

We Ain't What We Used To Be

By Dr. Henry Harbuck—AEGA President/General Overseer

The billionaire, H. Bunker Hunt, said “A billion dollars ain’t what it used to be.” Well, the same may be said of the United States today. With all the changes, frustration, and fear we currently see among the populace, it’s a cinch that our once world-power – the USA – “ain’t what it used to be.” And due to the economic down turn, most of us might also say “We ain’t what we used to be either. In fact, everyone seems scared to death!”

Lately I’ve been exhausted and overwhelmed by the continuing barrage of negative news constantly being broadcast by both secular and Christian television stations. Nothing seems to be good. Everything is bad...and getting worse. Many a family’s dreams for retirement have now been shattered by scammers and the shrinking stock-market. Long-held hopes have turned sour, and apprehension has now become utter despair and hopelessness. Many careers have been put on hold for a lack of money. Nothing is falling into place. Things appear to be falling apart. And I hear little or no hope from those sources who should be offering encouragement. In fact, I’ve never seen people throughout America so critical, depressed, and hopeless. Individuals, groups and organizations have squared off for battle, each hoping to give the other a “knock-out” punch. When will it end? Nobody seems to know.

My responsibility is not to encourage the people of the United States, **but to encourage YOU** -- an AEGA member and/or partner of this great fellowship. **Now is the time** to remember what Jesus said as He neared the end of His sermon on the mount. Like all good preachers, He used a comparative illustration (parable) of two ways to build a house. Matthew 7:24-26 (*New Millennium In-Depth Bible*) reads, “Therefore, everyone who hears these words (teachings) of mine and [habitually] practices them will be compared to a prudent (smart) person who built a house upon the rock—[that is, a solid rock or rocky cliff]. And the rain fell, and the floods came—[that is, the rivers and swollen streams overflowed], and the winds *battered and howled and hammered against* that house; yet it did not collapse, because it was built—*founded and established* on the rock.” In this illustration Jesus is introducing Himself to the Jewish community. Through this, His first recorded sermon, He declares His authority—witnessed by the people to be greater than that of the religious teachers (Matthew 7:29).

Some people say this is “the end.” My response to that is ... “We ain’t what we used to be, but perhaps it ain’t the end!” Yet the looming question is ... *Even if the United States bites the dust in defeat and destruction, shouldn’t we hold fast to the trustworthy teachings we know are true, and continue to trust the One in Whom we have believed?* And if we experience uncontrollable fear or timidity during these perilous times, we must cast it aside, because fear does not come from above (God), but from below (man).

God gives us power to overcome fear (2 Tim.1:7). He gives us love, which is greater than any command or law, and He gives us a sound mind (2 Tim.1:7). We shall be calm, not fearful! And we shall remain full of power so long as we hold fast to the sound words of the Lord. Our Savior is not an ordinary Person, but extraordinary. He can defeat any foe and deflect every adversity—even if it’s a stock-market crash! As for me, “I ain’t what I used to be! **I’m better, stronger, more trusting, more serving, more committed, more merciful, more faithful, and more patient than I was yesterday.**” Adversity destroys the faint-hearted, but it tests and strengthens the soldier of the cross. So, let us be fruitful and steadfast in the faith.

Scripture tells me (paraphrased for effect) that “whatever test or trial attempts to overcome me is common to men. But my God is faithful. He will not let me be tested beyond what I can bear. And when I am tested by any trial or adversity, I shall overcome because He will also provide a way out for me so that I can hold up under it.” (I Cor. 10:13). **LET THIS BE YOUR CONFESSION AND PRAYER AS WELL.**

In the Grip of HIS Grace
Dr. Harbuck