knows exactly what it will require to change our hearts and He will do it in His divine time and wisdom. We all need to mind our own business and let God mind His.

It is a religious spirit that adamantly claims women cannot ever preach the Gospel and must only serve God in the capacity of a servant/wife. Why is it that we will cling to such scriptures as "women must be silent in the church," yet we ignore the scriptures that announce that *in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female but all are equal*? Do we say it is better to sit under a carnal, unsanctified man, because he is a man, rather than to listen to a woman who is operating in the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Why do so many wield scriptures like a hammer, with which they mete out perverted judgments, laws and regulations? I don't know why Paul made two such apparently contradictory statements, but I don't think he intended his words to be used by men as a tool to oppress and carnally lord over women, as is done in many religious circles.

As a woman, I do respectfully concede to my husband as the spiritual authority, and especially when we are in disagreement on a matter. I do believe the Word instructs us to do that and I don't think a woman should be overbearing, nor be exercising authority over men. I have heard women publicly berate their husbands in a shameful manner and such a one ought to be corrected. But I also appreciate my husband's willingness and maturity to allow me to speak and work as Christ leads me. I am thankful that my husband treats me as an equal sister in the Lord, and it increases my respect for him all the more. Many men want to use scripture to degrade their wives and demand silent obedience but don't fulfill their scriptural obligation to love their wives as Christ does the Church, nurturing her and building her up.

There are other worldly abominations occurring in modern churches that do not please God. Besides the already mentioned focus on entertainment, there is a disproportionate balance on “sacrifice,” versus obedience. How we love to bring the sacrifice of praise, offerings, and tolerance through the “service,” but we do not obey God in every other aspect of our lives and church group or fellowship! We harbor unforgiveness; we are lacking in love, we offer a portion of our income to God, expecting a “blessing” in return; we neglect to read the Word; we ignore brothers and sisters in need, and we make daily decisions on our own without seeking God’s counsel. We expect God to bless us because we come in on Sunday morning and shout and clap and sing His praise. Pastors rush through the carefully planned and orchestrated worship in order to get on with their sermon, allowing the Holy Spirit mere minutes to act. Then it’s “thank you, Holy Spirit, move along now.” As “spectators,” the rest of us expect His Holy Spirit to fill us for a few minutes. Then, many of us sit back down and think ungodly thoughts, or wonder when the pastor will finish the message so we can have some lunch. The rest of the week, it’s back to the “real” world. We don’t bother to look after the widows and orphans, visit the sick, shut-in and imprisoned. Why should we think God would be pleased with this Sunday morning lip service? “Obedience is better than sacrifice.”

(1 John 2:4) He who says, “I know him” but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. [RSV]

We don’t bother to just be still and know that He is God. We don’t wait upon the Lord so that he can renew our strength and make us to mount up with wings as eagles. We don’t get revived and refreshed because we aren’t given a chance to truly experience the presence of our living God. Everything about the service is prepared, controlled, programmed and one-sided. True participation through corporate prayer, singing and just experiencing the Holy Spirit, as He moves and speaks freely from person to person, is not allowed or encouraged because saving time for the message takes precedence over everything else. We are passive recipients of the worship leader’s songs and the pastor’s sermon and it is all on man’s liturgical allotment of time, rather than on the Holy Spirit’s bidding and thereby we grieve Him.

Personally, I love praise and worship time more than anything else. I enjoy the music and

the more instruments, the more I enjoy it. These are wonderful additions to the whole experience, and I am disappointed when worship is cut short. But perhaps we have over-emphasized the importance of the production of worship and fallen short in other areas that are vital to God. Everything is practiced, performed and planned and there is little allowance for the work of the Spirit of God. A single, simple instrument would work as well as all the grand equipment, if the Holy Spirit is allowed to work. And if He is not allowed to work, what good are all the instruments and equipment, anyway? There is something to be said for the small home fellowship that is more able to adjust to the desires of the Holy Spirit with each member able to burst forth into song, rather than a planned worship service. The Holy Spirit can be given all the time He wants to move. Believers can be still and know that He is God. I have enjoyed small groups where only a guitar or autoharp or no instrument at all is used and it is sweet, pure, unrehearsed and spontaneous, corporate fellowship with the Lord.

I yearn for the little unlocked church building with a parsonage next door, where a sinner could walk up and walk in, to pray and seek help, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Today's large, well-equipped and locked-tight churches are formidable and impenetrable. They make it impossible for walk-in salvations or urgent cries for help. If one is desperate for immediate spiritual help, what good is an answering machine? I recall several times when I longed for the companionship of a comrade in Christ. One particular Easter Sunday evening, at a time when my life was in shreds, I was so hungry for Christian fellowship that I drove from church to church for two hours. But none were having services and everyone I knew was occupied with their relatives, doing the usual pagan Easter activities. There was no prayer warrior available anywhere to pray with me or encourage me. I learned to encourage myself in the Lord and draw from His strength. That is a good thing, but true fellowship with another believer would have been a comfort many times, yet none could be found. Community is absent when you drive across town to a church structure once a week or so, sit quietly through a program, rush home and are not involved with the daily lives of one another in a family sense as was intended for the Church.

(Rom. 12:13) Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. [RSV]

Often, when someone needs a spiritual crisis met, they must make an appointment. Many

years ago, I was cleaning my church and the secretary was out, when the church office phone rang. The pastor, who did not wish to be disturbed, instructed me to tell the caller he was not in. I stood indecisively and wound up just letting the phone ring until it stopped. But I was sick at heart because I had been asked to lie by my pastor and besides, the caller could have been in desperate need. This should not have happened. But neither should pastors be so overwhelmed with such a great need for counseling in the first place. Look at any large church website and you'll find a list of services available that are geared to social and psychological needs of a people who should be strong in Christ and doing good works, themselves. Why are we not powerful in the Lord and His might? Why are we spiritual weaklings, still needing milk and seeking after secular answers to our problems? Why are we so flesh-focused? Something is very wrong. For all the spending on ministry, for all the preaching, week after week, why is the Bride of Jesus Christ, the very ones who should be examples of strength and power to the world, such a bunch of spiritual weaklings?

(Rom. 5:3-5) More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. [RSV]

All our fancy trimmings are costly and require more and more money to protect, insure, maintain, clean, heat, and cool, therefore more money is always needed. In a time where people are financially strapped more than ever and getting deeper in debt, some just over basic necessities, a church's continual cry for money is a hardship for the people. I have been stressed when a church leader pleads for funding for another costly project after I have already tithed and given even beyond that, and am struggling to pay my bills. Plus I usually know of several folks at a time who are in desperate need of help and the churches are not meeting their needs. I am normally a very cheerful giver. I love to help others and I especially love to give assistance to brothers and sisters in need. However, it has been difficult for me to contribute to financial pleas of the "church" above and beyond the tithe, when my furnace is broken and winter is coming on, my water heater is about to die and my toilet is leaking and I have no funds to repair them. On

top of that, I often hear some pastor or evangelist boast about how God has just stirred someone's heart to give them a fancy new car or house and wants His children to be blessed. Many people, who would otherwise love to gather in Christian fellowship, are turned off by the constant fund-raising, when they are barely getting by themselves. They tend to stay away from churches and ministries for that very reason.

(1John 3:17-18) But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth. [RSV]

I have heard true accounts of people being described among pastors as “giving units.” I have been given a visitor card that asked for the guest's annual income amount. The church is supposed to be collecting money to disperse among the body as they have need, not consuming everyone's resources to support a building, musical instruments and equipment, sound systems and an endless list of wants and needs to make us like “other churches.” What used to be a problem of “Smiths keeping up with the Joneses,” has escalated to coveting within the churches themselves, as they each push to have what the church next door has, with attracting financial contributors as the real goal. God will bring down the material minded preoccupation of these churches as he takes this nation and the entire world into “survival mode.”

(Heb 13:5) Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” [RSV]

(1Peter 5:2) Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. [NIV]

This demand for money from the congregation only causes an unnatural indebtedness of the pastor and elders to the people who do the giving. The wealthiest givers to church funds

often control the spirit and work and thrust of the church. These elite members of a “church” (*not to be confused with members of the Church*) develop a bad habit of dictating to the leadership, and the leadership feels a need to cater to the whims of these often controlling and manipulative folks. This cripples the whole body of believers and attempts to usurp the authority of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. Those of us who are caught up in this activity need to repent.

To the Pastors:

Heed the Word in James 3:1 when he admonished the believers to consider carefully whether they should become teachers. He was not saying that few teachers should exist, but that the position should never be taken lightly or for ambitious motives. To qualify as teacher one needs to strive to possess the qualities and gifts required for such an office. James is referring to the grave responsibility and accountability before God. To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a position that many should want. It can bring upon us a greater judgment and it can bring upon us intense persecution and satanic attack. Such a one should be striving to be an example of love, compassion, humility, and constant self examination, always allowing God to purify one's own heart. It should be a life of true sacrifice.

(Phil. 2:3-4) Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. [RSV]

Instead, it has become an executive occupation, where one negotiates payment and benefits. As mentioned earlier, degrees and titles should not have become the criteria for the position of a pastor, nor should worldly qualifications even be considered as needed credentials for God's servants. The abominable practice of leaders attending seminaries, acquiring degrees and titles to validate one's call, is not what was meant by Paul's counsel to "study to show thyself approved." Paul would be the last to give his Pharisaic, religious education any credence in his knowledge of Christ. It is true that the disciples followed and learned under Jesus before being appointed to their ministries of apostles, however the focus was on loving one another, hearing the Spirit of God and obeying Him. It took time for Jesus to explain the meaning of the scriptures so that he could correct the Jewish misconception of what the Messiah would be and do. We have the benefit of the New Testament where these things are clearly explained. Only Revelation remains largely shrouded in mystery and I have yet to see all scholars agree on most of its messages, predictions and interpretations. Therefore, I don't see the advantage of a degree in studies of last day's prophecies.

In these modern times, the folly of institutionalized, religious education has brought upon us an institutionalized church, where worldly methods and formulas are depended upon and not the Holy Spirit of God, even among Pentecostals. This is especially true when much of the curriculum is focused on the business of running a church. In these elaborate institutions, would-be men and women of God, learn the psychology, finance, politics, etc., that will lead to the building up of a “successful” congregation. In these places one learns motivational skills that will produce the needed income to secure a worldly kingdom, disguised as a church. Sadly, miracles are often explained away in these lofty institutions. Scriptures are studied mainly for academic reasons, making a “scholarly clergy” appear superior to the “uneducated laity.” This creates an unspoken “class” distinction and implies that the common and “unlearned” Christian cannot possibly rightly divide the Word of truth or be trusted to speak in a “church” setting. “Laity” is looked down upon as being on a lower level than “clergy” and less able to understand spiritual matters.

Furthermore, these practices and principles install mere men as earthly representatives of Jesus Christ, causing other Christians to hear and obey a mortal, rather than the ONE TRUE HEAD OF THE BODY, JESUS CHRIST. Pastors and elders were to be a kind of overseer to protect and serve the Body and the Christian faith from unsound doctrine. They weren’t instructed to have titles and positions of power and superiority. They were overseers, in a servant mentality, for the sake of protecting the purity of the faith, not dictators of the order of worship services or a shepherd to direct the lives of believers. Those who interpreted the words of Paul in the era of King James were conforming to the hierarchal thinking of the day. How could it be anything other than misinterpretation of leadership terms in 1st Timothy and other epistles? After all, would Paul have contradicted the Lord? Hear what Jesus said to His special chosen:

(Matt. 23:8-12) But you are not to be called Rabbi, for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth father, for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called teacher, for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. [NIV]

Pastors must repent of the "king over a kingdom" mindset and the authoritarian attitude that requires brothers and sisters who are equal in Christ to bow to the pastoral throne of superiority. If indeed any man has been given the position of "Master" from God, (which is doubtful, since there can only be one Master and He shares His glory with no man) a pastor should at least understand what Jesus clearly said about the one who would be master, should be servant. What was the statement made when Jesus washed the disciples' feet? Not only did Jesus speak this, but He lived it by His own example.

