# WHAT HAVE WE, THE CHURCH, LEARNED IN 2020?

## *"A WORD FROM THE LORD"*

I, Chester M Wright, was awakened early this morning (12-9-20) with the Lord putting this WORD into my Spirit. I testify unto you, Dear Reader, that I have received this message from the Lord for His Church, as one of His conduits and by His Grace alone, and offer this Word to those who will receive and hear it from Him and not as the words of a man. To Him Alone be all the Glory:

As 2020 rapidly comes to an end, the Lord has caused a deep concern within the spiritually sensitive, a stirring of His Spirit within His Body, and a burden for the Church within the Men and Women of God who are willing to receive it from Him. He is moving on all of those especially that He can trust to pray His burdens and His Will and NOT their own. This moving and convicting of His Spirit is primarily about what this year has revealed concerning the faith, attitudes, priorities, and spirituality of those of us in the Body of Christ. It's also about where and how we go from here in Him and in His Will/Plan.

This year's "unusual circumstances" have mostly disrupted all "normal daily life"—things of both the natural life and the spiritual life. They have clearly revealed the difference between those who have and those who do not have an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ HIMSELF—instead of just with their local church body. It also has revealed a very sad divergence: It is making glaringly apparent the growing disparities that exist between those whose faith and "salvation" is "dependent" upon "having Church services" because of the lack of that personal, spiritual relationship with God, and those whose faith is able to both survive AND thrive during these very difficult times—because they "know Him."

Some will reject this WORD because they will "judge it" to be "judgmental"! Sadly, both in the world AND in the Church today, that characterization has become the "go to" self-justification for this current culture's rejection of and refusal to hear truth and/or anything that disagrees with their opinions, preferences, choices, i.e., specifically, THEIR WILLS. But, as Jesus plainly declared, we know ourselves and one another for what we REALLY are or are not BY THE FRUIT of our lives and choices (Matthew 7:15-23; 12:33; Luke 6:40-49). Jesus has called us ALL to be "fruit inspectors," FIRST of ourselves and our own "fruit," and only then, of the fruit of others, i.e., "know them that labor among you" (I Thessalonians 5:12). Our Father desires that each of us would, by His Grace alone, essentially start EVERYDAY by first inspecting OUR OWN FRUIT through His Word and by His Spirit. WHY? BECAUSE HE WANTS US TO BE SAVED!!! (See II Corinthians 13:5; Psalms 139:23-24; Ezekiel 18:18-32; Haggai 1:3-11; I Corinthians 11:27-32; I John 3:18-22)

THIS MESSAGE IS NOT BEING COMMUNICATED TO "THE WORLD." The Lord is speaking this to those who "name the name of Christ" (II Timothy 2:15-19). According to the Apostle Peter, the time has come that "judgement" MUST begin at the House of God (I Peter 4:12-19). The Lord God CANNOT—CANNOT—righteously judge the world for its sins and iniquities, before He FIRST "judges" His own house for its sin and iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 13:24-30). Through the Apostle Peter, the Lord has very specifically declared this!

The Word of God is True and THE Truth—ALL of the Word of God! Both His Truth and Grace teach us (Titus 2:11-14) to DAILY seek for the WHOLE Will of God to be done—first in, by, and through US; then in, by, and through the whole Church; and finally, for the Will of God to prevail in the whole earth as it has already been purposed in Heaven (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4; Romans 8:26-27; 12:1-2)! NOTHING in our daily lives is more important—no matter what is going on—than finding and following the Father's Will. ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!

One thing that this year has revealed is that God's priorities and the priorities of many (maybe even the majority) of those who say that they are "in the church" are vastly and disappointedly different. God's priority is doing or allowing to be done anything and everything that He has purposed in His Own Will that will facilitate His Word being brought to the fullness of its completion (Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:1-13; Romans 9-11). This eternal/unalterable principle is so fundamental to God's purpose and to how He works that it is impossible to genuinely live and work in harmony with Him without fully receiving and believing it.

