

# THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers  
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Dear Reader

Again we have been sent a very helpful article of encouragement and warning by a well known and respected brother, Raymond K. Campbell, often known by his initials, RKC. It was transcribed from ministry given at a brothers conference in 1982 and has been very slightly edited for clarity and space requirements. If the warnings he gave were important then, they are far more important today as increasingly the Pauline truths of the Assembly are given up. Brother RK, now with the Lord, wrote many books, but without question his most famous is *The Church of the Living God*, recommended several times in past issues of the Assembly Messenger. Let's see what he has to say.

## **DANGEROUS TRENDS AND REMEDIES (RKC)**

I would like to say a few things as to Dangerous Trends and Remedies. In Acts 20:28-29 the apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders (whom the Holy Spirit had made overseers to feed the flock of God) of savage wolves that would arise from among themselves, "speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance ..."

Also a few words in Revelation 3:2 and 11, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard: hold fast and repent .... Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown."

Here we certainly have a call to watchfulness and to hold fast. We ought to be very conscious in these days that we need to be watchful. In Ezekiel 3:17 God said to the prophet that He had made him a *watchman* unto the house of Israel to give them *warning*. This is certainly part of our ministry. It may not be so pleasant and so nice to hear, but we must not neglect this important watchfulness even amid encouragements.

I am very much aware of things which God has given us as encouragements. He is still working among us today and we thank Him for it. But even in the midst of encouragements, we need to be aware of dangers and trends. We are part of the present condition in the world. One finds all too much that the children of God, no matter where gathered or what we profess, so easily take on a part of what surrounds us. We say, "It rubs off."

So we need to be reminded again and again of dangerous trends. We can see such things coming in even in the midst of encouragements — dangers from without and dangers from within. Paul said men would arise *from within*, speaking perverse things. I looked up that word *perverse* in the dictionary and it frightened me to see what it says about it. Yes, we can see these things coming in and we ought to be aware of them.

## **A Low Spiritual State**

I think we need to be aware first of all that our low spiritual state is the root cause of troubles. There is a lack of real devotedness to Christ. We have been talking about various things happening among us and we all ought to feel humbled. We are part of this condition of things which manifests our low spiritual state. We have to come to the place of identification of ourselves with the general *ruin* of the professing Church, the great house we are in (2 Tim.2:20), and come right down to ourselves. We lack spiritual power. Why? Because of our spiritual state! We have to judge ourselves. Recovery and revival have always begun there. We should be conscious of this. What is needed, the remedy, is real devotedness to Christ, commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and His interests.

J.N. Darby wrote many good things; he was a spiritual man. In one of his letters, written in 1875, he wrote of the need of real devotedness to Christ, persevering devotedness, unworldliness, non-conformity to the world, self-denial and self-denial in love to others, no mixing with the church-world, earnest gospel energy towards the unsaved, etc. We need to be recalled to these things.

We are thankful for activity. I have lived long enough among saints of God to see a great increase in this and thank God for it. Things we would have liked to see years ago, we see the Spirit of God producing now. But mere activity will not make up for lack of spirituality. Activity for the Lord, service for Him, should flow from communion with Him and out of spiritual exercise. Activity will not cover up a spiritual condition that manifests itself like boils breaking out on a body, which reveals a systematic bad condition. We should rejoice in all that is good, but also be aware of our spiritual state.

### **Danger of Extremism**

One of the dangers we always need to avoid is that of extremism. Extremists go too far one way or the other, to the left or to the right. There is a ditch on both sides of the road. We can go too far to the left or too far to the right and land in a ditch, which always means trouble. The Scriptures stress walking in the *middle* of the road. We can be too rigid, legal, cold and hardhearted, and act in the flesh in reaction to things we rightly see as wrong. On the other hand, we can be too loose, broad, permissive and tolerant. Neither one of these ways is the path of God.

We have the lovely word in John 1:17, “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” or “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ” (JND). Grace is first, then truth. We need the balance of both. Grace needs to be strengthened by truth and truth needs to be mellowed by grace. Then we will have the lovely combination which we need. We so easily get unbalanced.

It has been said that we are like the pendulum of the clock, swinging from one side to the other. We have seen those who have been so rigid and extreme in years past, swing way over and become so permissive and miss the path of God. So let us avoid extremism. Extremists never help one another. One is too extreme in the left and another reacts and becomes too extreme in the opposite right side and does not help the other extremist. We need to hold to the middle of the road.