(Phil. 2:5-11) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [NIV]

A pastor needs to learn the Word of God and to practice it in love, the same as everybody else. With that as a safeguard, he can then learn to hear the Holy Spirit through prayer and fellowship with the Lord. All the wisdom he needs to establish a body of believers is contained in the Bible, and the Holy Spirit will instruct in all things. Then those believers should be trained for a season until they come to the place where they no longer need a man to teach them, but can seek the Lord for themselves. Not only that, the pastor can humbly step down from the need to give a sermon and to run the spiritual show every Sunday. That humble spirit will give him the security to be able to encourage the rest of the members of the Body to function in their full potential in Christ.

Each one of those in the fellowship should be strongly urged to be responsible enough to study the Word for themselves, as well. If the mature members of the congregation know the scriptures, they will know whether the pastor is acting in accordance with God's Word, rather than in error or in the flesh. Furthermore, the pastor and the established brethren should

encourage newcomers to learn the scriptures, too. If this were going on, there would not be such an invasion of worldliness, selfish ambition and other errors in the church, and it would be quickly dealt with, when it crept in.

In the less-developed, “unpolluted by Western thinking” countries, where it costs dearly to serve the Lord as a minister, elder, missionary, prophet or evangelist, there is no such foolishness. Men qualify themselves to preach the Gospel by their willingness to risk their very lives. They must lay down their lives, their homes, their income, their families--everything for the calling. Why should a pastor expect the power and authority of Christ unless he is willing to die for the Church, as was Christ? These are the credentials that God requires of His greatest servants and these men and women are the ones who will retain their positions of leadership in the eternal kingdom, alongside the great Church fathers. The rest will have already enjoyed their reward, here and now. The wealth and comfort and lack of sacrifice they had on earth will make them ashamed, in the presence of God’s true servants.

God despises the political games that many modern clergy are often compelled to play. They must often cater to and brown-nose the wealthy of their congregation, neglecting the lowly members who have less to offer in assistance to the pastor’s lofty ambitions and goals of accomplishment. Some leaders watch the records to see who gives large offerings and who tithes and who doesn’t. *(In all fairness, I do know of one pastor who refuses to view the records of offerings by members, lest he would favor or be prejudiced toward members, based on their giving, and I am sure there are others like him.)* I have seen the poor and “undesirables” discouraged from coming to churches that prefer members who are “assets” and not “liabilities.” It is the well-to-do businessmen who are usually enlisted to be on the "board of directors" of many church bodies. There is a great deal of favoritism shown to the affluent, professional and gifted, while others are left out.

The “professionalism” that rules the world today extends its high-brow influence into the Church. The same people are always called upon to pray, play in the worship team and serve on the deacon body, service after service, while others wait perhaps a lifetime for an opportunity to feel the joy and humility of stepping out of the pew, and feeling God’s grace, power and presence as He uses them to minister to and serve the Body. The presence of God in His Holy Spirit can be so strong and genuine when we are being used by him, it is a real faith booster that

everyone needs to experience. When it comes to worship, surely the Holy Spirit responds more readily to sincerity, rather than professional excellence.

Sadly, the rest of the body is usually left to quietly remain unused by God, and in that state they fail to experience the many ways their faith is enriched by good works or in worship, prayer or sharing the Word. They become like stagnant cisterns of water, which eventually smell because the water of the Word, which has continually been poured into them, remains unused and wasted. The rest of the believers are crying to have an opportunity to pour out what has been put into them. They are not only given no encouragement to do so, but many are discouraged from going forth and venturing into the realm of preaching or teaching the Word of God. They become spiritual zombies, sitting week after week, receiving but never experiencing the growth that comes from putting it to use. They are not given any place to practice and improve their ministerial gifts because they are not among the popular or professional “chosen” of the church. Eventually their light dims, as they are repeatedly told they are “called” to minister in the home or workplace. They are taught that only “ministers” are allowed to speak or lead in the “church” without express permission from the “pastor.”

(By the way, witnessing or ministering in the home first is required of ALL Christians, including [especially] elders, deacons and pastors. Witnessing in the workplace is all well and good, and we are all to minister wherever we go, by our deeds, words and actions however, there is nothing godly about standing around, preaching and sharing scripture on company time. Your best witness at work is to do a good job, be honest, and give your employer his money's worth, with a cheerful heart. Telling the cashier about Jesus in a brief moment is fine, but laying out the whole Gospel while checking out your groceries will only serve to get him/her in trouble at work and make the customer behind you, angry. Quickly try to arrange an off-the-clock time to meet.)

The church is not intended to be a feeding trough on which the members come and get fuller and fuller until they bloat. The church is not meant to be a static institution, a miniature kingdom to bring glory to man. It is meant to be a training ground, where saints are equipped to go out and carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Pastors, if you are losing members because they are being called out to minister, then you are doing your job right. So repent of keeping your people bound to your little domain. They aren't here to keep *your* vision and dream of a

“church” alive. If you aren’t preparing them for a mission or service to propagate the Gospel, letting ALL of them practice before the body and sending them forth, you are failing your call.

Repent of manipulation and control of your congregation. I have heard pastors berate their members, scolding them for low tithes and offerings, low attendance and failure to help on a project. The worst thing I ever heard was a minister forbidding his congregation from praying in small clusters before the service. He accused them of being sneaky and told them if they had anything to pray about, they could share it with the whole body. What? Suppose a woman with a recent diagnosis of breast or cervical cancer would not be ready to share it publicly with the entire church? I don’t know what was going on with that church, but that pastor’s attempt to manipulate and control the people was evident with every word he said. As he spoke on, it was obvious he feared that members were speaking against him in these “prayer groups.” If the church has problems and the pastor has insecurities, he should be glad that the members want to pray about it. I never desired to visit that church again.

There are leaders who lay guilt trips upon the people, demanding participation in various programs, imposing all sorts of expectations, forgetting that many of their members are all working for a living, women who work actually have two full time occupations, so they might not be able to participate in anything else. Members are financially strapped as it is, then they are tithing their income, plus donating offerings to various other causes and funds related to the church. Be merciful to them, and you shall receive mercy.

(Matt. 23:15) Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. [NIV]

We live in a society that pressures us into a steady rush of things to do, places to be and stuff to pay for. Pastors, your “sheep” are trying to support themselves with daily operating expenses that are unceasing and ever-increasing. They have housing costs, food and clothing for their entire family, school expenses, car repairs and payments, insurance, taxes, utilities, yet few of them experience income raises to match the increase in living costs. Statistics prove that consumer debt is on the rise and it isn’t for luxury items. People are using credit to buy their

groceries and pay taxes. Fuel to drive around is at an all time high and every place people drive their car is a sacrifice. Consider that before you scold the congregation for low offerings, low attendance or decide that God wants you to build an addition or buy a new sound system.

Most pastors have a fair or excellent salary plus benefits. How can such a one be critical toward members for a lack of faith or commitment? Chances are, many among the congregation are doing without health insurance and must rely on prayer and faith to keep them healthy. What can a pastor teach those members about faith and trust? You must practice compassion upon the flock.

Parents are both working and then running their children to all sorts of extra-curricular activities that this society dictates. (*And the Lord has much for me to say about this, later.*) They are coming home late and tired, only to be greeted with piles of dishes, laundry, and hungry kids with homework to do. In contrast, as a pastor, hopefully you have prepared for your message in prayer and fellowship with God and reading His Word all day. You become upset because these folks didn't come to the weekday evening service to hear what you had to say. Where is the mercy in that? (*I realize that pastors also have hectic days with concerns and distractions, but if you aren't getting adequate preparation time, **you need to simplify your life.***) As a pastor, your first obligation is to the work of ministering to the people if the Lord has appointed you. Of course people need to hear the Word that will refresh and equip them. They need to simplify their lives from the social pressures of this world, so they can have room for God. But they don't need your nagging and brow-beating to keep your ministry going.

Pray that God will give you compassion and wisdom and patience. Then, begin to help your flock see that they need to drop a lot of the stuff they think they have to do. Show them that modern society is putting more demands on them than they can fill. Pray diligently for each of your congregation to discern what God's will is, for their lives. Teach them to live in a God-conscious state of mind, so that they are in constant fellowship with Him. Perhaps it isn't necessary for them to attend services three to five times a week, in order to keep from backsliding.

Remember the often used illustration about teaching someone to fish, rather than just feeding them? Why isn't this applied to new converts as far as learning the scriptures and practicing fellowship with Christ? Teach your members to dig for truth in God's Word for

themselves. Folks who have been attending your “church” for twenty years, shouldn’t still need you to eat, digest, regurgitate and feed them the Word, like some mother bird. What if end-times tribulation should isolate believers? How will they spiritually survive? What does “equipping the saints” mean to you?

(Eph. 4:11-16) It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, the Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. [NIV]

Unless fuel and living expenses go down, your congregation will be forced to cut back on attendance as well as everything else. If they need to find a closer-to-home fellowship, you should understand and support them in that decision. Repent of earthly insecurities that cause you to feel hurt or forsaken every time you lose a member or family from your fellowship. Know that they are in God’s hands and they are quite capable of hearing the Holy Spirit every bit as much as you are. I believe scripture teaches that the design for leadership of the Church was intended to be more of a mentoring project than the authoritative, controlling, administrative mess it has become.

I pray that you, the pastor, aren’t also caught up in worldly activities which keep you from being in fellowship with the Lord, for that is a greater abomination. You have nothing to give if you haven’t been with Jesus. Teach the body members to eliminate as much burden and expense as they can. Preach to them to simplify *and do it yourself, too*, not only in your personal life, but you owe it to your congregation to simplify the needs of the “church” as well. Drop any

unnecessary activities your church might take on. Weigh proposed social activities to the spiritual value it has for the body. Give to them, instead of constantly taking, as some pastors do. The Church needs more pastors who have a heart for their congregations and think of their needs first. I know of a pastor who obeyed God's voice and asked those in the congregation with financial stress to line up with their request for the amount of money they most urgently needed. She then proceeded to write them each a check, no questions asked. Needy members didn't have to gather the courage to approach the benevolence fund committee, with an explanation of their financial situation. They were invited to come boldly and receive. I thank God for her obedience. *(While we are here, let's repent of needing thousands of dollars to run our "church" while the "benevolence fund" keeps a mere pittance by comparison. In the early Church, all the offerings basically were the "benevolence fund.")*

(Rom. 12:13) Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. [NIV]

It isn't wrong for a pastor to encourage members to assemble. A true pastor's heart is bound to grieve when a number of members became slack in attendance. Especially if that pastor spends a lot of time with and is deeply and personally involved with the body members and knows some of them are slipping into worldly activities and away from the faith and their relationship with Christ. If you know of members who are forsaking all Christian fellowship, it is okay to plead lovingly, earnestly and sometimes firmly admonish, as you would your own children, knowing they are in danger. But don't manipulate attendance through "guilt tripping" the congregation.

Make sure that if you want God's children to give their time to assembling, that there is something worth assembling for. That is, see that you aren't using that time to push your own fleshly agenda. See that you don't force the Body to simply "attend a service" that is, to continually listen quietly to what YOU have to say. Make sure you speak truth from the Word, giving meat and substance to the Body. Prepare your flock for good works. Be filled up with the Holy Spirit through prayer and earnest seeking and then let the Holy Spirit work through all the believers so they can know the joy and excitement of being used of God and spoken to by His Holy Spirit. That way, things are fresh and God is in control, not you. Let LIFE flow, throughout

the assembly. Drop the morbid, weary, traditional form. If you believe God is a God of order, let HIM be in charge. Things will go according to HIS plan and purpose and not by yours. Stand back and be amazed!