The Man CHIRST Jesus definitively declared His purpose in the earth: "My meat is to do THE WILL of Him that sent me AND TO FINISH HIS WORK" (John 4:34). If we are "true" followers of Christ, how can our faith, submission, and priorities be any different than His? THEY CANNOT BE!

In the Four Gospels especially, how many times do the Scriptures state that specific things happened so that the Word of God would be fulfilled? It was MANY TIMES! A careful examination of those instances would clearly reveal that the circumstances that facilitated the fulfilling of God's Word were rarely what we humans would label "good" or "positive." Most of the time they would be called by us "bad" or "painful"—at best.

The most obvious example of the above would be all of the particulars of the events leading up to and the accomplishing of Christ's crucifixion. This includes all of the events of His life since before and after His Birth, then of His Ministry, finally of His capture and trial, which culminated in the crucifixion of Christ itself followed by His resurrection/ascension. ALL—ALL—OF THE PARTICULARS OF CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION HAPPENED IN THE PERFECT WILL OF GOD and ACCORDING TO LORD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND FOREKNOWLEDGE! (Acts 2:22-24; 3:12-18; 4:23-33; 13:26-42; 15:13-18) Has the Lord changed? NO! Is He less "in charge" now than He was then? NO!!! Is He less focused on fulfilling all of His Word now? 10,000 times NO!!!

In order to have saving faith and trust in the Father, we must be able to fully acknowledge that all things that happened to Christ happened in the Mind of God from "BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD" (I Peter 1:18-21; Revelation 13:8). GOD HAS A PLAN! HE HAS ALWAYS HAD A PLAN! AND HE WILL ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN! Nothing is ever ultimately "out of His control." NOTHING! ALL of the things that happened to Christ happened so that the Word/Will of God could be fulfilled. None of these events or actions of men were random or coincidental—FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE. Neither were they "outside" of the Will of God!

Our Father sits on the Throne of the whole Universe and rules over EVERYTHING (Ephesians 1:15-23). NOTHING happens in our world except that which He either does Himself or permits to be done! NOTHING! Nothing that has happened in 2020 is random OR "out of His control" OR outside of His will! NOTHING—NO THING—EVEN THE EXTREMELY PAINFUL THINGS—EVEN THE MOST DISTRESSING THINGS! Why? Because the Lord is using all of this to prepare us, His Body, so that He can fulfill His Word THROUGH US! If that is not something we desire, then we have just condemned ourselves. We have done that to ourselves by our choice of preferring our will over God's! (John 3:16-21) Why? Biblically, that called, "UNBELIEF"!

So, Brothers and Sisters, in the light of the above, we must ask ourselves this question: If we had been a follower of Jesus at the time leading up to His Crucifixion, would we have "prayed (or spoken) against" the very circumstances that Our God allowed to produce the crucifixion that provided salvation for all of lost mankind? The importance of our answer to this question cannot be overstated. We are not answering this question for the gratification or to the satisfaction of others. Please, we must answer this question to the Lord Jesus Christ HIMSELF—and to ourselves! Peter spoke against what Jesus said about what was going to happen to Him and Jesus rebuked him strongly for it (Matthew 16:21-26). The Lord actually declared that Peter's words were of the devil. So again, how about you and me? If we were there, would we have prayed or spoken against God's workings (the things He either did or allowed) to bring about the fulfillment of His Word that resulted in Christ being crucified—because we didn't "like" them or want to go through them? SELAH!

How about now? How about today's circumstances that are being allowed BY GOD for the same purposes—the fulfilling of the Word and the Will of God? Are we praying and/or speaking against them? Or are we seeking for the Lord to do ALL of His Will and ONLY His Will—no matter what that means in and to our personal lives? It cannot be reasonably believed that it was wrong for those of Christ's day to be against their "GOD-ORDAINED" circumstances, but "ok" for us to be against ours! SAME GOD! SAME PLAN! SAME PURPOSE! SAME WILL! SAME EXPECTATIONS FROM GOD FOR HIS PEOPLE—FOLLOW HIS WILL! SAME JUDGEMENT ON THOSE WHO REJECT HIS WILL, PLAN, AND PURPOSE!

