

**ASSOCIATION OF 7<sup>TH</sup> DAY PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES  
(ESRESO)**

**2018 END-OF-YEAR CAMP MEETING**

**DATE: SATURDAY, 29<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2018**

**SERMON**

**BY**

**ELDER ENOCH OFORI JNR (SENIOR PASTOR)**

**TITLE: LIVING HIS UNCHANGING TRUTH IN A CHANGING WORLD**

**His Faithfulness, the Bedrock of our Hope**

Family of Christ, let's give a big shout-out to the Almighty Father on high. Let's praise His holy Name on this holy occasion.

It's a beautiful day and a beautiful hour and a beautiful moment in the presence of the Holy One of Israel.

From all the corners of the earth, in all languages of the earth, songs of praise and shouts of joy are ringing out to the Creator and sustainer of life, God Almighty. Currently, the heavens are a busy highway of praise and thanksgiving.

Check the season: It's year end, according to the secular calendar in popular use, and it's natural for people to be thankful to their Creator for seeing us through another year in peace.

We serve a faithful God of salvation. "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

Can you imagine what it would mean if Jesus were not as the text says of Him? How could such a fickle personality be relied on as our Saviour? How could we be sure of His assurances and promises in the unchanging text of His Word (considering that He Himself kept changing)?

Thank God, we are able to say with the Apostle Paul:

*"But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.*

*“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea.*

*“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor. 1: 18-20).*

Yeshua as “the same yesterday, today and forever” is the bedrock of our hope. His word is His bond.

But how often have we not tried to make Him condone our life of disobedience? How often have we not tried to make Him put up with our waywardness when His Word clearly says He detests it?

### **“Friendship of the World is Enmity with God”**

Friends, we have not been called to live happy sinful lives where religion is all about mouthing praises and putting on nice clothing to church. We have been called to be holy (set apart) as God is holy (1 Pet. 1: 15-16). We have not been called to walk the broad way of sinful pleasures but the narrow way of self-denial leading to life (Matt. 7: 13-14). We have been called to bear the cross of discipleship (as learners of Christ) where “Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith” (Matt. 16:24; Luke 14:27; Heb. 12:1-2). God has called us to conform to His way, His nature and His life of righteousness (Rom. 8:29; 12:2; Eph. 4:22-24; Heb. 12:9-10).

But how the people of God have often failed to measure up!

Yah complained on witnessing the idolatry of Israel which was and is spiritual adultery:

*“Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.*

*“Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.*

*“For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2: 11-13).*

It’s a sad situation that it’s often the people of the true God who are enticed and tempted to abandon the worship of God for another. This was a flaw of the Israelites which rankled with God for years – almost right from the time He redeemed them from Egypt through the post-Joshua era and most of the monarchical era till they were exiled from the land. It was a nation whose “heart was not right with Him” (Ps. 78:37) – except that the northern kingdom of Israel outdid the southern kingdom of Judah in separating herself from Yahweh with blatant idolatrous worship.

In all the divine warnings given to the Israelites, one given in the early days of the post-Joshua era (the time of the Judges) sums up for our understanding the inevitable dire consequences of associating with worldly people and cultures: God is hurt by our betrayal, even as we expose ourselves to the continual temptation of sin:

*1 “And an angel of the LORD [YHWH] came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break My covenant with you.*  
*2 “And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed My voice: why have ye done this?*  
*3 “Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.*  
*4 “And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.*  
*5 “And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.*  
*6 “And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.*  
*7 “And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that He did for Israel.*  
*8 “And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.*  
*9 “And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.*  
*10 “And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel.*  
*11 “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:*  
*12 “And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger” (Judges 2:1-12).*

The angel went from Gilgal (the place of blessing where Israel first encamped on entering the land under Joshua) to Bochim (the place of weeping). The angel traces their spiritual journey from righteousness to compromise with sin and therefore from blessing to curse!