(1 Cor. 10:24) Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. [NIV]

If pastors would devote more time leading believers into true, thorough and systematic Bible study, then the Body members would be equipped with the truth of God's Word and would not be prone to error or unsound doctrine. With the maturity that comes from studying the scriptures, the Body members could be entrusted to contribute to the gathering as the early Church did. There is too much preaching of milky sermons going on and not enough real, meaty helpings of the Word of God. I have attended churches where there wasn't the equivalent of one book's work of scripture read from the Bible in a year. Pastors, teach your flock to study the Word of God. If you give them in depth study, they will hunger for it and learn to crave meat and dig for it. Stop throwing milk to them week after week, telling them what *you* heard from God. One of the best Bible teachers I know never says a word from his mouth to reflect his own thoughts and opinions. He merely directs the group from one scripture to another and allows the Holy Spirit to teach, convict, and reveal through the Word. It is amazing!

A pastor, who is not intimately familiar with his or her sheep, either has too many sheep, and needs to appoint spiritually focused elders to minister to the needs of the body and keep him informed, or else he needs to be omniscient and omnipresent. Since only God has those qualities, we should reconsider just how effective these large "churches" really are. Sadly, too many pastors are hirelings and not shepherds. Your body of believers should be your beloved children and you are their mentor who teaches them how to seek and hear the Father for themselves. Their spiritual welfare should be your foremost concern in life. Your calling as a pastor is one of servitude, intercession, love, compassion, and earnest devotion. Your walk before them should be exemplary.

(Rom. 2:21-23) You then who teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery,

do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? [RSV]

If you don't feel the love that a hen feels toward her chicks, or a shepherd toward his sheep, you are in the wrong line of work. If your focus is your ministry, your affluence, your reputation as a great motivator and accomplisher of programs, or a builder of a mega church, repent! The heart of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is not in you. The Son seeks to do the will of and glorify the Father, the Father is pleased and lifts up the Son. The Holy Spirit operates in tenderness and compassion but also in power, and carries out the will of the Father and the Son. Where does your own motivation fit in this program of the triune God? It is not about you and it is not about me.

A true pastor should spend many hours in prayer for his sheep. He should know them each by name and intercede for every one of them. He should spend a great deal of time in the prayer closet, seeking discernment and the will of the Father. He should be involved with heavy spiritual warfare on behalf of his congregation, as the apostle Paul was. He (or she) should spend many hours of fellowship and communion with the Lord, having a deep and intimate relationship with the Savior. A pastor should understand that his service to each new body member is temporary, only to teach them to seek and know the Lord intimately for themselves, so that Christ Himself, becomes their shepherd. This is the will of Jesus Christ. There is something wrong when Christians still need a pastor to assist them in growth, after years of hearing the Word.

(Heb. 5:12) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's Word. You need milk, not solid food; [RSV]

There are some pastors who spend their days surfing the internet, watching news and sports on television, or pursuing other interests. They view their calling as a "job" that should be over at a specific time and they feel entitled to a "normal" life after church hours. Many don't wish their personal lives to be interrupted after the Sunday sermon is given, unless it is for a death or other emergency. Some pastors can never be directly reached by the members of the body. Hurting souls are greeted with answering machines or secretaries and often the pastor

never gets back to them, or takes days to return their calls. Seminars are given for pastors who need help in how to “manage” their congregations so that they can have a balanced, personal life. Is this what Christ taught? Is this the example set forth by James, John, Peter and Paul? If you value your personal life so much, you should have gone into some line of business where you could go home and seek your own interests after 5:00 pm. I don’t mean to sound so harsh, as I know a pastor takes a lot of heat, but a pastor has greater accountability. I can’t think of any scripture that paints it as an easy position.

I could say that as a pastor, you are in the wrong business, but the problem is that the Lord’s work is not a business, nor was it ever intended to be. Men have made it so, with their carnal lust for money, prestige and approval of men. If a man or woman chooses to serve the Lord, it is a call to die to one’s self, completely. Your flock must come second only to Christ. Therefore, if your spouse or children will make demands that rob you of your ability to serve the flock because their heart is not in your ministry, you need a secular job. That was why Paul advised it would be better to not take a wife, if you hope to be a teacher or leader. Repent of your sense of entitlement to a private life. The bondservant of Christ has laid his life down. Repent of any indulgence in the lust of the eye, lust of the flesh and boastful pride of life. It can have no part in a man or woman of God. Yes, a pastor is a very difficult calling. No one should enter into it or stay in it lightly. And if your spouse is not with you in your ministry, you should reevaluate your calling. It is more than a man or woman can do, if one’s spouse is in conflict.

(Matt. 19:29) And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. [RSV]

I am not saying that one should never take a break from ministerial duties. I was speaking of worldly concerns and distractions. There were times when even Jesus got away by himself to be with the Father. He would escape to the wilderness to fast and pray and clear away all the worldly commotion. Such a retreat is needed for any spiritual leader and should be taken anytime exhaustion or spiritual dryness sets in. Pastors and leaders do suffer a more intense barrage of persecution, opposition and spiritual attack, especially if they are doing God’s will.

God is looking for men and women, in this time of final harvest, who will heed the call to give their lives over completely to the Lord. They must be willing to suffer and to pour themselves out as a drink offering for the lost and the sheep. They must be contenders for the faith, considering all this world has to offer as nothing, in comparison to the prize of knowing Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings. We aren't talking about a hectic week at the church office, my friends, or a frantic month of speaking engagements and flight schedules. We aren't speaking of merely missing one's family, while leading a conference and collapsing on a soft bed in some luxury hotel. In many countries, true missionaries have spent years separated from their loved ones, in filthy prisons. What do Western evangelists and pastors have to complain about?

(1John 3:16) By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. [RSV]

The day is coming when even the Western man or woman of God will be fleeing for their lives, or else lose them in martyrdom. The day is coming when the man or woman of God will be required to pray for every provision, engage in spiritual warfare of the worst kind and face the constant threat of a grim death. They will be persecuted, rejected and despised. The Western world will soon know the sufferings of their brethren who serve in countries that are Gospel-hostile. No longer will the western-cultured preachers enjoy a luxuriant way of life, while their third-world counterparts suffer beatings, imprisonment, starvation and death for their calling. Repent of your cheap version of the Gospel and your spoiled-rottenness that perceives a bad day as "persecution and suffering." Repent, for you truly know not the price others paid for your ease, but you will. And you will either endure to the end or you will fall away. God will have a pure and spotless Bride. He, Himself will do it. He will bring about the change that is needed. If we would repent on our own, we could be spared the suffering of God having to bring on the sort of threshing that will separate the wheat from the chaff.

Finally, pastors who are ruling over their flock with the abomination of what is known as "shepherding" whereby they advise or command the people in their daily lives and decisions had better repent. Jesus said:

***(Rev. 2:6) Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
[RSV]***

Nicos means conquest and laity means people of the church. Apparently, the Nicolaitans were a group who submitted to a leader who told them, as their spiritual leader, where to live, whom to marry, what work to do, etc. This is a usurping of the authority of Christ who is the Head of every individual. Spiritual leaders were intended to guide new converts, establish new churches and protect the believers from heresy. They were never given equal authority with Christ, much less authority to replace Him in a person's life. To do so is rebellion in the heart of the pastor or leader, for this attempt to usurp the power of Jesus Christ is the behavior of Satan. Only God the Father and Christ the Son knows a person's heart and knows what is best for that person. I want to repeat a scripture used earlier, for it bears mentioning here:

(1 Peter 5:1-3) So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. [RSV]

Oh, that we all would repent and rest from protecting our reputations, preserving our ambitions, and trying to keep congregations in submission to our wills. Pastors, aren't you weary? You bear a burden God did not intend for you. Rest from excessive leadership and be one of the brethren. You are surrounded by many brethren who are also able to hear the Lord and act under the command of Jesus Christ. It isn't a one man show; it is not all about you. Repent and rest. Let Jesus heal you of the false notions of headship and the frustration of not being able to please everybody. There is only one Head of the Body of Christ. He is able to handle all your concerns as well as those of His flock. And He knows how to deal with the rebellious ones. Just make sure you aren't in that number, too.

To the Sheep: The Individuals of the Body of Christ:

The ills that plague the body of Christ start with the individuals who make up the Body. Those who are in the ministry for gain and selfish ambition are only giving the people what they want. Prosperity preachers only succeed because the hearers desire prosperity. Lies are taught because people want their ears tickled, or because they don't know the scriptures so they are easily swayed and deceived. We like to exalt men and women, following them instead of Christ. We put them to the test when we do.

(Titus 1:9) He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. [NIV]

(2 Tim. 4:3-4) For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. [RSV]

Paul expresses his frustration with the early believers for their need to be constantly nurtured, craving the milk of the Word instead of the meat. In Hebrews 5:12 he admonishes the believer that many of them should have become teachers by now, yet they still needed to be prodded and coddled. There is so much of this going on in the churches, today. Many believers have become lazy, taking their salvation for granted and their responsibilities lightly. They are unconcerned with the call to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. They are oblivious to the hurting, suffering and lost, each caught up in their own sorrows and frustrations and pursuits. They are pampered and babied, always needing encouragement, when they should be encouragers. They are backbiters, slanderers, gossipers, selfish, and indulgent brats, always judging one another or taking offense. Contentious and faithless, they lack self-control, giving in to tempers and temptations. They are afflicted with worldly quests and concerns. In their petty self-focus, they care only about themselves and nothing for the body of Christ and the work of the Gospel. We have all been guilty of these things at one time or another. Not one of us is exempt from the need to repent.

(Phil. 2:3-4) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. [NIV]

Many Christians don't want to hear God for themselves. Like the children of Israel, who preferred that Moses go and hear God on their behalf, many modern so-called Christians want to be spoon-fed the Word of the Lord and have a man tell them what God has said. At least the children of Israel expressed a *fear* of God that made them not wish to go into His presence. They knew that His holiness would consume their ungodliness and they had the sense to be fearful because of their sorry state, but sadly, not the determination to become holy so that they could experience God's presence for themselves. But today's congregations don't even have the wisdom to fear the presence of a holy God. They don't even know the meaning of the word, "holy." Many of today's believers simply don't want to be bothered with the time and discipline it takes to know God and be transformed into the image of His Son, period. So they are content to sit in a pew and let a man tell them what God has to say to them. Then they can go back to their daily business of keeping up with the pace this world puts upon them and the Word is choked from them by the cares of this life. This should not be so.

(Exod. 20:18-19) Now when all the people perceived the thundering and the lightnings and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled; and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, "You speak to us and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." [RSV]

If we profess to be Christians, we should be working out our salvation with fear and trembling, knowing we cannot escape if we neglect so great a salvation as a God who suffered and died on our behalf. If we continue in sin and worldly living, we are trampling the cross underfoot. How then, do we expect to be saved? Can Christ be crucified afresh? If we truly understood what was done for us, we would feel so indebted to the One who saved us, we would be at His holy feet, like a faithful hound.

Instead, we run around in a desperate effort to accomplish a list of urgent, worldly tasks, sacrificing our lives to our jobs, our kids, the wants and needs of our flesh and theirs, and all the many dictates of a society gone mad with worldly lusts. It was a sad day when our society bought into the lie of the feminists, who have doubled the yoke of women and removed the heart of the home, for most families. Now, both spouses work and hopefully, share (*but often not*) the burden of caring for the children, home, meals, errands, and the list is endless. Schools burden families with a host of extra-curricular activities to consume even more time, money and energy. Parents run ragged all day, seeing very little of each other or their children, then finding themselves bewildered when someone finally explodes. No wonder marriages fail and the children stray. Few relationships can take such pressure. We must repent of making the demands of this modern and godless society our idol and god. We must repent of sacrificing our lives and our children to Molech, who is the god of this world. It causes us and them to pass through the fire of tribulation, resulting from the stresses of such frantic living. How many of our daily activities are carried out because we have had a clear direction from God to do these things? When the Lord returns, will He find us doing His will, our will or the world's will?

