**RESISTING THE PRESSURE TO CONFORM TO THIS WORLD**

Being the full text of the address of the President of God’s Kingdom Society (GKS) *– The Church of The Living God,* Brother Felix Ekundayo Adedokun to the GKS Youth Fellowship Annual Assembly, August 19 – 21, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

**HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!**

I give glory, honour, praises and thanks to **JEHOVAH**, the Almighty God, Who is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords”, through His appointed and crowned King, Jesus Christ, for the preservation of our lives from the Youth Fellowship Annual Assembly of last year, 2021, to that of this year, 2022. Despite the travails of the present time including the economic hardship in the world, God has been faithful in keeping us alive by His grace. - Lamentations 3:22, 23.

We cannot deny the fact that the youths are presently faced with enormous challenges in terms of enticements to do things contrary to the will of God than ever before. In order to educate, enlighten and warn against the present evils of the world, I have chosen the sermon, entitled: “**Resisting the Pressure to Conform to this World”** as my address to you the youths by God’s grace.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the word “resisting” as “to withstand the force or effect of something”. “Pressure” means “the constraint of circumstance: the weight of social or economic imposition”, while the word “conform” means “to act in accordance with prevailing standards or customs”. Thus, the essence of this address is to exhort and charge the youths not to act in accordance with prevailing ungodly standards or customsbut to resist their compelling and enticing force by the grace of God.

**The Spiritual State of the World**

Diligent Bible scholars are aware that we are now living in an epoch or era known as the last days – the last age of Satan’s wicked rule over the affairs of men here on earth - in fulfillment of Bible prophecies. (Revelation 12:7-12; Daniel 12:8-10; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13) Concerning this age, Apostle John declares: “We know that we are children of God and that all the rest of the world around us is under Satan’s power and control.” (1 John 5:19 - *Living Bible*) Apostle Paul refers to it as “this present evil world”. (Galatians 1:4) Hence, Satan the devil is known as “the god of this world”. - 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4.

Exercising his vile influence over men, Satan the devil entices people to engage in ungodly practices contrary to the will of God. The exhortation of Apostle John on the state of the world and what is expected of the children of God is apt, to wit: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” – 1 John 2:15-17. See also James 4:4; John 15:19.

**Worldly Pressures**

There are myriads of ungodly pressures confronting the youths at the instance of Satan the devil. I will highlight a few of such pressures in this address by the grace of God.

One of the worldly pressures facing the youths is sexual immorality. The virtues of chastity and integrity which form the core of Christian and societal values are now at a very low ebb. Some of the youths indulge in pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations in disobedience to the laws of God. The Holy Bible warns: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” – 1 Corinthians 6:18. See also Ephesians 5:3-5.

I must sternly warn the youths against getting involved in “LGBTQIA” which the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines as “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (one’s sexual or gender identity), intersex, and asexual/aromantic/agender” as well as bestiality (sexual relations between a human being and an animal) and prostitution. Godly youths must not bow to these pressures as they lead to consequences such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases and other medical complications, imprisonment, insanity. Such ones would ultimately incur the wrath of God if they do not repent. – Leviticus 18:22,23; 20:13,15; Romans 1:24-32.

Also, there are series of Reality TV shows that showcase nudity and broadcast all forms of human indecency for people to watch. Such TV shows dangle mouth-watering sums of money for the eventual winners, and by this some are lured to participate in them thereby eliciting lust and sensuality. – Matthew 5:27,28; James 1:13-15; Luke 16:15; 1 John 2:15-17.

It could be recalled that Joseph, a godly youth who had the fear of God, resisted the immoral advances of Potiphar’s wife to lie with her. Though he was cast into prison by his master, Potiphar, God later made him “ruler over all the land of Egypt”, next only to Pharaoh. - Genesis 39:7-9; 41:38-46.

The Bible says: “The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.” – Proverbs 11:3; 13:6.

Furthermore, the crave for quick riches and materialism especially among the youths today is unprecedented. Some of the youths who join the bandwagon to become rich overnight lose their sense of decency, responsibility and integrity. This uncontrolled quest for quick riches make such ones to go into kidnapping for ransom, ritual killings, armed robbery, bribery and corruption, fraud, (yahoo-yahoo), gambling (betting including betting online), lie telling, deceit, hypocrisy, cheating, prostitution, oppression, extortion, cultism, human trafficking, drug taking and peddling, etc. Though it is not a sin to be rich, I hereby warn that no youth should engage in these and other evil practices as wealth obtained through dubious means does not last. The Bible states: “Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but he who gathers little by little will increase.” (Proverbs 13:11 – *Revised Standard Version*) The Prophet Jeremiah says: “As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatchet them not; so he that getteh riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.” - Jeremiah 17:11. See also, Proverbs 20:21.

