

December 9, 1997

Dear Ministers, Elders, Hosts and Brethren:

I have just learned that a letter has been sent out by three men in the home office, in a further attempt to discredit me, and force me into retirement. Please refer to the opening paragraphs of my previous letter, in which I sent to you the letter I had written to the council and the Board. Please read, carefully, ALL of that letter again!

Over twenty-eight long months ago, I began pouring out my heart to God in soul-shaking repentance. My wife knows better than any other human being how traumatic; how utterly painful and stressful all these months have been.

I have never let a day go by without going to God's throne of grace and mercy, pouring out my heart to Him in deep repentance!

But for some, who have now set themselves up to JUDGE me, this has not been enough! As I said in my lengthy letter, God has been powerfully BLESSING the fruits of my life! Attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles was UP by about fourteen percent! Income was UP by about fifteen percent! MANY NEW BAPTISMS were occurring! But because of the desire of some to REPLACE ME ON THE TELEVISION programs; to GET ME OUT OF THE PULPIT, and to FORCE ME TO QUIT, I have now had to endure a renewed onslaught of filthy garbage being thrown at me -- and, unconscionably -- dumped ON THE CHURCH, in order to defame, malign, and DESTROY!

WHY? WHY is this happening? To me personally, it is infamous *treachery*! How would YOU feel if you had poured out your heart to someone in private, discussing SINS you were fighting to overcome, only to find out later those deeply PRIVATE conversations had become COMMON GOSSIP? There is LEGAL terminology for this! It is called "Priest-Penitent Confidentiality." In plain terms, if a Catholic priest were to dash out of a confessional booth and shout out what he had heard to his congregation, he could be liable for a major lawsuit!

These men, many of whom God used me to CALL INTO HIS CHURCH, have now set themselves up to "judge" whether I am "qualified" to remain in Christ's ministry. When the apostle Paul told Timothy, the young evangelist, about "qualifications" for overseers of the church, it was not because he expected Timothy and others would then turn around and decide whether Paul was "qualified"! My "qualifications" are the FRUIT God has borne through me during these 28 months. Jesus Christ said a tree is known by its FRUIT. Either the tree produces GOOD fruit (and some of YOUR lives are a part of this GOOD fruit) or it produces BAD fruit!

Who decided whether Ezekiel was "qualified"? Who decided whether Daniel, or Isaiah, or Moses, or Elijah, or Paul, was "qualified"? Paul said, "O wretched man that I am!" Did the ministers under him then disseminate to the congregations what Paul had done? Did they set themselves up to JUDGE Paul?

The concept of "ministerial qualifications" is a sword that has two very sharp edges! Read all of I Timothy 3 and see for yourself. If such had been applied to many in the ministry, they would have been defrocked long ago!

God used me to raise up this church back in 1978. I was the one who approved "credentials" to those who came into the church. It is simply INCREDIBLE to me that some of these men -- some who came along MANY YEARS after I had labored so long and hard to build this work have now sanctimoniously set themselves up to "judge" whether I am "qualified" or not! "Qualified" to DO WHAT? Do they think they can STOP ME FROM DOING GOD'S WORK?

No. Brethren, what is occurring here is nothing short of a gigantic struggle for PEOPLE'S SUPPORT! The subtle hints are "stay with US! Don't FOLLOW TED!" You know what I say here is true! This is nothing short of a power play! As always, it will be couched in "spiritual" language -- as if, somehow, the holy "skirts" of some self-righteous, posturing Pharisees would be "contaminated" if they did not "punish" me! How ridiculous! Which one of YOU would hold THEM TO ACCOUNT if they did not "punish" me? Do not we all know that the wages of sin is DEATH if it is not repented of -- and not "punishment" handed out by judgmental men?

Do you believe God has now anointed a DIFFERENT "watchman"? Has God TAKEN AWAY HIS GIFT of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom; my grasp of history, current conditions and Bible prophecy from me?