(Luke 21:34) "But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; [RSV]"

We say we love Jesus, but most of our time, talents and money are consumed doing worldly tasks. We run around hauling our children to dances, games, events and social activities that have nothing to do with their spiritual welfare. We spend ourselves into debt oblivion, buying our children things to fill their every whim and desire. We indulge them and ourselves on all manner of stuff. We get caught up in an endless cycle where we work and work so we can run ourselves ragged and spend ourselves silly. Then we wonder why our spouses and children become strangers to us. We let others dictate what we do and where we go and how we spend our money on any given day, when it should be God who advises us on these things. But we would have to set aside time with Him to get to know His will and we don't have space in our daily planners for that. The way we all run is insane. We serve many kings and dictators through

the many social systems of today and sadly, even the religious system, forgetting that there is only One King we are supposed to be serving. If we persist in following these worldly ways, then no one should blame God, if our world and our society falls apart, as a result of our misplaced priorities. How would you spend your time and money today, if you knew Jesus was returning this afternoon?

(2 Peter 3:10-11) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, [RSV]

The truth is, few of God's people live as if they think that day is ever coming. But even if you think Christ's return is a thousand years away, your own "last day" could be this very day. Any of us could be selected for departure from this earth today. In light of that, how would you want to spend your last day on earth, before you meet our Lord face to face?

We seek stability in worldly institutions using worldly plans. Many Christians place their security in mutual funds, stocks and bonds, a job and its benefits, such as health insurance. With all this, who needs to trust and hope in the Lord? In fact, in our present society, anyone who would forfeit these things to serve Jesus full time is considered foolish, even to those who claim to be disciples of Christ. I tell you the day is coming when the western nations and their worldly securities will be swept away. I fear it is coming very soon for America. Time is swiftly running out because God is weary of our corrupt version of Christianity. Our hearts are not set upon things above.

(Matt. 6:19) Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [NIV]

Spiritual priorities are shipwrecked, particularly in the home. Restoration must begin with each individual and then extend throughout one's foremost and immediate ministry, one's own family. Husbands, you should be nurturing your wife and treating her as Christ does the church, even laying down your life for her. That means seeing to your responsibility as the spiritual leader. It is YOUR job to see that your family spends time in fellowship with other believers, receiving plenty of spiritual guidance and teaching from the Word. It is YOUR job to pray and intercede on your wife and children's behalf. It is YOUR job to see that your work is balanced with family time and both of those should come after you have had ample time in the presence of the Lord. Can't do it all? No kidding! Satan has set this world up in such a way as to consume you. It is up to you to simplify yours and your family's lives, until you can put God first, cherish and love your wife and then your children. Everything else comes after that, and any other accomplishments *should* come after you have given yourself to God, wife, then children. You are to nurture, love and cherish your wife, but never to lord over her.

(Col. 3:18-19) Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. [NIV]

Be faithful to your wife. This means take captive every thought, every temptation. If your wife looks haggard, maybe you are leaving too much for her to do. If she has aged from years of selfless service to you and your children, how do you justify "turning her in for a newer model," whether in your heart, your imagination, (*through porn on the internet*) or in actuality? It amazes me how many men leave their wives, claiming they "let themselves go," yet these same men have become careless in their own looks and are overweight and slack in hygiene and grooming. When love dies in a marriage, you can be sure that both partners are to blame. Keep your marriage vows to each other. You made those vows before God and it is Him you will sin against the most, if you break those vows.

Wives, you are to submit to your husband. Honor, respect and obey him. Be a helpmate to him. That means you do not scold, nag, retort or diminish him, in any way. You are to edify and build him up, holding him in highest esteem. Be considerate of him and wait upon him. If this sounds horrible to you, you are lacking in love and have a selfish spirit. Repent and ask God

to help you treat your husband as you would treat Christ. Treat your spouse as you should treat everyone, with unconditional love. Focus on developing the gifts of the spirit and practice them on your husband, for you are one flesh with him. To bless him is to bless yourself. If you don't show respect to your spouse, you will reap a bitter harvest as your children fail to respect you and your God.

(Col. 3:16) Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [NIV]

Christian singles, teens and children, you should respect and honor your parents. You have a ton of worldly interests, foisted upon you by the society of your school and peers. Pray and ask God to help you decide which activities are beneficial. Select the minimal things that take your time which have no eternal value and especially seek those things which will feed your spirit. You need to spend time in the Word and in prayer, just as much as your parents, perhaps even more. If you neglect your faith, every aspect of your life will suffer. Don't make financial demands of your parents. Repent of your worldly focus and selfish concerns.

The west, especially America, has become grossly materialistic and self-centered. It has become all about SELF: self-fulfillment, self-motivation, self-esteem and self-indulgence. Christians have lost their focus on Christ. Selfish desires overshadow the call of sacrifice that is set forth by the cross. Jesus said no servant is greater than his master. How is it that those who call themselves Christians, approach the Gospel as a means of personal gain, rather than a responsibility to give every part of their lives for the sake of the Gospel? There should be a deep desire to help and serve others. Christians should be hungry for the Word, hungry to spend time in the presence of the Lord, hungry to go out into all the earth and spread the good news of salvation and reconciliation to God. Instead, it is all about getting that education and the degree that will bring about that coveted income, large home and SUV. We can choose to change our focus now, or we can be forced into it later, as God brings down all our idols, through the storm that is coming to America and the Western world.

(1 Tim. 6:6-10) There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs. [RSV]

I want to emphasize part of the above scripture by repeating it in a second translation. It is probably the deepest problem among Christians today, in America and the rest of the Western world.

(1 Tim. 6:9-10) People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. [NIV]

Rather than seeking after wealth, things that are perishable, we are supposed to be seeking after things that will carry over into eternity, but few in the Christian realm seem to view these pursuits as all that important.

(1 Tim. 6:11) But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. [NIV]

Instead of weeping over the condition of our hearts, we church members are caught up in disputes, becoming critical of one another and our pastor. Many of us engage in slander, gossip, jealousy, pride, religious arguments, judgment and we fail to examine our own selves rightly. We are often unable to submit to authority, unwilling to put ourselves out for any humble work that might be needed. Far too many Christians want positions of glory that draw attention to themselves and their gifts, rather than perform simple tasks for others. Deacons want to be

honored as highly-esteemed leaders who make decisions, but few of them want the lowly job of looking after and serving the widows, as was their original call. Being a Deacon isn't anything to be proud of. It was a shame they were needed in the very first place. Remember it was because at fellowship meals, members of the body were running over the old widows, to get to the food first. The members of the body have been letting their flesh get the best of them since the very beginning! When, out of love and respect for our Lord, will we choose to get it right and truly lay down our lives and die to self?

Many of today's professing Christians have bought into the abomination of prosperity teachings. They run to and fro, chasing after the latest preacher/evangelist or prophet who is willing to tickle their ears, promising them blessings, wealth and fulfilled dreams. They see the Lord as a kind Santa Claus or fairy God father, here only for the purpose of granting their every wish. Latching onto only those promises in the Word which justify their hope of material gain, they pick and choose scripture out of context. They operate in a "gimmee God," mentality and refuse to endure sound doctrine which builds upon the whole counsel of God. Listen to what James is saying to the Church. These are *Christians* James is addressing when he says they are killing and coveting. I am assuming they were not literally murdering people, but rather hating (*or breaking fellowship with*) one another, which Jesus says is murder in one's heart.

(James 4:1-4) What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. [NIV]

Because many of God's people do not read their Word and pray, they do not know their God, nor do they know their enemy. Therefore, they are vulnerable to every false wind of doctrine and every temptation of the flesh. And so they fall prey to the schemes of the devil. This is why sin abounds in the churches, with adultery, fornication and every sort of evil tearing away

at the integrity of the Body, causing the world to shake their heads over our shame. Therefore, when the world rejects the Gospel because of our hypocrisy, and thus despises and ridicules our faith, it is not unjust persecution, but a loss of credibility that we have brought upon ourselves. Yet we wipe our mouths and say we haven't sinned and claim to not be responsible for the lost, who will not hear what we have to say. I tell you, God will hold us accountable for the blood of every soul that was eternally lost, due to our sin and inconsistency. Yet despite our failures, we have the audacity to judge one-another and judge others, and we walk about without love in our hearts toward our enemies or the lost or even our neighbors.

(James 4:8) Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind. [RSV]

Having been a Pentecostal for years, I think I can speak this next admonition in fairness and truth. We declare ourselves spiritual because we are open to all the gifts of the spirit, but we are among the worst offenders of commercializing the Gospel and not walking in the whole counsel of God's Word. Because many of us are often not well-grounded in scripture, we are easy prey to those who take the Word out of context and preach unsound doctrine. We are particularly vulnerable to doctrines of personal, material prosperity, the tendency to exalt leaders and their ministries, and we promote the focus on manifestations and spiritual sideshow acts and even physical abuse, as evangelists bap our heads or punch our stomachs.

(2 Cor. 11:20) For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. [RSV]

(1John 4:1) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. [RSV]

We endure these things for several reasons, but the worst reason is that just like the children of Israel, we still want a king to rule over us and be our mascot. We want a leader and so we chase after a man (*or woman*) to be God's spokesperson. It is SO much easier than taking

the time and trouble to hear God for ourselves. It is SO much easier than to know God in the intimacy that comes from being in the fiery furnace with Him. It's easier, yes, but it's no substitution for a genuine relationship with Jesus. The good reason for following after claims of signs and wonders is that we are desperate for a real experience with Jesus. We long for those manifestations that speak to our hearts and say "Yes, I am here. I am real and I long to show you My love." But our approach is all wrong. We can never come to God and experience Him in any vehicle other than a pure heart. He sees through all our schemes and tricks and deceptions. We have to get real. Then He, Himself will come and dwell intimately with us, not through some man.

(1 John 2:27) But the anointing which you received from him abides in you and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him. [RSV]

Callous to the suffering of a dying world, we continue to live as we please, holding all manner of frivolous activities, in order to entertain ourselves within the church. Many of these activities have no value in the growth of individuals or the furtherance of the Gospel. Men gather to watch a ball game, eat snacks and worship their favorite teams. Often at such gatherings, jovial, coarse jesting and gender-bashing abounds, and the television accosts them with ungodly commercials, in-between the plays.

Women hold elaborate teas, dinners, shows and social events, to raise funds for various causes, from a mission trip to some exotic place, to new carpet for the nursery. Social events such as these can become a snare to us if it becomes a time to gossip, put down husbands, or just show off our talents. While it is commendable to practice hospitality, I fear we have made the Body of Christ a social club and missed the point of what we are practicing hospitality for.

Sunday services in many churches look more like a fashion show. Looking nice is not a sin, but if our focus is on status or prosperity, we need to let the Lord show us our hearts and repent. This is especially true if we find ourselves gravitating to those who "look nicer" than others. Looking nice is not a sin. Looking like a million because someone told you that God wants you to prosper, so you overshoot your budget so you can look prosperous, is. Looking like

a million to impress possible business clients is a wrong motive, too. Dressing to the nines to allure a married man in your “church” that you have lusted after, must be repented of. Get honest with God. You might as well, since He already knows your heart.