Again, TODAY, we, as the Body of Christ, are living in very similar circumstances to the general times of Christ's Crucifixion. God is allowing this world's current events and conditions (both the natural and the spiritual events) to cause His Church, His Body, to be crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20-21; Colossians 3:1-5; Romans 6). His purpose for this is that He might reveal through us to the whole world a salvation that is so great that it will impact the whole earth before Jesus appears to catch away His Bride (James 5:7-8; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Will you and I submit to God's working on and in us so that He can work through us? Are we asking Him to do our will (what we want or "think" should be done), OR are we seeking for God's Grace to enable and empower us to do HIS WILL so that we may please Him and only Him (Philippians 2:13; 4:11-13)?

Just who is serving whom in our lives? Do we serve and please God, or do we expect Him to “serve” (do our “bidding”) and “please” us? This question can ONLY be answered one way or the other! With God on this point, there is NO middle ground—AT ALL. According the entirety of the Word of God, we are either ALL HIS, or we are NOT His at all. Yet, He loves us so much that He is working on us, with great determination, using everything at His disposal, to bring about our full commitment/submission to Him and His Will! He is doing that BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE WHEREWITH HE LOVED US! (Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 2:1-10) If we reject His efforts and are lost, it will NOT be His fault!

As stated above, the year 2020 with its trials and tests have revealed that God’s purposes and the focus of most of His people are not in harmony. THAT MUST CHANGE! We must believe that EVERYTHING that God does and/or allows is for the express purpose of fulfilling ALL of His Word and Will. In fact, IN THE WILL OF GOD, He either does or permits to be done (by humans and/or the adversary - I Corinthians 2:6-8 ) ANYTHING/EVERYTHING that will bring about the fulfillment of His Word. His Word is FOREVER settled! It cannot fail to come to pass! NONE OF IT!

At this time, too many of us do not view the circumstances of our lives today in the light of the Scripture; we view the Scripture in the “light” of “OUR LIFE” today. However, the Bible is so replete with examples of God’s principle (of doing whatever it takes to fulfill His Word), that the question must be asked: How can anyone who has actually read/studied the Bible with faith not see this Biblical principle? When faith is expressed and/or prayers prayed in contradiction to or even in opposition to this principle of God, then those who do so are “out of the Will of God”! That is a perilous place to be!

BELOVED, we must BEWARE of persistently praying prayers that are not according to the Will of God—but that are focused on persuading God to give us that which we will/want! The Scriptures have too many examples that clearly provide the accounts of the tragic results that occur when God’s people were more focused on persuading God to do “their will” (give them what they wanted) rather than His Will, until He finally gave in to them and “answered” their “prayers” according to their desires. THAT’S TERRIFYING!

Too many situations still occur in our day when people “press” the Lord, by doing what they call “prayer,” to persuade Him to do their will until He relents, CONTRARY TO HIS WILL. Rather than seeking to find and know His Will, submit to it, and do it; they use God’s Word as leverage “against Him.” They demand that He give them what they want, while “quoting Scriptures” that they have “perverted” to “prove” to Him that He is “obligated” to “answer” their prayers their way, according to “their desires.” However, even the Man Christ Jesus prayed “nevertheless, not as I will but as you will, Father.” Again, the end results of this so-called “faith” are tragic: naturally, spiritually, and eternally. Please Church, beware of praying these kinds of prayers!!! THEY DO NOT PLEASE GOD! And IF HE “ANSWERS” THEM, it can be illustrated Biblically that we will come to sorely regret the day that we “forced” Him to give us our will/way—against His Will!

