

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

Once again, a special greeting. Pentecost services and the preceding Sabbath services were most inspirational and rewarding to all who had the opportunity of attending. Our affection and love for our God must truly be great when we reflect upon the privileges and opportunities afforded to be faithful to Him and, at the same time, be permitted to assemble with others of like faith and conviction. And even where we are forced — by circumstance — to spend the Holy Days alone, the presence and inspiration of God is unquestionable. How joyous and thankful we ought to be, daily, for the manifestation of God's great love to us — love as manifested in the privileged understanding of His laws and statutes! Truly, the converted do not call His laws and ways of life grievous. They are a joy. Replete with meaning and purpose.

Last month, I covered one-half of the points considered to be positive identifying marks of a Christian. For this month's letter, I will complete the subject — covering the last five points. These points will be numbered in relationship to the first five. So, the first one in this letter will be number six.

6) Possession of our bodies by patience. The requirement is perfect control. It is the absolute mastery of every volatile characteristic inherent in our makeup. It is the capability of total emotional control. The natural impulses are repressed. By knowledge and conviction, the Christian compels himself to live (manifest) the spiritual principles rather than give vent to the physical drives and emotions.

To gain such mastery — control — we must understand the magnitude of the enemy. What are those characteristics? How deceptive are they?

The enemy is self! But what is the natural state of any human being?

By nature, we are wrathful (Eph. 2:1-3). We exercise every devious avenue whereby the self is justified or protected. There is a natural, volatile reaction to censorship or correction. A complete dislike for control, imposed limitation or any constituted authority. Paul was inspired by the Spirit of God to write, ". . . the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17).

When someone points out a mistake, our natural inclination is to resist — advance explanations of self-justification. But when the Spirit dominates, we face the reality of our mistakes. We admit them and attempt to correct the situation.

When our tongues speak injuriously of others — once the circumstance is known, we express remorse and regret. We do not allow any fleshly manifestation of self-defense. We accept our guilt and, by admission (confession), find joy and satisfaction mentally. Implicit happiness and the way of peace are elusive to the carnally dominated.

By the dominance of God's Holy Spirit, we have tolerance for the convictions and feelings of others. We recognize the natural tendency to force others to accept our views. Conversion is a process by which we recognize our own imperfections and partiality. And in this process, we become aware of the unalterable, immutable and unchanging nature of God's perfection. Oneness and harmony come by the power of God's Holy Spirit. As converted subjects, we are called to the singularity of that one way of life. Perfection is achievement, individually and by personal conviction, of that irrevocable and unalterable standard of life. As each daily reaches for that perfection, harmony is greatly enhanced. Such oneness is, and can only be, achieved by a revelation of that truth — a personal call by God to each of us and a final concerted effort, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, to gain complete mastery of the self. Herein lies the meaning of the need to gain possession of our bodies by patience. Possession is a matter of control — control of the life and body which God gave to us to overcome. How? By patience. And patience is a manner by which we can accept the occurrences of life. It has nothing to do with condonation of wrong, apathy or indifference. Rather, it is the ability to accept conditions and circumstances in a right spirit and then begin a judicious and concerted effort to effect necessary resolves or changes.

We can either accept things in patience — taken in stride, as a matter of trial for our good — or manifest resentment, wrath and bitterness: a form of self-pity, arrogancy and utter carnality. Happiness, satisfaction and contentment come only from living up to the spiritual requirements of life. So absolute is this principle that many of God's true servants have been able to accept martyrdom with love and understanding. Have we resisted the pulls of flesh unto the shedding of blood?

7) Perfect relationships with God and Christ. Salvation is knowing the Father and the Son (John 17:3). In order to perfect those relationships, we must first come to know them. How? By revelation. Jesus Christ said one of His first-appearance purposes was to make known the Father and Himself. Though Christ — the God of the Old Testament, the Spokesman of Israel — had verbally manifested Himself to our ancient forebearers, the Father was known in no way (John 5:37). Christ came to reveal Him (Matt. 11:27).

By the operation of God's Holy Spirit, we are called to an acquaintance of both the Father and the Son. Such a call is a profound miracle — a miracle far greater in magnitude than that of some great physical sign, wonder or healing. It is a call to know God. And to "know" implies a knowledge of background, character, ideals, purposes and principles of life. Character involves a principled existence — manifestations which warrant confidence, assurance, trust and reliance.

To come to such a knowledge requires effort and purpose on our part. It is not automatic. The revelation of Himself, with the Son, is but a beginning step. That knowledge must grow more profound daily. It becomes the source of every worthwhile and eternal joy and satisfaction in life. Its magnitude and depth are such that the innuendoes, lies and villifications of antagonists are countenanced or received for not one single moment. The one who truly KNOWS God the Father and the Son, by revelation, cannot be persuaded in any form of denigration. But that knowledge (TO KNOW) must be nurtured, fed and enhanced. It is not static. God and the Son, as Spirit Beings, are not seen. There is presently no manifestation. They are understood by the character, nature — as defined by the Way of Life — which was once (and only once) delivered to us. Delivered at the time of our call. Then it becomes our inviolate responsibility to retain that way and conviction of faith. Our faith must not become tarnished and clouded because of disuse. But how do we keep our confidence in that knowledge viable and strong? Since everlasting life is to KNOW God and His Son, Jesus Christ, it is most imperative that we understand.