Then too, we need a balance of objective and subjective truths in ministry. What is *objective* in Christ, what we have unchanging in Him is necessary to warm and rejoice our hearts. Then there is the *subjective* side as to our state. But first we need the objective truths of what we have in Christ and then we can deal with the subjective practical things in the warmth and power of the objective.

### **Danger of Over-Organization**

Over-organization is a dangerous trend. We realize we need some planning and organization, for disorganized persons are not of much help. We have our personal and collective responsibility and then there is divine power for guidance and help. To believe and say that the Lord will help and the Holy Spirit will guide, does not excuse us from our responsibility. If I want to present something as food or ministry for the people of God, it requires some exercise on my part, some preparation. A good housewife prepares a meal; some [planning and] preparation is necessary.

But at the same time, we always need to realize our dependence upon the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Dependence upon Christ as our living Head and upon the Holy Spirit to lead, guide and direct is the remedy. How much do we really hold the truth of Christ as Head of the Church? The Assembly of God is more precious to Him than to any of us, more real and close to His heart.

We make our plans and preparations for activities, but we ought to also say, as is found in some price lists, “Subject to change without notice.” Sometimes we see brothers who have an outline of a message before them (and we

should have some sketch in mind), but the time is limited and they seek to get through their whole planned message and give every facet of what they prepared. No, we should be subject to change and be dependent on the Lord.

It was said of brother W.J. Lowe, that when he went to conferences, he sought to see how the Holy Spirit was leading and then fall in with that. How is the Holy Spirit leading? We should be conscious of that and follow that leading.

### **Danger of Independency**

One big danger always has been and always will be, *independency*. Man is inclined to be an independent creature. The expression is, “Do your own thing.” That’s not new. It is as old as Isaiah 53:6, “We have turned, every one, to his own way.” We like to do our own thing and be independent. But Scripture certainly teaches individual dependence upon the Lord and upon one another. The Creator-God said, “It is not *good* that the man *should be alone*.” So He made a help fit for him. Thank God He did; it was a wonderful being [woman] He made.

So in the local assembly also; we ought to function together as members one of another. And then *as assemblies* likewise. While *an assembly* has the primary responsibility first of all in local matters, responsibility does not end there. The truth of the One Body of believers and the unity of the Spirit teaches us *interdependence*. We must function together as assemblies.

There are a number of brethren in this hall who took a stand years ago against independency, against an independent movement. We paid a price for this, but we have never been sorry for it. We have proved the truth of unity. So we need to realize that an assembly is not in a position to act regardless of other saints and other assemblies. We can’t say, “Well, you do it that way, we’ll do it this way.” Yes, there is the local and primary responsibility to the Lord as Head, but we are also exhorted to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph.4:3). It is not the unity of the body of Christ, which cannot be broken, but there is the unity of the Spirit we are to *endeavor* to keep. In the path of obedience, the Holy Spirit may call one to walk in separation from one or another here and there in keeping the holy unity of the Spirit.

### **Unity in Corinthians**

I wonder if we realize how unity is taught in the epistles to the Corinthians? They are corrective epistles on assembly order. Seven times in these two epistles we have the thought of association with other assemblies — “as in all the assemblies,” etc. Some of us have had this pointed out to us many years ago, but there may be younger brothers among us who have never seen or heard this teaching on unity. It is necessary to point out this principle of unity among assemblies so we realize we can’t do some vital things one way in one assembly and act differently in another assembly. That would be independency. *We must function in unity on divine principles.*

There is local responsibility of assemblies, but we are also to be here as a united testimony. That’s why we have wonderful conferences of brothers. Those who believe in independent assemblies usually do not have such meetings together. We ought to realize and prize the privilege and blessing of walking together and giving a practical expression to the truth of the One Body. And then how wonderful to realize this unity, not only in our country, but to experience it throughout the world. Some of us have been privileged to travel overseas and we feel at home with those who hold and act upon the same vital principles. True, there are special national characteristics and differences in each country, but there is unity.

First, in 1 Corinthians 1:2, we have the epistle addressed to “the church of God which is at Corinth ... *with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*” This is a significant expression. The epistle was not just for the assembly at Corinth, but for all in every place who gathered to the Name of the Lord. This is unity expressed in a practical sense.

