

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

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Dear Brethren and Co-Workers with Christ:

Two Sabbaths ago, in a sermonette before the Pasadena Headquarters P.M. congregation, Mr. Dwight Viehe, a local elder, referred to my letter to you dated June 25. He elaborated on my letter. What he said is important and timely at this critical time. I want to share it with all of you, and I repeat it here as transcribed from a taped recording of his sermonette:

I brought with me this afternoon a recent member and co-worker letter from Mr. Armstrong. I'm sure most of you will recall this one. You should. He began by telling us how we are helping fulfill Bible prophecy. It goes on to explain how there is indeed a purpose being worked out here below, and that the events working out that purpose of God are recorded in the history of the past, and the prophecy of the present and the future in the Bible.

A few paragraphs below that he mentions how, right now, it seems that God has been holding events in the world back.

Mr. Armstrong says: "We had expected the Great Tribulation to come before now. Why the delay? Surely it seems God has held the winds of terrorism and the Great Tribulation back to allow time" for the preaching of the Gospel message as a witness unto all nations "in a more complete way." And then Mr. Armstrong concludes the paragraph: "Perhaps we ourselves have been holding the march of events up."

Mr. Armstrong has mentioned that before. I've heard him mention it several times. And each time I pondered that thought, but then something else would get on my mind and I would soon forget it. But this time I decided to think a little more deeply, because it's an incredible, awesome thought that it is possible for God's chosen people, his called-out ones, spiritual Israel, to actually alter the divine agenda of the Almighty God. Let us look at an example. In Acts 13 Paul is giving what has been said to be his first sermon. Beginning in verse 14: "... when they [he and Barnabas] departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation [or earnest urgings] for the people, say on."

Speak up. What an invitation, because Paul, being Paul, stood up, and he said, Well, as a matter of fact, I do. It says then he, "... beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it." In this passage I want you to notice that Paul always bases his ministry on the plan of God. Verse 17 talks about how God has chosen a people for the outworking of his purpose. He brought them out of Egypt by many wonderful, powerful miracles and he began guiding them and teaching them in the way they should live their lives. In other words, teaching them how to be in the world but not of the world. A large portion of scripture is devoted to the recounting of the way in which God labored to prepare his chosen people for his plan, for his purpose.

We never want to forget that God has a purpose being worked out here below, that he has a plan. We need to remember that God calls a people to himself for the working out of his purposes. He always has. And God has predestined a people to himself in this end time to be the very basis of his divine work on earth. For that people to be effective, they must be a people who are convinced of his plan, who are solidly committed to and supporting that plan, and who are diligently preparing themselves for the very next step in that plan. And it also must be a people who are fully convinced that God is totally and utterly able to carry out the entirety of that plan and purpose to the nth degree.

Through God's Church we've come to understand that God brought ancient Israel out of Egypt, a type of sin, to make of them a society to show other people how to live. So today he is calling his Church, spiritual Israel, out of this world, to show and to teach people ultimately how to live in God's kingdom. God led ancient Israel through Moses teaching them, preparing them, showing them his way. So God today is leading us through his apostle for the working out of his purposes. And just as his purpose was rooted in ancient Israel then, so is it rooted in us today.

It's very important that we understand this duality. God began his purpose from the day he breathed air into the lungs of Adam. And of course, he continues that work today right through his Church, the Body of Christ. As long as we can keep this clearly in mind -- that we are the ones whom God has called out and through whom God is working out his purpose in this world today-- then we're less likely to let the world get to us with its message of permissiveness, because we're so wrapped up with and committed to the task of getting God's message to the world. When we lose sight of the purpose, then we begin to get ourselves into all kinds of trouble.

Paul was quick to point up the plan and the purpose that God is working out through his chosen people. But now I want you to notice something else, the second thing that he speaks on, which concerns the patience of God. Look at verse 18. "And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness." Now this concerns the tremendous patience of God. Any of you who may have young children and had guests over to eat with you can understand what this statement means: suffering their manners. [Laughter] Because it seems that young children want to slurp their soup, and put their elbows on the table, and perhaps eat with their fingers when there are guests. They assume if there are guests you won't correct them, and so they can go ahead and do what they would like to do and somehow get away with it. That is, of course, unless it's my house. And as we have guests quite often, we go right ahead and correct them. I believe I have seen some fruits of consistency taking place lately. But we suffer their manners, so to speak, in many different ways. And that seems to be what God had done with the children of Israel, suffered their manners. The New King James Version reads: "put up with their ways" for 40 years. When the time came to bring the descendants of Israel out of Egypt, God prepared the human leader, and he brought them out with a high hand. But I don't believe that he intended it to take 40 years to get them into the land of promise.