When God placed Moses in charge of His WORK of leading His people out of slavery, men rose up against him, saying, "We are just as good as YOU are! (Read Exodus 16)." They told Moses, "WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, setting up yourself to be over us?" But Moses threw himself on the ground (Exodus 16:4), and, as a result of their rebellion, "Moses was VERY WROTH" (Exodus 16:15). Read what happened to Korah and his ilk who joined in the attempt to remove the one whom GOD had anointed.

When David sinned greatly (and his GREATEST sin was "numbering Israel?" he was guilty of "counting heads," worried about SUPPORT -- worried about the size of his army!), God dealt very harshly with him! But God forgave David when he went to God in heartbroken repentance. And God DID NOT REMOVE HIM AS KING!

I added at the bottom of my short letter to you a couple of weeks ago, the very important scripture of Psalms 69:26. David prayed, "For they persecute him whom THOU hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom THOU hast wounded." GOD ALMIGHTY has been dealing with me DIRECTLY during these past 28 months! I KNOW I HAVE HIS FORGIVENESS! Today, as I write, I look back at *three* Feasts of Tabernacles, having preached twenty-four sermons at those feasts; I look back at having written more booklets than ever before in any comparable period of time; at twenty-eight months of television broadcasting which has produced GOOD FRUIT for God's work! God has BLESSED His work during this time! Why cannot people OBEY JESUS CHRIST and look to the FRUITS of a man's life, instead of sins long buried under the blood of Christ; sins which He has removed "as far as the east is removed from the west"?

HOW can those who pretend to be "Christ's ministers" forget the very FOUNDATION of all Christianity itself -- FORGIVENESS? But, they answer, "Well, we have no problem 'forgiving' him [but I DID NOT SIN AGAINST THEM!], but we believe he must be PUNISHED!" This has been said by more than one! Some of these men, including some on the "Ministerial Council" (and I was the one who suggested they be placed there!), have arrogated to themselves the very PREROGATIVE OF GOD HIMSELF! THEY have set themselves up as my judge! THEY say to God, "God, we don't think you have PUNISHED him enough!"

Well, brethren, the blood of Jesus Christ and HIS GRACE are SUFFICIENT for me! The KINGDOM OF GOD is soon coming to this earth! Then HE will judge all of this! Every bit of this -- every secret conversation, every slander, every bit of gossip and rumor, every hidden agenda, every bit of unrepented sin will be called into account! God WILL perform His work on this earth, and it WILL NOT be performed by a "committee!"

Shirley has had to endure a nightmarish time through all this. We have clung to each other in wracking tears many, many a time. As any woman can understand, my wife has had to undergo all the normal, human feelings of outrage, shock, disgust, anger and disbelief when I had to go to her and confess my sins.

Shirley now wants to include a note to you all with this letter. She has never written to God's people in any manner before, yet, in the midst of this crisis, perhaps it is appropriate.

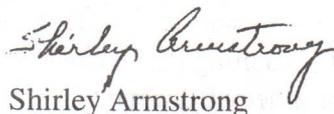
"Ted and I are utterly devastated by all this. First, let me thank so many of you for all your wonderful, loving, supportive letters, and all your calls. Both Ted and I have been on the telephone, taking or answering calls, even from countries overseas, for many hours each day.

Long ago, Ted confided in me, and these latest accusations are not new. As he said in his letter to you, these are things long buried under Christ's blood -- things which he confessed to me -- and yet others are now trying to deny his repentance. Through gossip and slander, some are saying things that I did not think a minister could ever say or do. This concerns me greatly, because God says that you are only forgiven if you forgive.

Both Ted and I feel so completely betrayed. I have seen his deep repentance for all these many months, and I know that it is real. Both of us have lost much sleep, and we both lie awake many hours each night. Betrayal is a terrible thing. Yet, in our prayers, both individually and together, we know God will somehow bring us through all this -- that there will soon be a light at the end of this dark tunnel.

