

FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL
THE WAY FORWARD IN CHRIST
(Part 2)

January 5, 2009

Today the gospel is Matthew 4:12-25. It is about the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus issued his call to repentance, started forming his core group, and began moving around Galilee doing his work.

This Bible passage brought me to a book I had written in 1998, "Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth." I started that book on May 16, 1997, while waiting at the airport for my flight to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. It was based on the mission of Jesus as written in Matthew 4. That hour I wrote the whole basic outline. But I did not start writing the book itself until December 16. I wrote on and off, and finally finished it on October 29, 1998.

"Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth" is about Jesus' mission, and also about the mission of CFC. Written ten years ago, it had warned about CFC being at the crossroad, that there was real danger of losing its anointing. Here is the text on the back cover.

"Today we are at the threshold of the third millennium. And the people of God face a momentous challenge.

It has been 2,000 years of Christianity, but the commission of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring the gospel to the whole world has not been accomplished. In fact, the Church itself is being buffeted by dark winds and sinister forces, both from without and within. Spiritual warfare continues to rage in the heavens and on earth. At stake are the billions of souls on the face of the earth.

In June of 1981, God raised up a new army to participate in the war. God raised up a movement to work for global evangelization and renewal. That movement is Couples for Christ. Now, 17 years later, Couples for Christ has made and continues to make a tremendous impact throughout the world.

But all is not well.

Now, towards the end of the second millennium and at the threshold of the third, Couples for Christ has come to a crossroad. Its future usefulness to God and his work is threatened. The dangers are very real, but the opportunities also continue to be tremendous and exciting.

- * Will the members of Couples for Christ give in to the ravaging attacks of the flesh, the world and the devil, or will they continue to move on in the power of the Holy Spirit?
- * Has the zeal of Couples for Christ grown cold, or will it continue to blaze with the fire of God's love?

- * Will the work of Couples for Christ end the millennium with a whimper or with a bang?
- * Will God discard Couples for Christ, or continue to use it mightily in accordance with his will?

Now, more than ever, there is a great need for Christ's witnesses to be sent to the ends of the earth. Will Couples for Christ be counted among them? Will Couples for Christ be part of the victorious army of Jesus Christ, as history races into the third millennium and closer to the end of time?"

We did not truly heed the prophetic word of the Lord at that time. And so slowly but surely, the downward spiral continued. God warned us again entering into 2007 with our theme of Lamentations. But again we were hard of heart (and hard of hearing) and did not learn the lessons God wanted to teach us. In fact, some openly rebelled against the Lord, marginalizing Jesus in our work with the poor, acting in unchristian ways against brethren, and attacking even the hierarchy of the Church.

God had had enough. He then allowed the crisis to result in a split. He was going to start all over again. He raised a remnant, the restored CFC faithful to its authentic calling, now CFC-FFL.

I had very high hopes for this restored work. I had hoped that the painful split would truly teach us the lessons of Lamentations. And indeed there are many hopeful signs. But the old flesh is still at work. There are still conflicts among top leaders, unfaithfulness to our life together, a lack of passion for evangelization, and a general failure in growing in holiness.

Read the above text again. The prophetic word remains true even now.

So this is our third chance, and possibly the last. If we do not shape up, then God can indeed discard CFC-FFL altogether.

I invite you to read "Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth" again, and to take up in your household meetings the discussion topics given in the Guide at the back. But take up the topics yourself in your prayer time, just between Jesus and you. If you did not read the book before, then that explains partially why we plunged into crisis in 2007. If you read it but did not amend your life accordingly, then repent. If you read this invitation of mine but do not heed it, then may God have mercy on us all.

This book explains God's call to us—to be witnesses, to repentance, to community, to discipleship, to evangelization, and to global ministry. It points the way to our personal posture in Christ, the way of humility. It pinpoints the threats to our work—pride, unfaithfulness, lack of faith, selfishness, weariness,

preoccupation with other things, complacency, disunity, and a lack of growth in holiness.

These are all the aspects of our life and mission that we need to continue to learn, and to live out accordingly. If our baptism in the Spirit does not result in our becoming witnesses to Jesus, then we cannot be fully empowered to accomplish a worldwide work of renewal.

God's mission in the world is so important that we cannot just respond casually, or halfheartedly, or grudgingly. We need to give it our all. We need to totally belong to Jesus, and to totally commit ourselves to his mission. If we are but willing to do so, then God's grace is sufficient to overcome all our shortcomings and fears.

If we have not yet truly started on that path to total commitment to Christ and his mission, then let us start now.

God bless you all.

Your brother and servant,

Frank Padilla