



United Church of God *an International Association*

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Dear fellow elders and brethren,

We have just completed one of the most inspiring General Conferences of Elders meetings in the history of the United Church of God. One could sense a positive spirit and attitude that prevailed and provided a synergistic energy to everyone in attendance.

There were several elders and wives who stated that this was the best conference in recent memory with expectations of good things to come. And, of course, the members of the Body of Christ have abiding within them the anticipation and expectation of being born as glorious, radiant spirit beings into the family of God. Each one of us needs to fan the flames of anticipation and expectation that is burning in our hearts and minds as begotten sons and daughters of God.

We are now looking forward to the day of Pentecost with great anticipation and expectation. On that day some 1987 years ago, God sent his very essence, the Holy Spirit, to dwell in the hearts and minds of the Israel of God, the Church of God.

In my last letter I wrote of the 50-day journey that we have embarked upon—from the wave offering to the day of Pentecost—a journey that is often filled with great trials and triumphs. Even if there are trials on the journey we know we can be more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Romans 8:37). God so loved us that He gave His Son, and the Son so loved us that He gave His life to pay for our sins so we can be reconciled to the Father and receive the Holy Spirit. The Son gave it for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). What was that joy? That joy was to see you and me as His brethren in the family of God. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17).

Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren because the same Spirit that is in God is in Christ—and is also in each one that has been sanctified. The apostle Paul makes this clear in Hebrews 2:10-12: “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. *For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one:* for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:10-12 King James Version throughout, emphasis added throughout). Please note the italicized words in verse 11: Both He that sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all of one.

Do you or I forget at times that we are all of one? Each one of us has the same spirit essence of God and Christ abiding in us. The apostle Paul writes: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,* whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Note carefully the italicized words in verse 13. Through the Spirit of God and Christ

we are members of one body. Because we are members of one body we are exhorted to have love and care for each member of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

In fact we are members one of another because all begotten sons and daughters have the same essence of God and Christ, the Holy Spirit, abiding in them (Romans 12:5). It is quite sobering to consider that we are members one of another. And just as it is with the human body, when we injure any body part the whole body suffers. A stubbed toe affects the whole body. A suffering brother or sister affects the whole spiritual body. Thus, we are admonished to love one another fervently. Note the words of the apostle Peter: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Peter 1:22).

As we focus on the deep spiritual things of God we need to remember that the inward man must be *daily renewed*. Although the Holy Spirit is of God, and invisible, it conforms to the biological law of use and disuse—“use it or lose it.” A body part that is not used will atrophy and become useless. In a similar manner the Holy Spirit can be quenched.

The Holy Spirit is symbolically likened unto fire. Paul admonishes Timothy to stir the gift that he received through the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 1:6). The Greek word *anazopureo* that is translated as “stir” means to kindle or inflame.

If we do not fan the flames of the gift that is within us the flame will begin to flicker and through neglect it will become a dying ember. This reminds me of the parable of the Ten Virgins where the lamps of the foolish virgins were going out. We must not wait till the midnight hour for the knock of the bridegroom on our door! We must fan the flames of the Spirit now. The inward man must be renewed daily. That renewal is done through prayer, fasting, obedience and reading and meditating on the Word of God. Jesus states: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). So we see that Jesus equates His words with spirit.

The most precious gift of the Spirit is life. Our biological parents gave us physical life. We know how short this physical life is. The psalmist writes that our life is as dust, as the grass and flower of the field that flourishes for a short time and is gone with the wind (Psalm 103:14-16). But God and Christ have made it possible for us to receive everlasting life—to be born of the Spirit and live forever. Note the inspired words of the apostle John: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). At the resurrection of the just we will be born of God as glorious, radiant spirit beings in the family of God and Christ.

So, as we observe this coming day of Pentecost, let us be glad and rejoice evermore in the precious gift of the Holy Spirit that imparts life and hope for a glorious future as kings and priests in the Kingdom of God.

In Christ’s Service,



Donald L. Ward