I have reminded him of his calling many times; of all the calls and letters from so many who say, "Don't quit! Hang in there! We're here for you!" So many people have told me what a blessing his work has been in their lives. It is only our faith in God and His work, and the support from so many brethren that keeps us going on a day-to-day basis. Ted and I were called into God's work back in 1953, and with His help, we will still be doing God's work until it is finished. Please pray for us."

With much love and appreciation,


Shirley Armstrong

I now want to include a couple of excerpts from the "retirement contract" which Charles Groce, the Chairman pro-tem of the Board, sent to my wife. By the time you receive this, the "first draft" of the proposed contract is to be discussed by the Board on a telephonic conference call.

It says, "WHEREAS the Church and the Armstrong's have determined that it would be in the best interests of all parties concerned that Mr. Armstrong retire and resign as a minister of the Church..." This is *entirely misleading*, as a careful reading of my previous letter proves. We most certainly DID NOT "determine" that it was either in OUR best interests, OR in the BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHURCH if I resign as a minister or retire. There were many scenarios presented, like a series of "quid pro quos" included in the letter I read to the council. I clearly explained that I would be willing to resign and retire from the corporate entity that is the CGI, while moving into a new corporate entity, an "Evangelistic Association," in CLOSE COOPERATION and working ALONGSIDE the CGI, sharing facilities, etc.

Then, in paragraph number SIX, the proposed "retirement contract" reads, "In the event Mr. Armstrong engages in religious preaching, teaching, writing, broadcasting or other publication, the salary and benefit provisions of the Agreement shall terminate, within the sole discretion of the Board of Directors."

Can anything be more revealing as to the true intentions of these men? They do not merely want me to "retire" from the CGI as a corporate entity -- they want to insure I CAN NEVER PREACH, TEACH, WRITE, OR BROADCAST AGAIN!

This is like asking me to sign a document which would VIOLATE THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, as well as the Texas labor laws! It would violate my right to express my religious beliefs in any public forum! It would violate my right of FREE SPEECH! It would violate my right to FREEDOM OF RELIGION! They would try to place me in a straight-jacket, in handcuffs, and wearing a muzzle! Would a doctor sign such a thing? Would a heavy-equipment operator, or a CPA, or a computer programmer? They are trying to tell me I CANNOT BE WHO I AM, or do what God has especially gifted me to do! This is an incredible proposal. Of course, it is supposedly the "initial draft" of their proposal they intend discussing with the Board, but it appears far more like an ultimatum than a "proposal."

I told these men, many times, that "I DO NOT WANT TO HAVE TO START OVER AGAIN" (read numbered paragraph 11 of my previous letter!), and said "I DO NOT WANT another onslaught of horrifying publicity!" Yet, they have already triggered exactly this! Already, it was on local television that they are trying to insist that I resign. Already, an "Associated Press" reporter has called several, including at least two Board members -- so no doubt another article will explode on the pages of hundreds of newspapers all over the country.

Thus, the very thing I tried to avoid they have now caused to come to pass!

May God forgive them. May God preserve and protect HIS WORK on this earth! I didn't know I would be forced to write this letter -- I certainly did not want to do so, but I could not let non-response on my part be interpreted as agreement with the letter they sent out.

Please PRAY for us. PRAY for God's work. FAST and pray! We do not want to see beloved brethren taking sides, posturing, beginning to alienate themselves one from another! Thank you, and God bless all of those who are truly in submission to His will!

In great sadness, but in FAITH, and in Jesus' name,


Garner Ted Armstrong

P.S. THANK YOU to so many who have overwhelmed us with cards and letters sent to our address. We have been so overwhelmed with letters of support that I have had to rent a private Post Office box. Anyone who may wish to write to me personally, please write to my private Post Office box. The new address is "Garner Ted Armstrong, P.O. Box 747, Flint, TX 75762."