

President's Report

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, our soon coming King! My report this year will be a little different than previous years. I will not report on any of the activities in the region since Superintendent Twitchell and the various conference presidents will do so in their reports with much greater depth and precision than I am able to do. I will report that I have attempted to faithfully fulfill my duties as President of the ERA, conducting board meetings as prescribed in our constitution, attending ACGC Board meetings, and being a confidant and often a "sounding board" for our superintendent.

For the remainder of my report, I want to sound a warning and provide an encouragement to our pastors and churches to be faithful to "the teaching you learned." Paul in Romans 16:17-20 gives such a warning and encouragement. "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves not of our Lord Jesus Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore, I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil. And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

I will begin with the warning. The evangelical church at large is under serious attack. Yes, as it has been for almost 2000 years, it is under attack from the world. But the attack that I am concerned about and causes me to give a warning comes from within the evangelical church or at least from those who claim to be a part of the evangelical church. We are seeing churches, and even entire denominations in some cases, being torn apart by various factions that claim allegiance to the gospel of Jesus Christ. These factions include those who preach Critical Race

Theory (CRT), Social Justice, New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), Faith Movement (health and wealth gospel), unhinge the Old Testament from the New Testament and acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle. The largest evangelical denomination in the United States, in addition to some of these factions, is also being split over rampant plagiarism including the very president of their denomination. In every one of these cases the gospel is being compromised or changed in one way or another. The gospel is often, "just love Jesus and you're good." You don't have to repent of your sins. You don't have to accept the Bible in its entirety as God's word. Where is the evangelical church at large headed? I am afraid that we are heading down a path of destruction. A path of destruction which Paul describes as "causing dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned." These were the teachings that they had received from the apostle Paul himself. He goes on to say that those who are teaching these teachings that oppose the teaching of Paul are "not slaves of our Lord Jesus Christ but of their own appetites." This exactly describes so many that are teaching the various heresies I have mentioned above. They are doing so for their own benefit. For "by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting." The motivation for many of these false teachers is power, money, and fame, while they are leading astray millions of followers. In many cases, they even deceive followers into believing that they know Christ as savior when they are actually following a false teaching. Paul's warning is this: "now I urge you, brethren, keep your eyes on those," "and turn away from them." The warning is certainly appropriate in 2021. This is not who we are to be. We must not be part of these false gospels, these heresies, these teachings that are contrary to the teaching of Paul and all the scriptures.

Then, there is the encouragement. Paul has received the report that the Christians in Rome have been "obedient," and he wants them "to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is

evil." Paul is alluding to the fact that the Roman Christians have been faithful to his teaching and to the Scriptures and therefore are not following the teachings of those who are false teachers. They are remaining true to the "teaching which you learned."

There is a great temptation to "jump on the bandwagon," and teach the popular teaching of the day. After all, aren't these teachings attracting the crowds? Aren't these teachings exciting and cutting edge? Don't these teaching make our message more attractive to those outside of the church? What would Paul say as a word of encouragement? Continue on in the "teaching which you have learned." "Be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." I have spent the last 45 years of my life involved in the Advent Christian Church and I have seen the faithfulness of our people to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The message of life only in Christ is as true now as it was over 160 years ago. My encouragement to all who read this report is stay true to the teaching of the Scriptures. Don't water down the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not allow expedience of a message to replace obedience to the teachings of Scripture. Our numbers may not be large, but our message is infinite.

I close with Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-8. Paul's warning and encouragement to us is far better than anything I can say. "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a

drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Rev. George Karl
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