(Eph. 4:22-24) Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. [RSV]

We are teaching our children to be self-centered. Many churches devote their youth group activities to Christian rock concerts, fun outings to amusement parks, or similar activities. Some organize mission trips, but they are usually to some enjoyable and expensive vacation destination, rather than a grueling project in some dismal, local inner-city location. Few are taken to nursing homes or hospitals to minister to the sick, elderly and shut-ins. I remember years ago when teens auctioned themselves off to work for church members, in order to raise funds for trips, but I haven't seen that in a long time. Still, how many youth are enlisted to simply visit or do odd jobs for the elderly saints, free of charge, as their own type of ministry? We could encourage the youth to spend one day a month doing a deep cleaning of the building, saving the Body the expense of professional custodial services. How are we teaching our youth to minister the love of the Gospel and responsibility to the Body? Years ago, as a youth leader, I had my teens bake cookies and make puppets. Then we went to a nursing home, gave the Gospel story via a puppet show, and then served their cookies to the residents. The teens sweetly, hand-fed the residents who couldn't feed themselves. Believe it or not, several youths told me it was the most fulfilling time they ever had. The kids love to minister the love of Christ to others. Why not give them that opportunity instead of teaching them to focus on selfish fun? Maybe their lives and hearts would change. These are the deeds we should all be focused upon. Why should we deny our children the rewards of doing for “the least of these?”

(Matt. 25:35-40) "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed

clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." [NIV]

Even among the adults, few hours are spent visiting the sick, the shut-ins, the poor, or seeking out the lost. How many of God's professed children make a point to visit nursing home residents, other than at Christmastime? How many members of your church have a standing weekly appointment with a shut in or a prisoner, unless it is their own relative? When was the last time you put yourself out to give a message of encouragement, comfort or hope to a person in despair? I am not trying to execute a general proclamation of judgment over everyone, but in all honesty, what percentage of your time and the time of others, do you see being spent on someone who has nothing to give in return? The church should be exceeding the charity of every worldly organization that exists. Since you first became a Christian, what percentage of your time has been spent doing the work of the Church, compared to the time spent on selfish or frivolous pursuits or simply "church" social activities? To tithe one's time is a worthy pursuit. What will remain of your life, when the chaff is burned up and the work of eternal value is weighed? We all must repent of spending our lives on things that will not matter. This includes any activities or projects of your church, which have no spiritual or eternal benefit.

(1 John 2:15-17) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. [RSV]

This is again, scripture that is worth repeating from another translation:

(1John 2:15-17) Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. [NIV]

**At this point, I want to make a quick statement to all readers. What follows will seem especially harsh and judgmental to many people. This was the most difficult to include because I am now touching on some of my own weaknesses. But the Lord wants His church to examine their hearts on many things that are very dear to our Christian society. He wants us all to truly examine our hearts and motivations. He wants to strengthen us and purify us so we will be ready for the things to come. It is out of His love and compassion for us that He does this.*

Not all of the following things we do are particularly sins in themselves, but we must each examine our hearts before God and ask Him if we are guilty of something that we need to repent of. I have prayed to be released from coming against these areas, but God will not release me. Therefore, do not be angry because you may think that I am attacking everyone. Instead, please go to the Lord in prayer and in a spirit that is willing to repent and ask God if you have been guilty of anything. If He dismisses you in peace, go in peace. If your heart can find no peace, repent until it comes.

I know that what follows will sound like I am being critical of everyone and everything. That is not so. Many of the things listed in these next paragraphs are areas in my own life that I have contributed to, participated in, and have been guilty of. I love drama, film, wholesome Christian entertainment and music as much as anyone. But some of it is impure and needs to be examined and brought before the Lord. The compromise we have allowed into the Body of Christ is costing the Bride the power and strength we will need to endure the final days before Christ's return. In all honesty, is there anything so precious to any of us that we would want to be ashamed before the Lord, on His terrible day of reckoning?

All of God's people need to repent of their constant need to be entertained. Evangelists

are endlessly challenged to ever seek new and more interesting ways to keep people's attention. More Christian entertainers jump on the bandwagon of making a pretty good living by entertaining the church, in the church building. The pure Word of God, delivered by a sincere man of God, should be enough. An hour of sweet corporate fellowship or worship in the presence of the Lord should thrill our hearts. Instead we have all manners of creative presentations of the Gospel, in an attempt to hold the interest of a society that is accustomed to being entertained. Merely hearing the Word is boring to us. Churches have to compete with the excitement of a generation raised on movies and television.

I am a creative person and I enjoy using my gifts, and God of course is extremely creative and so creativity is good to put to use in the Body. However, many of these creative means are extremely costly and therefore the Body either must pay for these extravaganzas or "love" offerings must be extorted by continual pleading throughout the "show." Entertainment forms of witnessing can be great for a way to reach the lost, but money grubbing in the midst of it is detrimental to that goal. Also, a real problem lies in which of these creative endeavors are truly helpful to the edification of the body. Some entertainment that goes on is definitely not edifying to the Body and some of it is unholy and unwholesome.

There are some powerful films and plays and music that have reached out to the lost, and I am not putting those down. *(In fact, I think film is a powerful medium and can be widely circulated to reach many lost people. Furthermore, a film has the potential to reach many more people than any church service, making it very effective. Just look how influential the worldly film industry has been on our society.)* I am talking about some specific events that are spiritually shallow and give a mixed message to the Church and the world. Such extravaganzas, if they are reaching souls, are reaching them on a level that is more carnal than spiritual and seem to be more of an industry than a ministry. Some would argue that the Christian entertainment industry is a viable business and has its place. That may be, but let's keep it in the theaters, concert halls, and other places of professional entertainment. Let's keep it out of the places of worship and let's not call it a "ministry" whereby we come to churches with our "show" and repeatedly extract "love" offerings. There is a serious difference between an industry and a ministry and they need to be kept separate.

A friend told me of her experience watching a group of men who use body building and

martial art techniques to show off “God’s power.” I am sure these men meant well, but surely Heaven groaned, as these virile young men called out a grandmother and a preteen from the audience to “feel their muscles,” while the congregation of God made whoops, hoots and catcalls in His house of prayer. May God have mercy, and may this misguided, American version of Christianity be forsaken! The assemblies of the Church are not meant to be a sideshow and a circus!

I struggle with "Christian comedy" acts where a man or woman uses coarse jesting and gender-bashing to get laughs. We have no scriptural justification to use humor to degrade a brother in Christ and promote the use of carnal insults. Little to nothing about such an act is a witness, testimony or message of the Gospel. I saw one act where the man simply avoided profanity. Beyond that, I saw no difference between him and all the other comedians in the world. If a comedian makes a remark or joke that causes us to feel a discomfort in our spirit, then we should take care that we don't encourage it. I am sure the early Christian leaders would be appalled to see all the commercialism we promote these days, in the name of Jesus Christ. Just how much more desecration in the holy place do we need, before we fall on our faces and weep with broken hearts over our sins?

(Eph. 5:3-12) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolator—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them for you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. [NIV]

(Eph. 4:29) Let not any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. [NIV]

Those of us who profess to be God's children among the businessmen and women need to repent of certain practices which are an abomination to God. This is what the Lord has against us. We have cheapened the Gospel and profaned the holy blood and cross of Christ, by reducing it to an advertising gimmick. The ictus or fish was a symbol of the early followers of the way. It was used to help them to identify one another, yet protect them from the very real danger of arrest and execution. It is a sacred symbol of the Gospel and Jesus Christ. The cross is also a sacred symbol. It represents a very cruel method of death which our Lord endured, in order to make it possible for us to be redeemed from the sin of Adam. These are NOT logos to promote our businesses. If we want the world to know that we are a Christian businessman or woman, we should SHOW it by treating our customers with utmost respect, fairness and honesty. If you plan to use the name of Jesus as a promotion for your business, you had better be certain that you conduct your business in a way that is absolutely inscrutable, otherwise you misrepresent our Lord and embitter the lost.

Sadly, I have personally found that several self-proclaimed and advertised "Christian" businessmen were the very worst people I have ever done business with. They charged more for their services or products, and were the worst at giving customer satisfaction. Several have outright swindled me. I have had better treatment from the heathen! I have heard many accounts from others as well, where "Christian" businessmen mistreated or cheated a partner or a customer. This should never be! If you have not dealt fairly, if you have let greed, rather than Christ, be your guide in business, you must repent!

(Matt. 6:24) No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. [NIV]

God's people in the west, *(particularly America, and the poison is spreading to the rest*

of the world) need to repent of worldliness in general, especially in the business and commercial realm. The “Christian music industry” should repent of modeling itself after the ways of the world. Many songs address God as “you” and can’t be distinguished at all from a worldly song. Song artists sing a single phrase over and over because it particularly sounds great and showcases their voice, but the lyrics are shallow and repetitive and there is no substance. Christian radio is often hard to endure. It wearies the soul to hear the same few songs played again and again, with a host of commercial babbling that sounds no different than a secular station. Personally, I miss the days of my youth when Christian-themed music was mixed in with secular. Lost people were more likely to hear the good news that way. Now that Christian music has become isolated from the rest of the music world, heathens can avoid hearing Christian lyrics altogether, by avoiding those “Christian stations.” There is an idolization of Christian artists and celebrities which occurs that is grossly carnal and this too is an abomination. In many “Christian” concerts, one gets the feeling that the creature, rather than the Creator is being worshipped, praised and adored. God will share His glory with no man. I have seen people flock after a Christian artist, begging for an autograph, yet they don’t give Jesus the simplest tribute of obedience. This should not be.

There is also great corruption in Christian television broadcasting. Much of what goes on is an abomination to God. It is often prosperity pushing and worldly in its nature, mimicking the secular stations. It will fall along with everything else, as God brings His wrath and judgment down upon this wicked earth. Jesus didn’t die to make us worldly rich. He didn’t die to grant our every worldly wish. He died to save our souls. No one can serve two masters; it is mammon or Christ. I fear too many serve mammon and call it Jesus. I see this sort of commercialism and worldly marketeering in Christian publishing, entertainment, and all sorts of Christian products and services. There’s a whole lot of big business going on in the guise of ministry. How does this fit in with His command to “deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me?”

(Matt. 16: 24) Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [RSV]”

God’s people need to repent of worldly pursuits. God did not call us to store up treasures

for ourselves. Our money and resources, talents and time were not merely intended to bring about personal wealth and prosperity. While it is okay to enjoy the fruit of our labors, I think we have justified a disproportionate level of pleasure and material goods for ourselves. I have seen many homes where the residents have claimed to love the Lord Jesus, but the extravagance of their homes and possessions is confusing. Every other aspect of their lives seems to verify their love for Christ, but somehow they justify these amazing mansions on earth.

The early Christians combined their money and land to provide for the needs of the Body of Christ so that no one had need of anything. Valuable missions and excellent works of God are struggling because there are no funds to support them. Children do without food and medical supplies all over the world. This is partly because the cost of living, fuel and taxes, etc. have consumed the resources of many saints who would otherwise send support. These have had to learn to trust God and pray in every morsel. But how much more we could give than we do, if only we could learn to do without so much that is meaningless in the eternal scheme of things? We will all undoubtedly be ashamed when it is revealed to us, all the things that our brethren did without, while exhausting their resources on the Gospel, and how wasted our wealth was, in God's sight. I truly believe that many of us will feel ashamed of the way we lavished ourselves with luxury, while we lived on this earth.

There are many Christians who feel their prosperity is something they are entitled to spend upon themselves and there are plenty of ministers and evangelists who preach that doctrine. However, consider that if God has blessed you with the gift of gaining wealth, He surely has a purpose for it. To whom much is given, much is required, so those, whose blessings abound, should seek His will in how to use that wealth. Some of us are being tested with the gift of plenty, and will be saddened on the Day of Judgment to find the Lord was disappointed in our choices of spending our wealth. When we see the Lord our God, what *will* He have to say to us about our self-indulgence, while those true workers for the Gospel do without basic needs?

