

4-23-1971

From/To: Betty Ash (Chalk's reply filed first)

Betty Ash

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April 23, 1971

Mrs. James Ash
4102 Helen Street
Detroit, Michigan 48207

Dear Sister Ash:

What a pleasure it was to hear from you today. Thank you for the very deep concern and Christian love your letter portrayed.

I enjoyed the week with the brethren in Cleveland. It was good seeing some of my dearest friends again and renewing acquaintances with so many brothers and sisters from all over the country.

I have resigned from the Highland Church, effective May 31. I am doing this for several reasons. I need more time with my own children and family. I also want to get a little better look--a little clearer perspective--at what my future role in the church needs to be and I also want some additional schooling which I plan to get at the University of Texas, in Austin.

I have not left the pulpit and certainly I am not leaving the church. In fact, I will be working with the R. B. Sweet Publishing Company producing Bible school materials and other study materials for Christians.

I have met with much opposition but I suppose this is the lot of all who are faithful to Christ Jesus. I solicit your earnest prayers that this decision of mine to resign the Highland pulpit will only mean greater and more effective service for me and for my family in the years ahead.

I send you my personal prayers and best wishes that you and your family will experience even greater fellowship and acceptance on the part of all your brethren in the days ahead.

Fraternally yours,

John Allen Chalk

JAC:lc

COPY

4102 Helen Street
Detroit, Michigan
April 15, 1971

John Allen Chalk,
Church of Christ
Abilene, Texas

Dear brother Chalk,

I am writing this letter because I heard something today which is very disturbing to me. I was told that you are leaving the ministry, or at least resigning from the post you now hold there. Since my information was second hand, I don't really know any of the details; but it came from the lectureship held recently in Cleveland. During the past several months I have also heard that you were being criticized because of your outspoken stand for the cause of Christ.

You and I have never met. In fact, I have never heard you speak in person. My husband and I first heard of you in 1968 when you were the radio speaker for Herald of Truth. You were then speaking on the "Three American Revolutions". Your radio lessons during July, 1968 were particularly significant to us. You see, we are an interracial family; I am white, my husband is black and we have three children. (You may remember another letter I wrote to you then.) At that time we had been members of the Church of Christ only a little more than a year. During that year we had met with all sorts of attitudes from other members of the church, ranging from cautious acceptance to indifference to blatant hostility. However, through your radio sermons during July, 1968, you gave us the encouragement that we so desperately needed at that time.

I have heard some of the criticism about you, especially concerning your stand on racism. I can only say that I wish there were hundreds more like you in the church. The church can never have the influence on our society that it should have as long as men refuse to believe and preach the whole counsel of God. I am so sorry that pressures have been brought to bear on you because you have the courage to preach the truth.

Here in Detroit the church is as divided racially as anywhere else in the country. Even in some of the "integrated" congregations, there is very little real communication and understanding between black and white. In most cases, "integration" only means a few black members in a congregation whose leadership is, and will remain, white. There are sincere attempts being made on the part of individual Christians, both black and white, to bring about a closer relationship between the races and some of these attempts have been very successful, on a one-to-one basis. But on the whole, I believe we still have a long

way to go before we will be the "one church" that we talk about; or more important, the "one body" that Christ talked about. That is the reason why we need more men like you who are not afraid to preach the Word of God in relation to the serious problems of our society today. I firmly believe that Christ has the answers to all of our problems, and the church should be that bright and shining light to show the way to the rest of the world. But we aren't going to be able to lead others until we truly believe that Jesus meant what He said. I talk to so many people who are terrified of communism, and I agree it is a serious threat, but I think that the reason an ideology like that is so powerful is that its adherents really believe in what they're trying to teach others. If members of the church believed and practiced the religion of Jesus Christ, what an effect we could have on others!

I pray that God will bless you in whatever you decide to do and I hope that you will continue to take the message of Christ to all who will listen. Again, I am so sorry that attempts have been made to hinder you in the work you are trying to do.

I shall continue to be grateful for the influence your words have had on my life and I'm sure that you have done more good than you will ever know.

Sincerely,
Your sister in Christ,

Mrs. Betty Ash

Mrs. Betty Ash