First, we are required to study daily. That study is the means by which we refine our knowledge of Him. Christ was the Word of God personified — the very Word which we are required to study. By reading that Word, we are studying the character and nature of Christ. Also, Christ was the express image of the Father. He came to reveal the Father — to make Him known. He said, ". . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . ." (John 14:9). Then by the study of God's Word, the Bible, we can enhance the revealed knowledge of Him. (In no way does this imply a change of belief or practice.) Revealed knowledge cannot be changed or altered — otherwise, it is not the Word of God which cannot change. On the contrary, the growth in knowledge of God — His way and character — only makes more beautiful, more deeply understood, more comprehensive and astounding, the originally revealed truth. This, truly, is the expansive — magnifying — characteristic of the Word of life. As we study and apply the pearls of life, new and exciting dimensions unveil themselves consistently. For example, God does not change — His character and innate glory are eternal. Yet, we become more cognizant of that glory and beauty only as we daily study His Word. It seems, daily, we are amazed and refreshed by new understanding which augments what we previously understood. This is the meaning of growing in grace and knowledge of Him, who has everything to do with our hope of everlasting life.

Daily study and application of knowledge will manifest itself in the life of the genuine Christian. He is an OPEN book — known and read by all who care to observe.

Second, the truly converted know their own weaknesses — helplessness in the human state. They know that as they must, through study, drink in the value of the Word — so also they must, through prayer, maintain a daily contact with the source of all help.

Prayer must be daily — just as feeding upon the Word of God must be daily. Read Matthew 6:24-34 and compare to physical needs.

Through prayer, we have opportunity to be honest and candid. We can confess what we are. And if we can be open and honest with God, He is faithful and just to forgive us of all our guilt. Study and prayer are the two lanes of a two-way street. After God calls us and makes us knowledgeable of Him, we grow and become refined only as we aggressively seek Him. He will be heard of those called. They have an open door to the throne of God. We can confess our faults and weaknesses and, at the same time, find the help to aid us in our venture of overcoming.

Third, the need to fast is imperative. Because of our natural complacency and tendency to become dead-centered, it is essential for us to face the loss of those physical commodities so desperately needed for a physical existence but which picture a more significant need, the spiritual. Once we relate the physical need to that of the Spirit, we are more easily persuaded of ourselves to regain a necessary spiritual orientation. Fasting cannot be overlooked. As we drift from its necessity, we lose our spiritual perspective — growing indifferent and calloused — and too frequently begin to rationalize that the need is not urgent. As this process continues, we will find it progressively more difficult to turn the tide and effect a real return to God. As many of God's great servants of the past did, so must we fast more frequently, study more diligently and pray more wholeheartedly for an understanding of God's perfect way of life for us. NOW IS THE TIME. THE END IS MUCH CLOSER THAN WHEN WE FIRST BELIEVED. The diligent and genuinely converted will heed and be richly rewarded thereby. May you have a happy and successful venture.

8) Lifestyles. Not faddish, strange or of the world. God's chosen people are normal — natural — in appearance. They are lights of what is acceptable. They set the standard. In no way are they motivated by trends of the world — becoming conformists for the sake of conformity. The usage of physical appearance or wearing of apparel, to differentiate themselves from others, is not Biblical. They are unique in their conservative dress and manner.

All of us are aware of the usage of design or style for specific representations. Customs, designs and styles generated for such purposes are not of



God. Frequently, designs or styles are introduced for a certain effect. That which depicts rebellion or revolt, that which accentuates the physical (intended to create lust) and that which is designed to destroy or mitigate the masculinity and femininity of God's created subjects, is categorically wrong. God is the creator of male and female. Their created purposes are not to be violated.

Rather than defensively argue relative to styles, habits, customs and other physical behavioral patterns, why do we not study and conform to the instructions of God's Word? Then, each should live up to his conviction. This, of course, is not to say God will not use an absolute standard when He judges. If all of us are aware of that fact and stand in fear of the Word of God, we cannot avoid an eventual harmony of belief and practice. The Bible does not reveal a multitude of ways, practices and customs. Yet, the Word of God — within certain basic guidelines — does afford the privilege of individuality. Rubber-stamp conformity is nowhere to be found in the pages of the Bible.

Lifestyles do earmark a true Christian. In all cases, he is not a conformist to this world (I John 2:15-17; Jas. 4:4; I Pet. 3:1-6; I Tim. 2:9-10). He sets a standard of cleanliness, decency, good taste and conservatism. As is true with spiritual concepts, the true Christian will not practice those things created by the Gentiles for whatever their avowed purposes (Deut. 12:29-32). He does not do that which appears right in his own eyes (Deut. 12:8; Judges 21:25; Prov. 16:25). He serves God in fear and respect. His foremost desire is to know and practice the will of God (Eph. 5:17). Since Satan is the god of this world, the Christian knows he cannot accept — at face value — his (Satan's) customs and practices (Luke 4:4-6).