(Matt. 13:22) As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the Word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the Word, and it proves unfruitful. [RSV]

I fear these saints will weep when they view their lifestyles through the eyes of Christ and see what help their wealth could have brought to the kingdom, had more of it been used for the glory of God. Jesus has promised to prepare mansions for us in Heaven, and it seems we could focus on doing His work here, and wait for our mansions in glory. Surely they will surpass anything we could build for ourselves here and now. We will see when we get there, that our castles, which we built on earth, were nothing but a shabby shadow of the real thing.

Furthermore, those things we have treated ourselves to, will likely cost us in the eternal kingdom, for surely we had our reward here on earth. I don't proclaim this in a spirit of self-righteousness and judgment. I share this from my heart with deep sorrow, as one who also regrets the way I have spent some of my wealth, over the years. My dear Jesus had no place to lay His head. I have indulged in many things.

In a final summary for the individuals of the Body of Christ, I urge all of those who call themselves Christians to repent of the denial of the power of Christ. Repent of faithlessness, lack of self-control, disobedience to the Word, grieving the Holy Spirit, double-mindedness, coarse-jesting, gender-bashing, worldly thinking, greed, selfishness, dependence upon others rather than God, seeking approval of man, giving in to the fleshly desires, failure to bear fruit, stinginess, gossip, slander, backbiting, sarcasm, idolatry, the need to be entertained and pampered and the general lack of love for the Lord and for one another. Repent of not studying God's Word and having a weak or non-existent prayer life. Repent of the whining and complaining and the rebellion to God's Word and Christ's commands.

(2 Pet. 2:20) For, if after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. [RSV]

(Col. 3:5-7) Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now, put them all away, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. [RSV].

Also repent of appointing a man to be king over you and then crying over your bondage, instead of following the King of Kings. Repent of kingdom-building in the guise of ministry! By the same token, if you choose to remain in the traditional system, you should submit to the established authority, practice love and repent of plotting against a preacher or leader. If you don't agree, get out from under that person. Your true authority is Jesus Christ and the Word of God. Move on, rather than go around stirring up strife and dissension among a group of believers. Such does no good for the body of Christ and the work of the Gospel.

Forsake resentment, worldly alliances, and the sense that God loves you more than he loves others. A recent trend that is very disturbing is the tendency among American Christians to despise illegal immigrants. It is true that we are burdened by them, but it is not their fault. They are desperate to survive and are merely utilizing the system. It is all because of the foolishness of our leaders, who have enabled them to receive financial assistance and medical help, while we working citizens pay the price. Just the same, does not God love each of those people as much as He loves us? Is God more loyal to a particular race or nationality over another, beyond blessing those who bless Him? He created us all and we are all equally precious to the Father. While God was speaking to the children of Israel, in the passage below, Jesus made it clear we were to love our neighbors as ourselves and that everyone is our neighbor, so we can be sure God's heart hasn't changed on this. Repent of hating the alien.

(Lev. 19:33-34) When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. [NIV]

If our nation is being taken down financially, in this way, understand that it is all a part of America's judgment. Our leaders have no discernment or wisdom because they have no God. Because we have allowed ungodly leaders to rule over us, we have been warned in Hosea that foreigners would devour the fat of the land, because the people had forsaken God. What does the Word teach us to do? Jesus taught us to love the hated Samaritans, to give our shirt also, to the one who asks for our coat. If one asks us to walk one mile, go with him two. If we try to save our life, we will lose it, but if we lose our lives for the sake of the Gospel, we will gain it. Sorry.

There is no scriptural basis for despising the alien, or to resent any other human. Whatsoever you do for the least of these, Jesus said, you have done unto me. The people of America, need to get on their knees, ask God's forgiveness for our godless behavior and for electing godless leaders, who are irresponsible with our tax money and do not protect our national borders. At the same time, we need to extend charity to less fortunate countries, without resentment. This is the reason we have always been so great and so blessed in the past. The best way to stop this drain is to pray for the repentance and salvation of our leaders, as well as the illegal immigrants, so that all will have a conscience from God to do what is right.

(1 John 3:17) But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? [RSV]

Repent also of the prideful spirit behind those practices you think are virtuous, whether it is religious practices, clothing, your interpretation of holiness, scripture memorization, charitable donations, church attendance, or even merely tithing. The early church gave all they had, yet we hold back with selfish investments and living, and if we tithe at all, we act as if God owes us prosperity in return. Your works are important, as your reasonable service to a God to whom you owe everything. But they are nothing more than filthy rags, if you consider them your righteousness. The early Church not only gave every cent of their money, they gave up everything of this world. They shared all in common and kept nothing for themselves. They even gave up their very lives. So in what then, do we boast, if we tithe out of our plenty?

(Matt. 7 :22-23) On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.' [RSV]

The present church in the west (*and the contamination is spreading*), has become largely, spiritually powerless. The endless willingness to compromise has cost the Body of Christ many things, among these: discernment, true holiness, the ability to do miracles, communion with God,

credibility among the lost, and it will soon cost us the freedom to publically practice our faith at all. It will also cost us the prosperity we have enjoyed. I believe it may soon cost this blessed nation, America, her very continued existence. It will certainly cost us rewards in heaven and it very well may even cost us our souls.

(Eph. 4:18) they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; [RSV]

A brother-in-Christ shared recently that he was hearing from many that the glory of the Lord seemed to be departing and that the presence of God was missing from the countenance of an increasing number of Christians. This is no surprise. It is the fruit of our shameful, man-made versions of the Gospel. Why has the Church become so dead, powerless and worldly? Why are there so many who practice a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof? Why is there so little difference between many who profess to be Christians and those of the world? I believe it is because we are so blessed that we just don't really care. I recently read on a missions blog how an Indian missionary who had come to reach the lost youth in America, returned to India. He said that people of India, even with all their dark magic and false gods were easier to witness to and in less grave danger than the American youth, who had unlimited access to the Word, but were bored with it. Their accountability will be far greater.

(1 John 2:15) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. [RSV]

I also believe it is because so many are satisfied just to receive salvation, but are not willing to be sanctified, set apart and fully committed to their faith and their Lord. Christians need to go beyond just being saved and move on to being fully sanctified, that is—given over entirely to their Lord and Savior. Then they would have victory over the sinful nature and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live holy lives, walking in the power of genuine, unconditional love, and thereby showing the world what the true Christian faith is really all about. Jesus wants to be more than your Savior; He wants to be your Lord. Learn what this means!

*(1 John 3:18) Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.
[RSV]*

Overall, the greatest area where repentance is needed is in the general lack of love among the brethren. The deep, unselfish love of Jesus Christ abides in so very few of God's people! Yet by loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and one-another as ourselves, we fulfill all the commandments of God. Of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of all the wonderful traits of a child of God, only one will remain in eternity. Love remains. Love abides. Love casts out all fear. Love endures. We will be known as Christians, by our love. Yet we are sadly lacking in love. Most of the problems in the Church, among both people and priests, can be traced to a failure to love. God IS love. Christ's willingness to become the atonement for the sin of mankind is the ultimate act of love. It is time the people of God start showing love to this lost and fallen world. Love never fails. It is likely that 99% of our misery as a Christian, is that there is no selfless, unconditional love for anyone, not even the God we claim to belong to. Jesus commanded us to love and He also said if we don't obey His commands, we do not love Him.

(John 14:21) He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. [RSV]

(Matt. 24:10-12) And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. [RSV]

(John 13:35) By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. [RSV]

(Eph. 3:17-18) and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is

the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. [RSV]

So, loveless child of God, who are you kidding, when you say you belong to Jesus, yet you love this world and the things of it more than you love your brother? Only yourself. The truth is proclaimed every time you choose to care more about your life, your things, your money, even your “church” more than you care about your neighbor and the God who asked us to lay down our lives and love one another. Repent with a broken heart and contrite spirit so that your loving and merciful Father can heal and restore you. He is quick to forgive!

(1 John 4:8) He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. [RSV]

(1 Pet. 4:8) Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. [RSV]

A FINAL NOTE TO THE BRETHREN:

If you feel an anger at my words, which are not mine but those which the Lord told me to speak, then your flesh is rising and you must decide whether you will put that flesh to death or whether you will allow it to continue to live. I promise you that your flesh only wants to agree with your adversary, that old evil serpent the devil, who is Satan. He will devour you and take you with him to his final destination, which is the lake of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Your faith, in its present weakness, will never withstand the coming tribulation of the last days and you will likely fall. I beg you to forsake him and deny your flesh, take up your cross, repent and follow Jesus. If you say that you love Him, then you must do as He says in His Word. Repent! Better to weep in godly sorrow for a night on this earth, knowing His joy will come in the morning, than to weep and gnash for eternity.

To those who hear this word and repent, the Lord will reward you. You only need to get upon your knees, or even better, your face, weep before your God with true repentance and cry out for His forgiveness, mercy and grace. Ask Him what He would have you to do. You will be as lights to the world, in these final days of harvest. You will become a sign and a wonder to the people of this world. You will participate in the final harvest gathering of repentant souls, before our Lord's return. You will be able to withstand the coming judgment of America and perhaps other western nations and the following tribulation or be mercifully removed from its midst. And you will reap a great harvest in eternity, where you will hear those sweet words from our Savior, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." I am convinced that to hear those precious words are the only ambition any of us should ever have.

(Rev 3:19) Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. [RSV]

(1 Pet. 4:7) The end of all things is at hand; therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers. [RSV]

(1 Pet. 4:17) For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God? [RSV]

PART 2: To the Unbelieving World:

Let me first issue a statement for all readers. I know these words seem much too strong and harsh for someone who would prefer to represent the gentle, loving Christ who died so that mankind could be forgiven for their sins. There is nothing so precious than the soul that becomes aware of his fallen state. It is so easy to have love, mercy and pity on the downtrodden. My heart breaks for the alcoholic, the drug addict, and the slum dwellers who long for a chance to escape their lot. To these people, I yearn to reach with the wonderful words of life the Word has to offer their weary souls. They are much easier for me to love. It is the proud, the boastful, arrogant and wise in their own eyes, who think that sorrow and recompense will never touch them that I struggle with. The strong exhortation and almost scolding tone of this book is first addressed to the selfish worldly church of prosperous nations, who are unmoved by the suffering the rest of this earth endures. I can't apologize for the frankness with which God has compelled me to write. This next section is for those who are typical of the worldly lost who are also arrogant and prideful, certain of their superiority. They must be addressed with strength and so again, I cannot apologize for the tone, however harsh it may seem, that God has compelled me to use. But know this, God is strong with the proud and boastful, yet when one begins to see the errors of his ways, the Lord quickly becomes compassionate and merciful, anxious to show His tender ways. I liken it to a parent who tries to stop their child from entering danger. You first warn them in strong words. When they, certain they know more than you, ignore and proceed, you grab them and become more strong, louder and forceful. When they realize their near doom and return to you, weeping, you hold them to your bosom and shower them with love. Such is our God.

(Job 5:11) he sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. [RSV]

To the Nations:

America and Europe and other “westernized” nations are in grave danger. While currently, America best fits the description of a modern Babylon, the harlot nation, who caused all the other nations to grow fat off the excess of her wealth and caused them to drink of the wine of her debauchery, let it be known that all those who joined her and approved of her, will also drink the cup of her punishment. There is great destruction coming upon the earth and the wicked nations of the earth shall perish and they will exist no more, starting with the wickedest of all. A word of warning to the Allied Western Nations: On the day that you forsake Israel, your destruction will surely come upon you!