CHURCH, WE MUST NEVER FORGET THIS: There is only ONE “WILL” IN ETERNITY—THE WILL OF THE FATHER! NO OTHER WILL is permitted entrance to and participation with His eternal Kingdom. THIS LIFE, our lives here and now, is our opportunity to allow God to work in and on us to bring us into complete submission and harmony—daily—with His Will! (Luke 9:23-25; Acts 2:46; 6:1-7; I Corinthians 15:31).

No “believer” who lives by their own will and not the Father’s, can be saved. It is IMPOSSIBLE! Again, there is only going to be ONE WILL in heaven — THE FATHER’S! AND ONLY THOSE who come to a place of submission and obedience to the will of the Father — here and now — will be allowed into heaven then. In this context, Jesus definitively declared in Matthew 7:21-23 this criteria for salvation:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the WILL of MY FATHER which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

FOR BELIEVERS TODAY, THESE VERSES ARE SOME OF THE MOST SOBERING AND CONVICTING TO BE FOUND ANYWHERE IN THE BIBLE! Why? Because they are IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE against those who claim “Christianity” but live by their own wills, opinions, ways, and priorities. Do we “see” God’s point here OR are we blind? Do we reject His Words or submit their authority? Our eternity is dependent upon our answers (Matthew 13:13-23; John 3:16-21; 9:39-41; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

In agreement with Jesus, Paul declared in II Timothy 2:19 the following:

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Notice carefully that Paul’s teaching corresponded harmoniously with Jesus’, especially on the two most important points here: One, we must do the will of the Father and not do our own will. Why? Because, if we choose to do our will and not the Father’s, Jesus called that “working iniquity” (even as Paul did). Two, God “knows” those who do His will, AND He does NOT “know” those who do their own will and NOT His—AND he rejects them. Consequently, we have no choice but to acknowledge that JESUS Himself made “doing the Will of the Father” a “salvation issue.” AND IT IS! It is total deception to believe that we can live by our own will, “run our own lives,” while we pay God “lip service” through fulfilling our “religious obligations”—and YET THINK THAT WE WILL BE SAVED! That’s total and complete deception—which eventually leads to delusion, from which there is NO RETURN THROUGH REPENTANCE! (See II Thessalonians 2:7-12; Romans 1:16-32)

More “members” of “the Church” have probably “prayed more” this year than during any year since World War II. HOWEVER, the most important question that must be asked, first of ourselves and then of the entire Body of Christ, is as follows: Have we prayed to both know and do His Will OR have we simply prayed for God to give us what we want, the way we want it? We label petitioning “for our will to be done by God” as “prayer,” BUT GOD DOES NOT! HE CALLS IT WORKING “INIQUITY”! “Praying” for our will instead God’s is an act of iniquity!

FURTHERMORE, if the Church has “prayed” more than ever in recent memory, THEN WHERE ARE ALL OF THE ANSWERS to these prayers? God ALWAYS answers prayers prayed in and according to HIS WILL. ALWAYS! (1 John 5:14-15; John 9:31; James 5:15-18).

The Word of God does not lie. God does not fail. Biblical prayer always works. ALWAYS! While God does not work according to our time priorities and preferences but His alone; regardless, Biblical prayer ALWAYS works — even when it “appears” that it is not working!

Those who have focused their prayers upon acquiring from God a “return to their ‘normal’,” including the “normalcy” of their “religious practices,” have been sorely disappointed repeatedly this year. Far too many prayers have been focused on COVID going away so we can “get our lives back,” rather than on understanding what HE is DOING and SAYING during this time. In almost every case, the Lord has NOT answered those prayers. WHY? Because we have prayed for our will TO BE DONE BY HIM—and NOT HIS WILL to be done! He cannot and will not be untrue to Himself and His Word! That’s IMPOSSIBLE!