The Angel of YHWH, who is the pre-Incarnate Messiah, made it clear to the Israelites that His covenant with them, which they entered into after He delivered them from Egyptian bondage, would only stand so long as they made no pact with the Canaanite local communities. Indeed, they were to maintain their distinct spiritual and national identity through adherence to the covenant with Yah only.

To be sure, Yahweh was not against good neighbourliness, aka ‘friendly diplomatic relations’. All He wanted was to preserve Israel from the detestable customs and lifestyles of the surrounding pagan nations. (See Deut. 7:2-4). He wanted to keep Israel pure for Himself so that His covenant relationship with them would not be jeopardized.

And Israel stayed true to God as long as God-fearing leaders led the nation. As soon as those leaders died, however, they abandoned the worship of YHWH and join the pagans in their idolatrous worship. It was almost as if the people ‘tolerated’ God out of deference to their God-

fearing elders, to avoid hurting their feelings. Once the leaders left the scene, the nation felt no sense of duty (to them) to follow Yahweh, the Elohiym of Israel.

Now, are we also going to lower the standards of righteousness in the church because our long-time Apostle is no more?

But notice this: the Israelites didn't rush headlong into pagan worship all at once. It began with "friendship with the world" (Jam.4:4). They began to find common ground with the pagans, and they ended up compromising their faith to accommodate the pagans. In the end, the pagans converted the Israelites, who were worshippers of the true God.

### **An Unchanging Word through Time**

We in this present generation consider ourselves to be far smarter than the ancients. We don't tend to replace the worship of Yah with the worship of false gods in an overt manner.

What we do is to dictate the way we worship Yah. We set the standards; we try to make God accommodating to our lifestyle choices and viewpoints. After all, He's such a loving and understanding God. We have turned the Creator God into a 'puppet' God, a convenience God.

Convenience is the name of the game. It's one of the major gifts of our ultra-modern world. We live in a digitized convenience world of e-shopping without lifting a finger; a world of instant messaging and social media without moving an inch and, of course, a world of instant noodles! The convenience store has long been put in the shade!

Almost everything has been adapted to suit our wants, situations and feelings – to serve our convenience. So, why can't God adjust Himself to the 'realities' of our modern times? He can't reasonably expect us to live by His commandments proclaimed thousands of years ago in ancient times!

His response roars through time:

*"I am YHWH, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6).*

The advances of modern times do not make God old-fashioned just as primitive times didn't make Him modern. He transcends the progression of time and history. His word is ordained to outlast the heaven and the earth, the very cosmos we are encased in. It's not a word to bend to our feelings and will; it's not a word to associate with a particular era of history or era of church leadership. It's a word that stands forever. The Psalmist celebrates the eternal validity of His word:

*"The works of His hands are verity and judgment; all His commandments are sure.*

*"They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.*

*"He sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant for ever: holy and reverend is His name" (Ps. 111:7-9).*

We may be smart in our own eyes, but we can never outsmart God. Our presumed smartness in not openly bowing before idols but choosing rather to worship God on our own terms is not really a new thing. It's smart thinking with ancient origins. It's worship by lip-service which dates back to the days of the Prophet Isaiah and which has kept resurfacing since the earthly days of the Messiah. It's a 'spiritual two-timing' where the worshipper presumes to embody the compromise between God and the world; where he professes loyalty to both God and the world.

But the omniscient God of omnipresence sees beyond the façade; He sees a heart which is not with Him:

*“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,  
“This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips;  
but their heart is far from Me.  
“But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”  
(Matt. 15:7-9).*

When we pretend to love God and the world at the same time, we betray where our hearts really belong – the world!