The Bible speaks of that great harlot nation who is destroyed in a single hour by fire. The destruction of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center was a warning and a symbolic picture of what is to come, if America does not repent. Those towers represented the power and wealth of America. Symbolically, America was destroyed by fire on that day. It took exactly one hour for both towers to come down. In a single hour, America was symbolically destroyed by fire. Such will be done to her on a larger and complete scale, if the nation continues to refuse to repent. Time is running out. The American nation has enjoyed God’s hand of protection, as He has held back attacks from touching our soil, but because even those who profess to be His have forsaken walking in truth, He has removed that protection and we will be at the mercy of our enemies. This excerpt from Revelation depicts what truly sounds like a nuclear holocaust. It could be the fate of our nation, who has focused on luxury, wealth and immorality and spread this poison throughout the globe as we have “westernized” the world. It need not be our fate, if only we would repent. For the worldly minded nature of America is a Babylon spirit that has invaded the mentality of the church in this nation as well.

(Rev. 18:2-3) And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul and hateful bird; For all nation have drunk the wine of her impure passions, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness.” [RSV]

(Rev. 18:5) for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. [RSV]

(Rev. 18:7-19) As she glorified herself and played the wanton, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning. Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit, I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,' so shall her plagues come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her." And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and were wanton with her will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning; they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! alas! thou great city, thou mighty city, Babylon! In one hour has thy judgment come." And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more, cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

"The fruit for which thy soul longed has gone from thee, and all thy dainties and thy splendor are lost to thee, never to be found again!" The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, "Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste." And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! In one hour she has been laid waste. [RSV]

(Rev. 19:2) for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his

servants.” [RSV]

Those nations who despise the harlot nation, (which America best depicts in this present age), though they have grown fat from the excess of her wealth, will bring about her destruction, because of their hate for her. I warn those nations who hate her, however, even though God will use you to destroy America, He will also destroy you, for you have dealt treacherously with the one who gave aid and wealth to you, in your time of need and distress. Just as God used the Assyrians to destroy Israel and take her into captivity, He eventually had the Assyrians destroyed. As you judge America and other western nations, and as you rejoice in their destruction, so will God also judge you. The Bible promises that God will destroy the entire earth, as we know it, before it is all over. Therefore, since the melting of the elements is inevitable, what should be your manner of conduct? If you laugh at the harlot’s calamity, God shall laugh at yours.

(Ezek. 35:11) therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy which you showed because of your hatred against them; and I will make myself known among you, when I judge you. [RSV]

To the Unbelievers: Atheists, Skeptics, and Opposers of the Gospel:

In arrogance, you proclaim your gospel of hopelessness and have tried to make those who are called by Jesus' name to be ashamed of the truth they have. You think you are wise, but you are foolish and will receive the inheritance of the foolish unless your eyes are opened. Even those who proclaim that Jesus was a good teacher or a prophet, have no wisdom in these concessions. For if you say Christ was a prophet, then you should have believed him when he said that all authority is given to him and that he said, "before Abraham was, I am." When he said he would rise again on the third day after his death, then if he is a prophet, why have you not believed him? If you say he was a good man, then you are foolish and deceived, for your disbelief of Who he was and what He did, condemns you. For this "good" teacher said "I am the way and the truth and the life and that NO one comes to the father, God, except through Me." If then, He is who He said He was, and you have refused to believe in Him, you are doomed to eternal judgment, because of the truth which you have rejected. Don't think that conceding that He may have been a good teacher or a prophet will save you. It will not.

For those of you who are atheists, especially those who have actively persecuted the Gospel with lawsuits to eliminate and eradicate the Gospel from government shrines, buildings and schools, you are a particularly sad lot. Your self-sufficiency will fail you on that day, when EVERY knee shall bow and EVERY tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. You too, will bow on that day, but you will not enter into his glorious kingdom. You will be cast into the fiery pit, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is so sad and needless because the one true, loving God, who doesn't desire that any should come to this fate, has provided a way of escape for you but you are too proud of your "intelligence" to take it.

Your judgment against the church of Jesus Christ and his servants will be your own judgment on that day. You should repent of your arrogance and foolishness, while there is still time. Otherwise, you will not escape the wrath that is to come, which has been reserved for those who rejected the salvation of God. Whether or not you believe there is a God, and a hell designed for Satan and his demons, does not change the fact that it is true. Your notion of truth does not make it the truth. Even for all the deception you have caused, I would not wish the horrors of the damned upon you. That horrible place was not created for man. Jesus made a way

out so that no man need go there.

(Rom. 1:18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. [RSV]

Humble yourself then, and consider that it is not possible for you to know for certain whether you are right or wrong in your determination that there is no God. You cannot prove God does not exist anymore than anyone can prove He does. So since it requires faith either way, you are entrusting your soul to a belief, the same as those who profess Christ. If the Christian is wrong, then nothing was really lost by trying to live in the spirit of love that He asks of us. If you are wrong, you have bet your soul on a losing horse.

(Psalm 14:1) The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none that does good. [RSV]

I know an atheist who is a very good man and I love him like a brother. I don't want him to perish and I pray for him every single day. He has acted more Christ-like than many who claim to be Christians. But even this dear man is a sinner, for there is none on the earth who is righteous, not one. All come short of the glory of God and all have need for a Savior. I have confidence that my Lord will save him, and I will storm Heaven with prayers until that day. I know another atheist I pray for daily, who is not so nice. He is racist, angry, rude, and doesn't care whether there is a God or not. But God has placed him in my life so that he will be prayed for. I hope someone is also specifically praying for the many others who are too self-sufficient to believe. I hope someone is praying for each of you who read these words. God is about to tear down the earthly securities that make a man or woman see no need for God in their lives. On the day you cry out to Him, know that He stands ready to help and make Himself known to you.

(Isa. 1:18) "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. [RSV]

To The Wicked in General:

The same lust, immorality, murder, and unforgiveness that has caused you to despise the hypocrisy of the people of the Church, will eventually be your own downfall. God warns that by the same measure you judge others, by that same judgment you will also be judged. Beware how you judge another, for you are likely to fall into the same temptation. This world has pointed to the Church and accused her of heinous acts in the name of Jesus. If you were honest, you would glance back over time and see that many organized religions, governments, gangs or other groups, religious or otherwise, have committed horrible crimes against humanity. Communist Soviet Union and China as well as the Darwinian thought, (i.e.: natural selection and survival of the fittest) behind the perverted practices of Nazi Germany and abortion have killed far more humans and committed more heinous acts than the “Crusades.” You hold a double standard against those who are called by God’s name, and you hold the deeds of a few who betrayed or failed, as examples of what the Christian faith produces. You neglect to notice or mention the far greater numbers who do good and not evil, and you conveniently fail to remember the dark deeds of those from within your own godless ranks. So you prejudice yourself, and those you can reach, with your anti-gospel. Truly your shame will be great, on that terrible day of the Lord, when EVERY knee shall bow and EVERY tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord, but the wicked will be cast into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth for eternity.

(Isa. 59:8) the way of peace they know not, and there is no justice in their paths; they have made their roads crooked, no one who goes in them knows peace. [RSV]

You, who say you are not hindered by the bonds of religious thinking, are ensnared by your own traps. You worship the God of this world, Molech, and you worship all sorts of idols, false gods, objects and mammon. And you force, by activist legislation, others to follow your path, hoping to silence the Christian voice forever. This generation is full of all the things foretold about them. They are idolaters, full of pride, envy, strife, lust and greed. You amass wealth to yourself, giving only the smallest percentage of your abundance to those less fortunate.

In the workplace, you have no regard for your fellow man, but you will disregard everything that is moral and true, to gain wealth and power for yourself. This generation is self-centered and full of selfish ambition. You oppress the poor and weak, in your worldly power, but your rewards on this earth will be left here to others when you die. Therefore, it would be prudent to give your wealth to God and his children in need. That is the only way you will ever take any of your wealth with you.

For those who give great amounts of money to humanitarian causes, take no comfort in your “goodness” as a person. You cannot buy salvation. The price is too great and you cannot pay it. You are of the seed of Adam and you are born into the sin nature of mankind. Your only hope of salvation is to be born again, under the acknowledgment that the blood of Jesus alone can cover and save you. You are arrogant and wise in your own eyes, and the cross is foolishness to you. How sad you will be when you discover all your good deeds to humanity were in vain and your soul is forever condemned, all because you were too proud to believe you needed a savior!

You are angered by these words of warning, not realizing that these harsh words are meant to work like a violent shove, desperate to get you out from the path of an oncoming train. You despise the Christian, who earnestly longs to save your eternal life and soul from the fate that awaits those who don't believe. You can't see the train. It is hidden from your sight, but those of us who know it is coming long to push you to safety. Do not despise us, but let your eyes be opened so you can see your danger.

(Luke12:4-5) I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear; fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes I tell you, fear him! [RSV]

(Ezek. 3:18) If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. [RSV]

To the Leaders and Lawmakers:

When Jesus said “Woe to you lawyers (lawmakers) you burden the people and you will not lift a finger to help,” he was addressing the Pharisees, who spent their lives interpreting and enforcing the laws of Moses in ways that made life unbearable for the people. But this same sort of burdening and lawmaking continues through the government, lobbyists and legislators of today. Despite the cry from the oppressed citizens, leaders continue to live in their sheltered world of excess. Eventually, the corruption of a nation’s leaders is passed on to the embittered people and there is no regard for one-another, within a society. Such a society is a house divided, and it WILL NOT STAND. Decadence only leads to the fall and ruin of a nation, and those who ignore the signs and continue in their extravagant and wicked living, will reap the destruction that is to come. You don’t have to believe me or the Bible or agree with my faith to know this truth. You only need to study world history. Such moral breakdown will contribute to the coming fall of America, as it has every nation where corruption abounds. These same warnings God gave to Israel applies to every nation, whether they are “in covenant” with Him or not. He is a God who despises injustice.

(Deut. 16:19) You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. [RSV]

Because Americas leaders have not upheld, respected or acknowledged the Lord, God in this nation, because they have passed regulations in an attempt to have all traces of God removed from our midst, this land shall become a desolation and abomination by their own hands. They have become greedy and selfish gluttons, keeping too much money for themselves. They give away the bread of those who work, to those who don’t. They are breaking the backs of the laborers. They deal unjustly with and overtax the people. They have no wisdom, nor discernment, because they have no God. They are the wicked of the wicked, entrusted with the representation of the people, they have become greedy cheats and liars. They claim to be “public servants” while they make servants of the public. They do not obey the very laws they make but

they bully the people with them. They rape and plunder and violate the nation that has blessed them. They cause hatred and resentment among the races, as well as hopelessness and disillusionment among the people. They are guilty of treason. God is against them and because of them, the nation will fall unless they repent.

(Isa. 1:21) How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. [RSV]

It is God who places men and women in positions of power and authority. Yet they disregard the very God who placed them in their high position, and they attempt to eradicate Him from the land. They are wise in their own eyes, as they stumble on, in blind destruction of the people's rights God assigned them to protect. They are full of corruption, injustice and deceit. They betray the trust of the people and God WILL eventually bring their kingdoms down. The history of the world and nations, since the beginning of time has made this very clear, but they refuse to see. Therefore destruction will come upon them and they will be cast down from their lofty heights. God requires a greater accountability to those whom He has placed in authority. They will be appointed a more severe judgment than those they have cheated and abused. They will be most wretched on the day of the Lord, when the One who has true authority administers true justice. What a terrible day that will be for many of this nation's leaders! They seek to save their kingdoms and the life they love, but they will lose them.

(Isa. 10:1-3) Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! What will you do on the day of punishment, in the storm which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth? [RSV]

To Teachers, Professors, Universities, and other purveyors of “knowledge”:

Before I begin, I want to clarify that some education is needed and appreciated. I speak now of those things that must be known before a practice can be applied. I want any nurse who tends to me, to know where my veins are located. I want a surgeon, if I must have one, to know where my vital organs are, before he cuts. I love the convenience of my automobile and my computer. I appreciate those with the understanding to invent, manufacture and repair these wonderful tools. Scientists, mathematicians, laboratory technicians, electricians, and a host of other fields, requiring specific knowledge and skills, are needful and require legitimate education.

