

United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough
Chairman

Roy Holladay
President

Letter from the President March 31, 2005

Dear Beloved Brethren,

The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are quickly approaching. This is a time of thoughtfulness and reflection as we consider the love and sacrifice of God the Father and Jesus Christ through the fulfillment of these days. As in everything we do or observe from the Bible, these festivals should refocus our minds and hearts on God. In taking the Passover, Jesus told us to eat of the bread and drink of the wine remembering what He did for us, honoring Him (Luke 22:19).

Why was Christ willing to die for us? Scripture reveals that the reasons are not complicated, but they are profound. First, we consider the love Jesus Christ had for the Father and His overriding desire to fulfill the will of the Father and accomplish this most important step in God's plan.

- “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes on Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:38-40).
- “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done” (Matthew 26:42).

Despite the great anguish and mental torment that Christ went through prior to His crucifixion, knowing the terrible suffering He was to endure, His supreme desire was to fulfill this role in God's plan of salvation for mankind—which, of course, shows us His deep love and concern for us as well.

- “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).
- “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love... Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends” (John 15:9, 13).

We read in Philippians 2 how great a sacrifice this was for Jesus and the Father. For eternity, there was the glorified, spiritual, perfectly harmonious existence of two Beings in the Godhead. Then, some 2,000 years ago, that changed—Jesus Christ became human. God the Father willingly gave up His Son because of the love and plan He has for His family. Jesus willingly gave up His glory because of His love for us. If we have ever had to watch our own children suffer pain, then we have had but a very small taste of what God the Father must have been feeling to watch His Son suffer such cruelty on earth.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

How do we remember and honor God the Father and Jesus Christ during this time of year, according to Scripture? Again, the directives from God's Word are simple, yet with depth of meaning. We are to evaluate our lives—the fulfillment of our calling, our walk with God, our obedience to His will and our love for Him and for other human beings—in light of the perfect example of Jesus Christ in

all of these areas (and more). It is the process of examination (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5). After all, the entire plan of God revolves around us becoming like God and Christ in every way—not remaining human. God wants to see Himself in us. He wants to see Jesus reflected in our mind, heart, soul and deeds.

The example of David—a man after God’s own heart—is instructive. In Psalm 26:2 he writes: “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my mind and my heart.” David knew that God is the expert. God knows our state, our attitude and our approach. He sees into our heart and mind. Today we have scans that can look into the brain and tell us if there is a tumor there or if something is wrong. We need to pray to God and ask Him to show us what our mind and heart are like. The examination process begins with the understanding that God must reveal to us our spiritual state (John 2:23-25 and Matthew 9:4).

David also wrote in Psalm 139:23-24 the following: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” And in Psalm 19:12-14 we read: “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.”

David was a man after God’s own heart because he constantly wanted God to examine and cleanse his thoughts and ways. He knew that it was only in following God through His Holy Spirit that his heart could be changed and made right. He knew that only through examination could he (through God’s help) realize what was right and what was wrong.

This leads us to an important aspect of David’s self-reflection in light of God’s perfection: David saw the good in himself (humbly), as well as the bad. His evaluation of his own character was not an exercise in self-condemnation only, but also a recognition of where God had led him in righteousness. “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me” (Psalm 119:97-98).

Like David, our examination needs to be honest. We need to praise and worship God for His guidance in His way and thank Him for revealing those things in us that still need correction. In doing so we will also be participating in fulfilling the will of the Father—becoming more like Him and Jesus Christ.

As you have read in recent letters from the Council of Elders, the Council is going through the process of selecting a new president. Please pray for God’s direction and will to be done in this matter as well. Above all, we must be well pleasing to God and accomplish His desires. Once a new president is selected, let us give that individual our support and prayers in the difficult job he will need to fulfill.

I certainly wish to thank everyone for their prayers and support during the time I have served in this capacity. It has been a blessing and privilege to serve God and our brethren in this way. Norma and I look forward to continuing to serve our Father in other duties, and helping our brethren in whatever way possible. We wish all of you a most enriching Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

In Christ’s service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Holladay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roy Holladay