The godly standards of behavior God expects of His people don't, and won't, change with time. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. The holy principles and laws He gave to our spiritual “fathers” in the faith – the ancient Israelites under Moses – are the very same ones we must keep. Christ, ‘our own Christ’, was the Rock that followed Israel, and He destroyed those who displeased Him through disobedience, even though they “all” went through “all” the external ‘religious’ ceremonies which formalized their relationship with God (1 Cor. 10: 1-8). Because the same lusts and temptations which enticed the Israelites into sin exists to this day, to us has the warning come:

*“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (v. 6).*

The text then goes on to name the “evil things” which entice by lust as “idolatry” (v. 7), not merely in bowing before images but as in covetousness (Col. 3:5c), which entails putting an object of desire or pleasure or pride before God; “fornication” which has since gone hi-tech via digitized pornography, even as homosexuality and a host of newer forms of illicit sex are being promoted. Another is “putting Christ to the test” (trying His patience) as the Israelites did when they complained about both the route and the food (manna) given them by God as they journeyed in the wilderness (v. 9; Num. 21:4-9). This naturally leads to the next – “murmuring”; a complaining spirit, lack of contentment which is an integral component of godliness (v. 10; see 1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5).

*“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (v. 11).*

We have been warned twice, “lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).

If you think about it, it's not actually in our interest to want God to change. What if He changed and He no longer listened to our prayers? What if He changed and He no longer healed the sick or performed miracles of healing and deliverance? What if He failed to redeem the ultimate promise – the promise of eternal life?

Obviously, we want the living God to do His mighty works in our midst, as He did in the days of old (Ps. 44). But we still wished He would change somehow?

Thankfully, God is unchangeable in His nature and will. He will not stoop to our level should we fail to live up to expectation.

The Spirit of God speaks today as He spoke in the days of the saints of old:

*“And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:*

*“And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chron. 15: 1-2).*

*“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him:*

*“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He will also deny us:*

*“If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2: 11-13).*

*“Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).*

### **Flee Youthful Lusts**

As far as the spiritual warfare between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of darkness is concerned, the whole world is a war zone. Without doubt, one of the fiercest battlegrounds in this war is the youth. While the Creator calls on them to remember Him in their prime (Eccl. 12: 1), the devil dangles before them a whole bunch of juicy activities to tickle their fancy!

It's sensual music, booze, drugs, sex, clubbing and wild partying till you drop out! It's an exciting life of vanity.

But it's the sort of life the Christian youth have been told to flee from.

Be that as it may, we heard reports, at the end of last year's camp meeting, that some of our youth (not all of them but some) were at the camp meeting solely to chat up friends of the opposite sex. The reports indicate that these young brothers and sisters were so engrossed in their sweet chit-chat that they saw no service in session at a time and place we had come before the presence of the Almighty God. They were cocooned in a different world, secluded from the intruding sights and sounds of worship as well as from curious, prying eyes in obscure corners of the compound. They couldn't be bothered. If God was omniscient, they seemed to say, He could watch and eavesdrop on them for all they care!

Worse, others were caught watching unwholesome material on their smartphones and other electronic devices, caught up in their own little world of impish ecstasy!

Meanwhile, the selfie craze was not left out. Some were seen compulsively filming and photographing themselves all day from all angles, in all poses. The selfie craze has brought a whole new meaning to the end-time Biblical prophecy in 2 Timothy 3: "...in the last days perilous times shall come. For *men shall be lovers of their own selves...*" (vv. 1-2).

Instead of following the latest trends in fashion or entertainment, the youth in Christ are to flee youthful lusts (as Joseph fled from Mrs. Potiphar, the temptress) in order to pursue "righteousness, faith, charity, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22).

Divine judgment by fire will surely be meted out to all those who engage in acts rightfully reserved for married heterosexual couples (Heb. 13:4).

We cannot claim to follow God whilst we want to go our own way. We serve the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Let us respect His sovereign rights – His is to instruct; ours is to obey.

Standards are going down all around us; paganism (as we saw in the morning presentation) is boldly reasserting itself even in some churches. It won't happen here. A remnant has been chosen by grace (Rom. 11:4-6).

Let's not forget. Those who belong to God are aliens in this world (1 Pet. 2: 11; cp Ps. 119: 19). Those who belong to the world are alienated from God (Eph. 4:17-18; 1 John 2: 15-17).

So decide this day which side you belong to. It's either Yah or the world. You can't serve two masters.

"As for me and my house we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15). I believe that's your choice too! Amen!