Israel left Egypt on Passover and arrived at Mount Sinai and received the law at Pentecost. Conceivably they could have gone right ahead and taken the land of promise on the Day of Trumpets, and perhaps enjoyed the Feast of Tabernacles with the abundance of the harvest. If not in that one year, surely leisurely, the next. But 40 long years God patiently waited to get on with his plan. Let's look at Psalm 78 and get another view of this. In Psalm 78 David had been recounting all the mighty miracles of God in bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, and all the mighty miracles in preserving them in the wilderness. He says, verse 32: "For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. [They kept forgetting the mighty, powerful workings of God.] Therefore [listen to this] their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble." And the New King James Version says, "their days He consumed in futility." Forty years of futility. Forty years Israel went around and around in that wilderness, getting deeper and deeper in their groove, accomplishing nothing.

Then in verse 41, "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel." Incredible. Limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember his power.

I thought how Mr. Armstrong recently has reminded us of that time during the '70s when men whom he had put in charge of the day-to-day affairs here at Pasadena began to liberalize the sound doctrine of God's Church. Men who lost sight of God's purpose and began to let the world get to them rather than them getting to the world with God's message, and began to water down his doctrine, did not believe his wondrous works, his almighty works, his great miracles, the miracle-working power of God who heals, the miracle-working power of a God who's able to work in the minds of people whom he would call, and open their minds, and give them an intellectual awakening by the power of his Spirit to understand things that they could never understand before. I believe they limited the Holy One of Israel. As a result, God removed his blessings. We can honestly say that God consumed their days in futility, because, during that period, for the first time in the history of God's Church in this era, there was negative growth.

Can a group of little human beings stop an Almighty God from doing what he wants to do? No! No, God's purposes will stand. But can a group of little human beings alter the time agenda for God doing what he wants to do? The Bible speaks loudly that it can, especially when his time frame involves their faith, and their cooperation, and their commitment. We're told that ancient Israel limited the Holy One of Israel, and therefore their days He consumed in futility. God's work was hindered; not stopped, but slowed down. Plan A shattered. Plan B came into effect. And you know it's a grievous thought, a sad thought, to think that a people that could be enjoying the tremendous blessings of the promised land were not, and instead were still wandering around in the wilderness.

Of course, that's the lesson. That's the lesson that came home loud and clear to me. And that is why we should indeed be very, very thankful for the plan and purpose of God, and that we've been given the knowledge of it. And why we should indeed be very thankful and grateful for the incredible patience of God. We dare not presume upon that patience.

With that thought in mind, I'm overwhelmed again with how thankful that we should be that God has brought his apostle back to put God's Church back on the track of faith, back on the track of repentance, and back on the track of doing the will

of God so that we can do the work of God by the power of God. Thankful that he's exhorted us to come out of this world and be separate from it so God can restore his blessings to the Church and thereby we can get the message to the world and thereby bring to fulfillment man's only hope for salvation, for peace, for joy.

And very thankfully God's Church is again moving forward with great power. The statistics are amazing. God has again restored his blessings. We need to make sure that we're growing with it and we need to make sure that our spiritual statistics are improving. We need so to commit ourselves that it never again need be written in the annals of church history, or even alluded to, that they limited the Holy One of Israel. But rather, let it be said that by their faith and obedience, and by their commitment and zeal, they hastened the day of his coming.

That is the end of the transcription.

Finally, brethren in Christ, I call your attention to the fact we are now facing the most critical month of the year in financial income for carrying on this tremendous worldwide work-- the final concluding work of GOD. Cash reserves are always at the lowest ebb of the year during September. I know you will pray earnestly that God will prosper his called-out people so we may safely hurdle this difficult month. THANK YOU for your urgent prayers.

With great love, in Jesus' name,

Herbert W. Armstrong