ARE YOU BETTER OFF NOW? By Al Diestelkamp

Spoiler alert: This is not about politics

The pointed question “Are you better off today than you were four years ago?” is widely regarded by political analysts as a key factor influencing the outcome of the recent U.S. presidential election. It was a question that the incumbent political party could not successfully combat; but due to prevailing economic conditions, it was easily answered by much of the electorate. This got me thinking about more important matters.

Judging from responses to an article I wrote for the previous issue of *Think*, I have come to realize that our mailing list includes some individuals who no longer share the fellowship of brethren with whom they once worshiped. The fact that they remain spiritually minded enough to read such articles is encouraging; however, it prompts me to ask them, “Are you better off today than when you actively worked and worshiped with the saints?”

I’m not asking if you’re better off financially or socially, but rather if you are better off *spiritually*. It may be that, from a worldly perspective, you are living a more comfortable life now than when you were part of a local congregation. However, do you possess “the peace of God, which surpasses understanding” (Phil. 4:7)? The Lord never promised that loyalty to Him would assure comfort and ease in this life. In fact, the apostle Paul warned that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

Whatever event or negative experience may have led you to disregard the Lord’s instruction to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together…” (Heb. 10:24-25), it pales in comparison to what lies ahead for you. “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him’” (Heb. 10:35-38).

The good news for those of you who have “drawn back” is that God is so merciful that He will renew His pleasure toward you if you return and “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matt. 3:8). Furthermore, faithful brethren will joyfully welcome you back.

Each of us, including those who are faithful in assembling for worship, should consider a similar question: “Am I spiritually better off than when I first believed?” If not, Christ’s message to us is clear: “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works…” (Rev. 2:5). “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Gal. 6:9).