We should recall that Achan was stoned to death for taking “the accursed thing”, including shekels of silver and gold from the city of Jericho to enrich himself against the instruction given to them by God through Joshua, and that this led to the defeat of the Israelites by Ai. (Joshua 6:17,18; 7:1-26) Gehazi, the servant of Elisha was also guilty of greed and lie telling in that he pursued after Naaman and used the name of the prophet to collect gifts from him. Gehazi and his seed were punished with leprosy for this ungodly act. – 2 Kings 5:20-27.

As could be seen from the examples of Achan and Gehazi, family members who refuse to warn against fraudulent practices and reject ill-gotten wealth end up suffering for accommodating and accepting such illicit gains. The *Punch* Newspaper of March 30, 2022, (page 8), carried a story with the headline: “Yahoo Boy’s mother jailed five years for receiving N91m internet fraud largesse”. This ugly trend among the youths should not be emulated. King Solomon warns: “He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.” – Proverbs 15:27. See also Isaiah 5:8; Micah 2:2.

God has promised to bless His children with “durable riches” when they labour in integrity and in His fear. The Bible admonishes that people should be contented in life and God will bless the works of their hands by His grace. “By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.” - Proverbs 22:4. See also Proverbs 11:22; 15:16; Psalm 37:16.

Again, in institutions of learning, there is the pressure to engage in examination malpractice in order to pass exams. It should be noted that examination malpractice is dishonesty - which is a sin. Scripture says: “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” – 2 Corinthians 8:21. See also Philippians 4:8.

**Resisting Worldly Pressures**

I admonish the youths to resist worldly pressures by following these godly counsels:

1. **Knowledge of God:** Without the accurate knowledge of God one may be swayed into bowing to the pressures of this world. It is therefore imperative for the youths to crave for the knowledge of God because “…that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good…” - Proverbs 19:2 See also Hosea 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:15; Psalm 19:7-11.
2. **Faith in God:** Absolute confidence in the Almighty God is expected of youths, so that God will bless and prosper their enterprises by His grace. (Joshua 1:6-8; Hebrews 11:6) The Bible says: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thy own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.” - Proverbs 3:5-7.
3. **The Fear of God:** One who has the fear of God will not conform to this world but will bluntly resist any persuasive, alluring or coercive gesture to engage in a sinful act. King Solomon said: “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.” - Proverbs 8:13. See also Proverbs 16:6; Ecclesiastes 7:18.
4. **Spiritual Mindedness:** Paul, the apostle states: “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Romans 8:5,6) Youths who are spiritually minded will demonstrate the fruits of the spirit, resist worldly pressures and will not conform to this world. - Galatians 5:22,23; 2 Timothy 1:5.
5. **Diligence:** The Almighty God requires His children to be hardworking and not indolent. Some youths do not want to work yet they want to enjoy the good things of life. St. Paul warns: “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” - 2 Thessalonians 3:10. See also Ephesians 4:28; Proverbs 6:6-11.

Indolence leads to penury and compromise but diligence brings God’s grace and blessing to one. “In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.” (Proverbs 14:23; 10:4) Truly, King Solomon states: “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” – Proverbs 22:29.

1. **Contentment:** Insatiability is one of the ungodly traits that is common in the world today. Some people are no longer satisfied with who they are and what they have. This leads to conformity with this world. The ability to be contented in life and continue to work honestly would help the youths to keep their heads high in truth and righteousness. (Proverbs 30:7-9; Hebrews 13:5,6) The Bible admonishes, “But godliness with contentment is great gain…” – 1 Timothy 6:6-12.
2. **Becoming Role Models:** Mentorship in terms of character and discipline is being gradually eroded in the society. Worshippers of God are expected to be role models to the people of the world. They should be pace-setters in terms of discipline, integrity and chastity in whatever sphere of human endeavor they find themselves. Saint Paul charged Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” - 1 Timothy 4:12. Please look up also Matthew 5:16; Titus 2:7.

**Admonition**

It is instructive to note that an act might be seen as normal and acceptable by many people, yet it is a heinous sin in the sight of God and would incur severe punishment on all who engage in it. The preacher warns, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth: and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment…for childhood and youth are vanity.” - Ecclesiastes 11:9,10. See also Proverbs 16:25; 14:12.

Moses charged the Israelites, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil”. (Exodus 23:2) Therefore, wherever we find ourselves, we should resist the enticement to commit sin in any shape or form even if it is done by others. King Solomon, the wisest in his days, admonishes: “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause…We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path.” (Proverbs 1:10-15. See also 1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 4:14-17) I admonish youths not to be swayed by worldly pressures as was Demas who forsook the work of God “having loved this present world”. – 2 Timothy 4:10

In Romans 12:2, Saint Paul wrote: “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you.” – *Living Bible*.

Finally, a mind that is renewed in righteousness will always ponder over the spiritual acceptability of things before engaging in them. In this regard, worldly trends that run contrary to godliness should be rejected by all youths. Saint Paul charged us thus: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” – Titus 2:11,12; James 1:27.

May the Almighty God endow you with the requisite qualities to wade through the challenges of this age so as to stand approved before Him and be blessed at the end by His grace and power through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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*President, GKS*

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