However, much of what passes as education is merely social brainwashing, and an attempt to keep the professional elite above the masses. The requirement of "degrees" for many other jobs is unnecessary. In these fields, it is more a process of learning submission and there is an added agenda that is geared toward eradicating the hope and faith of young minds. In this regard, the education system is a monstrous institution, with money as the main motivation, and the elimination of God as the second. (Why else would educational institutions insist upon teaching Darwin's evolution theory as a fact, when many modern scientists admit it is a debunked idea, unsupported by fossil records?) Here is another group, to whom an extra accountability will be required, on the great and terrible day of the Lord. God will hold those who teach others in higher accountability. On the fearful day of reckoning, you will not only be accountable for your own unbelief, but for those whom you led into unbelief as well. You will weep and gnash your teeth on that day! Your blood will be upon your own heads and not mine because I have warned you.

(Job 12:7-10) But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind. [RSV]

To these, God restrains His anger, but only for a while. You have proclaimed yourselves wise and perverted truth in the name of “education.” Many educators are full of pride, creating academic standards that basically are nothing more than a demand of submission to the preferred religion of secular humanism. Your elevated “sages,” so-called enlightened ones, are devoid of any truth, deceived by their own vain and evil imaginations. They are rebellious to God and keep the company of demons. Yet you uphold these twisted humans as gods, as well as yourselves, to whom your students must bow and pay homage. You pass off mere theories, philosophies and ideas as fact, while you scoff at the real truth of the universe. You insist upon upholding a shattered theory that promotes atheism, when the originator (Darwin) of that theory had only primitive means of observation. Meanwhile, modern technology increasingly points to an intelligent designer of the universe, yet you willingly refuse to allow the evidence to be taught, lest it open the eyes of this generation that everything in the universe points to an intelligent Designer. You are not educators, but devourers of hope, destroyers of faith, merchants of false teachings, and perpetrators of lies. You claim to be intellectuals, whose minds rise above the blind faith of religion, yet it requires just as much blind faith, if not more, to hold fast to your beliefs. Repent! For God will soon pull your ivory towers down. Your massive influence is about to be usurped as God brings disruption into your shallow world. What will you do to save mankind, or even yourselves, when the very elements begin to melt down?

(Proverbs 16:5) Everyone who is arrogant is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished. [RSV]

To the Unrepentant:

The prophet Isaiah said, “Come let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” It is not the will of the Father that any should perish, but that all shall come to repentance and the salvation through Jesus Christ. Every opportunity will have been given to mankind before the end of this age. Indeed, every opportunity has been given the people of the earth and is still being given. But the end of the age is near. This generation shall see it. What can you hope for, when God has freely offered to you, through the blood of Christ, the blessed hope of salvation and deliverance but you have rejected His Son? You have declared yourself to be wiser than Almighty God. You will be humbled on the day when truth is made known to all men. What will you say when the wrath of God blazes before you and you have no defense? God has told men of a place where the unrepentant must go, though it is not His will that any should perish there, He has laid His own will down that men may have a free will to choose God for themselves. He does not want puppets or dumb beasts. He wants His creation to want Him. He has revealed the horrors of the fire to come to those who will listen to Him. Those who have heard the warning desperately long for you to see the dreadful flames up ahead. If I warned you of an avalanche coming your way and told you to run for your lives, you would be grateful. Yet when a Christian who has received revelation from God Almighty, has seen the horror coming to those who refuse Christ, and tries to warn you to flee, you scoff and disbelieve and hate us for trying to save you. It’s crazy and it will be your own foolishness that will cause your destruction, not God!

***(Isa. 13:11) I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant, and lay low the haughtiness of the ruthless.
[RSV]***

Terrible trials are coming upon the earth and even are already here. Even the many unbelieving scientists can see that the earth is groaning over its own imminent destruction. The Bible confirms that the elements will melt, as God pours out his wrath upon the earth. When it comes, it will rain upon the wicked and the righteous, the just and the unjust. We are all on this

fallen planet together and we will suffer together, unless the Lord is gracious enough to remove those who are His. Satan is the prince of this earth and the cause of our pain. God will allow Satan and sinful man to have a season of power on earth. However, God will allow this tribulation upon the earth, in hopes of bringing people to the point of crying out for His help before He finally pours out His wrath upon this earth. Nevertheless, according to Revelation, the unrepentant will scoff at, blame and reject God, even as they suffer plagues, diseases, and every imaginable hardship. Many will curse God with their dying breath, rather than repent. They have been given over to depraved minds and there is no relief for them. Not in this life, nor in the eternal one. Their eternal lot will be to suffer eternal torment in a lake of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. I pray that no one who is reading this will find themselves among those wretched souls.

(Eph. 4:18-19) They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. [NIV]

How very sad! Hell wasn't created for mankind. It was created for the destruction and punishment of Satan and his demons, who rebelled against God in the very beginning. Satan, knowing his judgment comes from a just and holy God, hates God and hates the creatures God made. Satan has deceived the nations and every individual, hoping to hurt God, by forcing God to destroy them as well. It was Satan's only hope that God would have to lay down His eternal heart of justice, and then Satan could escape destruction. But Jesus dashed Lucifer's hopes to the ground when He, who was without any sin, submitted to an unjust death at the cross. He did this to redeem His poor creatures from sin and grant them eternal life. God is not destructive by nature. He is a creator. He loves the things He has created. He especially loves those creatures He made in His own image. He wants to save them from the wrath and fury that must come, because He is a just Being. The price for your soul was more costly than you can possibly imagine. You cannot save yourself, even if you were to let yourself be crucified. Because you were never sinless, so it would do you no good. You were born into the sin nature of Adam.

Therefore, Jesus did it for you. He is the only one who could because he was the only one not born of the seed of man and therefore not born into the sin and nature of mankind. If you refuse His sacrifice for you, you are without any hope and for eternity, you will weep and gnash your teeth.

I can't imagine why anyone would trust their own thinking and deny all of this is true. The Bible is the most reliable historical document of its age that exists on this planet. It is a highly credible resource. Just because an arrogant, biased and uninformed unbeliever claims otherwise, don't bet your soul that he is right.

(Proverbs 3:5-6) Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. [RSV]

God made a way of escape for His beloved creatures, by taking on the punishment, himself, through the person of Jesus Christ. Why is this so hard to believe? If you think about it, you will discover that you easily believe things that are far more preposterous. There is no need for any human creature to spend eternity in shame and suffering. God doesn't want that for you. But He has granted His creatures the freedom to choose for themselves, whether to accept the truth He proclaims, and forsake their rebellious ways. And make no mistake, the Word clearly warns us that no one who practices adultery, witchcraft, fornication, perversion, gluttony, greed, murder, gossip, slander, lying, and every sort of evil will enter His kingdom.

(Ephesians 5:5) For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things, God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. [NIV]

I will agree there are many professing Christians who do these things and believe me, they will be held to an even greater responsibility and accountability. But you will face the judgment throne of God all on your own and there is no grading curve, based on the failures of

others. Christ will be the standard by which all men are measured. So if you find yourself doomed on that final day, it will only be your own fault because you rejected His offer for reconciliation and peace with God Almighty, through the Savior, Jesus. But don't think it can come any way other than through Christ Jesus and don't think it doesn't require true repentance and a turning away from sin. God is holy, righteous, and no sin will be allowed in the eternal kingdom of glory. He wants us, but only of our own free will. If we choose to reject His provision through Christ, we will perish. With a heart laden with sorrow and grief, God will cast those who rebelliously denied His Son, into the pit.

(Matt. 16:26-27) What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. [NIV]

To the Repentant:

Those who choose to repent of their sins will be forgiven, through the blood of Jesus. You will instantly have the hope of the redeemed. The Holy Spirit will come to you, providing wisdom, understanding and comfort, in the midst of trials and tribulations. You WILL still have trials and tribulations. Jesus assured us of that, while we are still on this earth. That is because Satan despises Christ, therefore he despise us. He is a murderer, liar and has every evil intention towards us. Also his time is short, and he is very serious about taking as many with him as he can, on the day he meets his doom. We are not promised that we will never suffer. We are in a fallen world where Satan runs two and fro, like a raging lion, seeking whom he may devour.

(Matt. 24:6-12) And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places; all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. But he who endures to the end will be saved. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. [RSV]

But there is no need for any human to stand condemned on the final Day of Judgment. God provided His very own "Lamb," who is Christ, Jesus, to be the sacrifice for our sins. All we must do is believe upon Him who has saved us, and follow Him and His ways. We must repent and forsake sin, however, lest we crucify Him afresh and also cause others to stumble. If anyone repents of their own rebellion toward God and his ways, and receives His salvation, they will be forgiven and escape the eternal wrath of God. As one of the redeemed, none of your former deeds will be held against you, nor even remembered by God. He will remove your sins as far as the East is from the West. He will cast them into the sea of forgetfulness and remember them no more. What a wonderful offer! Only God can do that! And He only does that through the blood

of Christ.

(John 14:6) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. [RSV]

(Acts 4:12) And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." [RSV]

Terrible times are fast approaching the sons of this earth, and those living in the end of this age will see the return of Christ. The final prophecies of the Word are being fulfilled before our very eyes and the whole earth pleads for release from the sins of mankind. The final call to repentance is being issued from the true prophets of God. The worst is yet to come to this earth and its inhabitants. I pray that you will be among those to heed the last call. I pray the first time you bow your knee and confess "Jesus is Lord" will NOT be on that terrible day, for then it will also be the last time you do it, and too late to do you any good. Whether you are a professing Christian who has failed to take your faith seriously, or whether you are a doubter who never repented in the first place, I weep and travail for your souls. I pray you will come to your senses and accept the way of escape that has been offered you. Repent while there is still time! The age of grace is nearly through. The final hour is at the door and then it will be too late. Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly!"

(Psalm 90:12) So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. [RSV]

(Psalm 143:8) Let me hear in the morning of thy steadfast love, for in thee I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to thee I lift up my soul. [RSV]

The Final Call to Repentance, a Prayer:

If you wish to repent and receive the salvation of Jesus the Christ, I urge you to stop right now and pray:

Father God, I come before You in the name of, and by the blood of, Your precious, holy Lamb. I confess that I am a sinner who was born into sin, under the curse of Adam, and my life has been selfish and worldly. I have been in wicked rebellion to Your will and Your holy Word. I request that You bless me with true repentance and a revelation of the truth that Jesus Christ suffered and died on my behalf, that I may be reconciled to a holy God. Please forgive me, for the sake of Your son, Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, I thank you for the sacrifice you made and for your obedience to the Father, unto death. I bow at your feet, Lord Jesus and I ask You to come into my heart and dwell there through Your Holy Spirit. I love You, Jesus. I want to serve You for the rest of my days and I give You my life. I wish to enter into a holy covenant with You and become one of your disciples. I submit to Your Lordship, Jesus, and I ask You to teach me Your ways. I am Yours. Thank You for reconciling me to the Father.

Holy Spirit, I ask You to fill me and dwell in me and keep me. I welcome You to lead, guide, teach and comfort me. Please conform and mold me into the image of Christ, my Savior and Lord. Let me never grieve You again! Bring me into submission to Your Word. Bring me to that place where I will hear from Your righteous lips, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into thy rest."

For all these things, I most humbly and joyfully pray. I rejoice that I am now, in Christ, a new creation. Behold the old things are passed away and all things are made new. All praise, glory and honor You, Jesus! Now make my life sanctified and pleasing to You. I am Yours. Be glorified in my life.

(Psalm 143:10) Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God! Let thy good spirit lead me on a level path!

Amen.