

Dear Friend,

As I write this letter, we are still in a phase of the "stay at home" instruction due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. In Oklahoma, the governor is slowly and carefully relaxing some of the restrictions to try and get the economy moving again, without putting people in too much danger of a resurgence of falling ill to the virus. In other words, they are slowly trying to get back to "normal."

I believe the Lord is not desiring that things return to normal. Not for the world and not for the church. It seems to me that everything that can be shaken is being shaken. I also believe there is much more severe shaking ahead of us. A man of God told me he heard the Lord say, *"The norm, the norm ... can be no more. My sheep having been following strangers – meaning anybody but Me. Most know me as Savior and not Lord."*

With all my heart, I believe God is after a new "normal," where it is no longer people following people trying to accomplish the will of God. God had a reason for "pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh." He intends for each of his sheep to hear His voice and follow His leadership. There will always be programs set up to feed the poor, clothe the naked, provide for the widows and orphans, etc.. God is not displeased with these things at all. But it is not okay with Him for us to substitute activity in those things if He has called us to do something else. A good example from the book of Acts is when there was a complaint that certain widows were not being properly cared for by the church. Pressure was put on the leadership to help with the feeding program. Notice their response:

Act 6:1-4 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. (2) Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. (3) Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. (4) But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Is it a good thing for the church to provide food for needful widows? Yes! Should that feeding program continue? Yes! Could it be improved? Yes! Could the twelve apostles have begun spending a portion of their time each day serving food themselves to the widows? Yes! But was that the plan of God for the twelve? No! Absolutely not! For them to serve the widows by waiting tables would have been a "good idea," but not a "God idea." God had a specific calling on their lives and for them to wait tables would have been substituting "brass" for "gold." They gave Godly counsel and qualified men were appointed to that task.

I think it is important to notice that some of those men only served in that position for a season. They proved themselves faithful and God promoted them in ministry. God used both Stephen and Philip in the gospel work with signs and wonders later on in their lives. It is the fulfillment of the words of Jesus, "He that is faithful in little is faithful in much." As you know, Stephen eventually became a martyr for Christ as he held faithful to the testimony of Christ to the very end. Glory be to God!

The Holy Ghost has instructed us to never substitute brass for gold. I am not against programs. Sue and I personally support several programs financially each month that extend beyond the reach of our local

church here in Tulsa. But I am against substituting "activity" for "time with Him." It is only as each of us spends time with Him that we find out our true calling in life.

"Come away with Me" says the Lord over and over. He has given each of us His Holy Spirit to lead us and to guide us into all truth, and into our specific calling in the body of Christ. The days of just signing up for programs as we follow limited men who have limited God are over. *"The norm, the norm, can be no more."*

Sue and I are trying to take full advantage of this more secluded time to spend time in the Word of God, in prayer, in worship, and yes ... in fasting. We don't want to go back to "normal." We want a new normal. What new normal? The following verse must become the new "normal" for believers:

Joh 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Your friend and co-laborer,

GARY