Again, we have “prayed” telling Him what we want Him to do RATHER than praying and seeking to find and know what He is saying and doing. While we are praying for what we want, we are not seeking for Him to tell us WHAT IT IS THAT HE WANTS US TO PRAY and how He wants us to pray for it! (Romans 8:26-27) We are NOT GOD, He is! He tells us what to do, we do not tell Him what to do—if we want to be saved, that is! Biblical prayer ALWAYS prays according and in submission to the Will of God! ALWAYS! Otherwise, HE DOES NOT ANSWER—if we are blessed that is. His “answers” to those prayers prayed by and for our wills to be done instead of His are a CURSE—NOT a blessing! EVERY TIME!

Because the Lord is DETERMINED to get our attention, COVID in many places, as I write this, is at its highest peak of the year. And, that is before our “Christmas” gatherings further the spread of it. In this contest of wills to see who will prevail, it is “NO CONTEST”—AT ALL! THE FATHER WILL WIN—EVERY TIME, ALL THE TIME! Do we really want to stay in “the game” that we are guaranteed to lose? GUARANTEED! One of the greatest deceptions of self-will is believing that God will give us what we want regardless of His Will—THAT IS A LIE!

Regarding our present circumstances individually and collectively, the Bible contains situation after situation where God allowed HIS OWN PEOPLE to suffer IN HIS WILL. His Word plainly declares that He does that to “prove/test us” and to “know us” for the purpose of preparing and positioning us IN HIM and for Him to be able to fulfill His Will and Word THROUGH us as His conduits. (See Deuteronomy 8:1-20; Jeremiah 17:5-11; Genesis 22:1-15; Exodus 15:23-26; 16:1-5; Proverbs 17:3; Malachi 3:1-3; James 1:2-8; I Peter 1:3-9; 3:8-18; 4:1-19; Revelation 2:20-23—just to include a very few of the many references available that are related to this point)

In light of the above, one of the most fundamental, spiritual questions that must be asked of us individually and corporately is this: “DO WE WANT HIS WILL AS THE RULE AND AUTHORITY OF OUR DAILY LIVES, or do we want God to give priority to our will over His Will in this present time? Are we “HIS” or our own? Do we belong to Him or does He “belong to us”? Who BOUGHT whom with death and blood? Whoever did that is THE ONLY LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR! (Just a hint: THAT is NOT any of us)

The Word of God declares in Jeremiah 12:5 these sobering declarations:

“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”

IN THE WILL OF GOD, 2020 HAS BEEN THE “FOOTMEN”! From the natural perspective, 2021 WILL BEGIN THE PERIOD OF THE “HORSEMEN” and “THE SWELLING OF JORDAN”! However, spiritually, FOR THOSE WHO WALK WITH HIM AND DO HIS WILL DAILY, 2021 will be the beginning of the greatest spiritual awakening with its resultant harvest, for those who are seeking to know and to do the will of God, that has occurred in the last 75 years!

By definition, REVIVAL (“awakening/quickening”) can only come to those who are or have once been “alive” spiritually. HARVEST is the “reaping” of those souls who have never been saved. For a Harvest to be a Biblical, REVIVAL must ALWAYS precede the HARVEST! ALWAYS! Revival is the quickening and the preparing of the LABORERS who will be the REAPERS in Lord’s ENDTIME Harvest. These two spiritual events are not the same thing, neither are they interchangeable terms; however, they are “mutually dependent” one upon the other.

The most important element of true revival will be the Church collectively and individually completely submitting to the Will of the Father in Heaven as the authority of their lives—EVERY DAY! Again, this is called, “being Crucified with Christ.” How could the Lord do His work through us if He had to constantly “COMPETE” with our wills for the use of our time, resources, and energy? HE REFUSES TO COMPETE WITH OUR WILLS! HE ALSO REFUSES TO COMPETE AGAINST/WITH OUR RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS/COMMITMENTS! Even those must be completely submitted to Him and His Will. As a result of our self-imposed, SELF-INITIATED “competition” with God for control of our lives, the Lord Himself becomes the “adversary”/opposer of our wills and the “works” we are trying to produce by our wills (I Peter 5:5-7). We can resist and rebuke the devil. BUT, when it is God that is resisting our wills working to accomplish whatever, we cannot “rebuke” Him! EVEN IF WE IGNORANTLY TRY—IT DOESN’T WORK! EVER!

