

Dear Supporters,

It goes without saying that 2020 was a hard year on all of us. I also think it is safe to say that in 2020 we saw unprecedented events many of us might have thought could happen but which one never really appreciates until you have to see it with your own eyes. Certainly this can be said for those of us who live in the United States. The political upheaval and unrest in this country is like never before. The uncertainty of the future is one of the only things most all of us can agree on. So what can we say about 2020? This is what the Bible told us would come, and unfortunately it's a time the church has really not been preparing its members to handle. It's one thing to talk about all the wonderful blessings of God when you're living in the comfort of a free country with a stable economy and government system. It's easy to hype all the things that will come in the future and talk about how those of us who serve The Lord will stand up and do great things. It has also been very easy for Christians to believe The Lord would return and save us from ever seeing the times we now live in or the idea He won't let us live long in them.

So the real question after the year we've all just come through is, are any of those thoughts correct? So many people find themselves without the support of a church to go to because it has been closed. Many are finding the platitudes Christians are so fond of just are not doing the trick of bringing them comfort now that times are really starting to turn. Many fear the teaching that Jesus' return is just around the corner may be untrue and that feeling will grow as time goes forward. All these things are signs, not just of the fact we are in hard times that would catch many of us off guard, but that so many have not been fed with the real meat of the Word of God! For far too long we have relied on religion as our crutch, and now that the crutch has been pulled out from under us, or taken a form we are not familiar with, it's hard to stand on one's own. This is the problem with religion over the truth. It can be comfortable, familiar, and supportive, but it's not the strength we each need to get through times such as these.

As we celebrated Christmas and moved on toward the new year people were talking about how much they wanted to leave 2020 behind. They talked about the hope of the new year and how much everyone wanted it to be better. In all this I found myself wondering how many really understood Jesus is our only real hope! I know we say it but to truly understand what that means is different. Hope in God is not about what we want or the comfort we desire. Our hope in God is that He will ultimately save us from the destruction man and his sin is, and has been, causing in this world for a very long time. As I thought more on Christmas and what the church claims to celebrate, I thought not so much about Jesus' birth but His ministry work. We study it and speak of His words and then we lead ourselves right down to the good part about how He died for our sins. We concentrate on the fact He came to be the salvation of this world, but we forget He came to do that right then. He came offering Himself no matter if that meant we put Him on a cross or accepted the leadership He could have provided. Jesus offered the world an opportunity so large I don't think any of us can really grasp it. We focus on the fact He died, but what we really should get out of that is how much it is in human nature to reject God's ways in favor of our own thoughts and desires!

What we are seeing in our world right now is nothing more than the culmination of many bad choices man has made for a very, very long time. Choices made without listening to God's voice which little by little have brought man to the brink of even being able to live without destroying himself. This is what we see when we rely on the group thought patterns instead of focusing on being the individuals God created us to be. There is strength in a government that does well but terrible things happen when it's bad. There is comfort in religion, but where will you be if that religion is taken away? These are the kinds of questions 2020 has brought us all to think about and what it means is the same thing we saw at the time Jesus walked this earth. What man will do he will do, but Jesus showed us each individual has a choice to

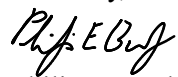
go a different way. We may not realize it but it doesn't matter what kind of time we live in, the question is always the same. It does not matter if we have a good church to go to or we are all alone, we must choose if we will follow man or follow God.

Over and over of late it seems the words of Joshua keep coming to mind. Words that great man of God spoke near the end of his life when he was preparing the chosen nation, not to go on some great quest, but to live their everyday lives as God had asked them to. Joshua told the nation they would have to choose if serving the gods the rest of the world served is what they wanted or if they would serve The One True God they had watched brush aside all those gods! Joshua made it clear he could do nothing to make them choose the right thing, but his mind was made up. Joshua told them whether any or the rest of the nation did or did not, he and his house would serve The Lord! (Josh. 24:14-15)

As we step our way into not just a new year but through each passing day, this is the question that over and over will stand in front of each of us. As families, and more importantly as individuals, look out across a world choosing to do its thing, I believe we will see an increasingly foolish path. This, because it is a path that does not serve, nor does it care for the ways of God. It's the same path man took and the reason Jesus is not here with us now but was hung on a cross to die instead. It matters not what comes out of people's mouths. What matters is what drives our every action. Jesus can come and in a moment change this world. For that we hope and pray! However, what He showed us in His first appearing is, we can do little to really change this world and we certainly cannot make it serve The Lord. However, that was never really what we were told to do. When Jesus came to this earth He showed us a way, a perfect way of offering what God's ways can do. Those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear will choose those ways because where they lead is not an experiment or about temporary comfort, it's about an eternity of being free from all the destruction men who do not choose God's path create.

Now, it may seem this letter is not really about this ministry's year, but it really is. Ministries faced hard choices in 2020 and I believe we will face even harder ones in 2021. I can't say what other ministries will do, but as for Living Springs, we will continue to do all we can to serve The Lord! As with so many years we have seen growth that's been hard to keep up with and in some ways we haven't stayed on top. However, we will continue to do our best because it's what God wants us to be, and what we have also seen is such an outpouring of gratefulness for what little we are able to do for those who reach out to us. I can't tell you how much that means to us! In 2020, more than ever before, this ministry saw with clarity how important the work God called us so many years ago to do, is. For that I want to say thank you to all of you! I also want to ask for your continual prayers. The challenges we face, even as I write this letter, threaten the very core of this ministry's work. This is not the first time we've been in that situation and I'm sure it won't be the last. However, each time God has brought us through and that is due to the earnest prayers of so many which go up for us each day and which we greatly appreciate. For us the hope 2021 holds is that it's just a few more days to keep serving The Lord, and of course we continue to keep our hearts on the fact we could see Jesus' return any time. This is a thought we all need to focus on. Not because we can say it's today, tomorrow, or even soon, but because it's the fact we never want to lose sight of through all this world throws at each of us. May God bless and keep each of you until that glorious day He calls us home!

Sincerely,



Philip E. Busby
Executive Director
Living Springs
2020