Secondly, in chapter 4, the apostle speaks of general things. Then in verse 17 he says that Timothy would “remind you of my ways in Christ, *as I teach everywhere in every church.*” The teaching was the same on vital matters in every assembly.

Thirdly, in chapter 7 the subject is marriage and regulations as to what would come in. In verse 17 Paul wrote, “And so I ordain *in all the churches.*” There was common teaching and order as to this matter.

Fourthly, in chapter 11 the subject is headship and head covering — whether a man has his head covered or not when praying or prophesying and whether a woman should have her head covered or uncovered when thus engaged. Does it make any difference whether we as brothers here in the presence of God in prayer have our heads covered or uncovered? This instruction is addressed to men first of all; then to women. Paul gives divine order here as to the uncovered head of men and the covered head of women. Then he says in verse 16, “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have *no such custom, nor do the churches of God.*” No such custom as being contentious, that is.

There was and is one order as to headship and head covering in all assemblies. We have no option here. This order was laid down for all assemblies and was not just for the time of Corinth. It is applicable today. I have been asked, “Is this a doctrine?” Yes, it is a practice based on a doctrine. The doctrine is that of the headship of God, of Christ, and of man.

Fifthly, look at chapter 14:33. The order in the assembly is spoken of. Two or three are to speak and women are to be silent when meeting *as an assembly*, “in ecclesia.” “*God* is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” This divine order was practiced in all assemblies.

Sixth, passing to chapter 16, we have instruction as to a material matter, the collection for the saints. Verse 1 says, “As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also.” Paul links the matter of the collection up with the order he gave to assemblies in Galatia. There is divine order and no independency here.

Seventh, look at 2 Corinthians 1:1. It is addressed to “the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia.” The apostle links Corinth up with all the saints in the province of Achaia.

This seven-fold manifestation of unity in the Corinthian epistles should speak to us. The danger of independency is always current. We are called to walk in the unity of the Spirit and to experience blessed help and strength therefrom. Assemblies among us have benefitted in years past in times of deep trouble by acting on this principle of unity and help of assemblies elsewhere. Individuals have owned that this would never happen among those who hold and practice independency among assemblies.

### **Danger of Pushing Forward Young Converts**

While this may be of lesser importance, there is the danger of putting forward young converts too quickly into taking an active place and position in assembly activity. Young believers and older ones coming from without should first learn in the assembly from the teaching of His Word by the Spirit. It is so easy to bring one’s environment and background into the assembly and bring in new, unscriptural things — new carts of the Philistines (2 Sam.6:3).

A brother who is new in an assembly recently said to me he was provoked because he felt my mind was made up. I replied, “Yes, my mind is made up on *principles of truth* I have proven in practice for over 50 years. I am not speaking about practices.” He needed to learn in the assembly. I was recently told that a young brother who grew up in an assembly, said he was silent for eleven years. There is a time to quietly learn. This brother is now a valuable teacher among us. We can so easily pattern after the camp of Christendom everywhere about us and bring in new, unscriptural things from the systems of men.

## **Important Words of Instruction and Warning**

I want to close by quoting a faithful servant of the Lord, Paul Loizeaux. The quote is found in *Notes on the Book of Nehemiah* by H.A. Ironside. He said, “By some an attempt is being made to pull down the barriers of truth and make us give up what we have. *If the younger men among us, who are soon to take the lead if the Lord tarry yet a while, are not true in practice to the truth, not only of the gospel but also of the Church of God, the truth itself will slip away from them.* As I see the developments all around, I burn with jealousy [zealous vigilance] for the truth we have. It makes us, in its practice, a people rejected by all, but who have the bread that all need. If we keep separated from every movement which leaves out what hurts in the truth; if we just live out in practice what the truth is, we will remain no doubt a small, unpopular people, but we will be to the end, God’s vessel of truth to His whole Church on earth; and that will be ten thousand times better throughout eternity than to have been on popular lines for greater access to men.”

“Our assemblies, if kept truly pure, are little fortresses for the defense and sallying out of [setting forth] truth. Let us build them up strong, solid and faithful ... Principles of independency annul the constitution of the Church of God as laid down in Ephesians and make it impossible for us therefore to carry out its by-laws, as I may call them, given us in Corinthians.”

RKC