Finally, does not the conclusion of the Bible contain the declaration that the day would come that, in unity, both the Spirit AND the Bride would pray “COME” Lord Jesus? (Revelation 22:16-21) Is that even remotely the attitude, desire, or prayer of the great, great majority of those who make up today’s Church? NO! In communicating this message from the Lord, there is NO intent, desire, or motive to be “negative,” to “condemn” (judge), or accuse anyone! Yet, the Holy Ghost is challenging each and every one of US! He is bringing the Body of Christ to the place that WE WILL PRAY THE PRAYER FOR HIM TO COME when it is HIS TIME for us to pray it! It is His Word and His Will for it happen! It is NOT YET the time for that prayer because His promised HARVEST of “every nation” has not yet occurred. (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18; Galatians 3:6-9,14; James 5:7-8) But, for those who choose to walk in His will and by His Spirit, we will pray THAT PRAYER one day—we surely will!

The desire, attitude, and “prayers” of the “mockers” concerning the last days were prophesied to be for “all things to continue as they were” since “the beginning” (II Peter 3:3-18). That is “their faith.” THAT is also “their desire.” However, the Lord God CANNOT fulfill His Word and His promises in or to a world that desires to be comfortable and for all things to be convenient for them. Furthermore, He CANNOT fulfill His Word and His promises THROUGH a Church that prays and seeks for things to “stay the same”—NO CHANGES! There is no promise of God that when it is fulfilled leaves either us or our circumstances UNCHANGED! So, do we want NO promises to be fulfilled so things can stay the same, OR do we want to receive ALL of the promises while accepting that there will be changes in our lives in accordance with His Will? BELOVED, we must want His promises fulfilled REGARDLESS of what He has to do to bring about their fulfillment. The “Lost” of this world are counting on it!

The Lord references eagles multiple times in His Word in various contexts. JUST LIKE THE EAGLE, THE LORD IS CURRENTLY “STIRRING UP HIS NEST” IN ORDER TO COMPEL US TO LEAVE THE NEST AND “FLY”!!! (Deuteronomy 32:7-14) Rather than us being impeded by the familiarity of this world and its

temporal nature, let's choose to FLY! Tragically, some will choose to stay as a "captive" to the comfort of their "nest"? THE ACTUAL CHOICE? THE ULTIMATE RESULT OF THAT CHOICE? FLY OR DIE—spiritually!

The Prophet Hosea declared in Hosea, chapter 10, verse 12:

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: FOR IT IS TIME TO SEEK THE LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." In Jesus' Name, Lord, let it be so!

WHAT MUST BE BROKEN UP? OUR WILLS! ONCE AND FOR ALL TIME! The priorities of His Will must become our priorities so that we are in true harmony with Him, His Spirit, and His Word. IT IS TIME!

The words of an old song that was written by Dottie Rambo many, many years ago are still convicting today AND they sum up this message from the Lord perfectly:

"My burdens keep my humble and teach me to pray.
If I murmur or grumble, forgive the words I say.
Give me strength to carry my load day by day,
But don't take my burdens or my cross away

With a cross on my shoulders my feet cannot stray.
For the cross leads me onward to my home far away.
And I will not question this price I must pay.
Just don't take my burdens or my cross away.

Chorus:
For I would grow careless and idle I fear.
My eyes would be dry and I would never shed a tear.
Lest I forget that I need you each day,
Don't take my burdens or my cross away."

AMEN! AMEN! AMEN! IN JESUS NAME, CHURCH! IT IS SO, LET IT BE SO!

Bishop Chester Wright (Apostolic Iron)
MD/DC District Superintendent
Antioch, The Apostolic Church
Arnold, Maryland