All principles of the Bible teach the necessity of care and maintenance of possession and responsibility. We are the purchased possession of God. We belong to Him — completely. The care of the possession, God has entrusted to us individually. But the extent and scope of that care, God has determined — for we are the temples of the Holy Spirit. He has provided every necessity for the propitious discharge of that responsibility. We must judiciously and wisely use what God has provided — within each individual's financial capability.

Here seems the logical place to say a word about judging. The final judge has been appointed. The time has been determined. Any tendency on our part to censor, judge or criticize is a usurpation of that responsibility. Though chosen of God, we as human beings were called to obey — not to judge. James wrote, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:11-12.)

We are called to obey — to personally overcome — to live an exemplary life. We are to be lights — each of us, individually. (A concept which will be expanded in point number nine, below.)

Does the above imply there is no judgment in the Church? No! I Corinthians 6 explains the basis of church judgment. But, it is obvious, the scope of such judgment is limited. What is being said is this: We do not have the right to censor or prejudge one another — especially relevant to matters of personal likes or taste. Such factors do not adversely affect our internal Church relationships. Paul was inspired to elaborate on this point.

Is it mandatory to become vegetarians? Is abstinence from all alcoholic beverages required? Even a superficial understanding of the Bible will surely acquaint us with the fact that the answer to both questions is negative. Yet, for the sake of conscience and time required for spiritual growth, Paul wrote that a truly converted Christian ought to tolerate such abnormalities — even for a lifetime, if necessary (Rom. 14 and I Cor. 8). What is plainly taught is the necessity of proper spiritual orientation. Physical things, whether right or wrong (and many of them are wrong), should not become our preoccupation. Truly, as Christ said, we had better first consider the weightier matters of the law. In process of time, if the individuals are truly converted, the other matters of life will be understood and practiced. But, be careful that no time limitations are imposed. Paul said that, if necessary, a lifetime was not unrealistic.

9) Proving self daily. This point and the following ones will be covered only minimally, because I want to comprehensively cover them at a later time. They both deserve more consideration than that which can be given them in the contents of a Monthly Letter.

Paul said, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves . . ." (II Cor. 13:5). We all have the monumental responsibility of checking ourselves — not by comparing ourselves among ourselves, but in relationship to "the faith." What faith? Point 10 will cover this.

Paul further wrote, ". . . let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:4). Proving is not a reproofing of the doctrine — a reproofing of the way of life. It is the spiritual obligation of proving ourselves in relationship to that way of life given to us. And Paul said if we do not prove ourselves in that regard, we are reprobates (II Cor. 13:5). We have a lifetime charge to bring ourselves under control — to subdue the mind and heart. It is no easy task. If we are truly, aggressively pursuing that responsibility, it will manifest itself in a very tolerant attitude toward others! Why? Because, we are cognizant of the struggle which we fight, making us more sympathetic toward others. Deception on the part of the individual — with respect to his own trials — manifests itself in contempt and disgust for others.

If we are proving ourselves, we will overcome and grow in Christian character and tolerance. We will respect others as the called and chosen children of God.

10) Living by faith. Faith is the essential ingredient of salvation (Rom. 1:17). But faith in what? Is it solely a vaguely defined trust in God? James says faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17-26). So, having faith is far more than a mere expression, "I have faith." Indeed! Faith, as defined in the Bible, is an unswerving belief that God revealed to us His way of life. That which He revealed to His chosen servants is called "the faith." Then faith is the firm belief that God gave us, by divine revelation, a way of life. And that faith will manifest itself in continuity of belief. Those who have faith prove it by their loyal belief and practice of the revealed truth. These are the true Christians.

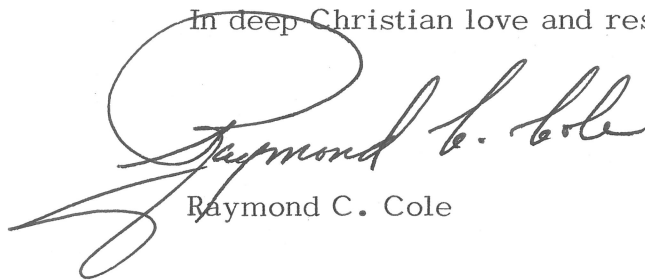
Let us prove ourselves — our faith. Let us be loyal to God. We can do so by remaining faithful to that priceless gift which He gave to us — to the very truth hidden from the world, the unconverted. And lost to those who had no love for the truth given to them. They departed from it, considering it an unholy thing.

Will we be faithful? Only time will tell. For we must endure unto the end — endure the temptations to forsake that way.

In conclusion, one small point needs to be mentioned. The library rate for returning tapes has increased. It is now 11¢ for the first pound or fraction and 4¢ for each additional pound or fraction thereafter. I hope this will help. Will attempt to keep you informed of such changes as they transpire.

Must hasten for other appointments. So, until next time, all our love and prayers.

In deep Christian love and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Raymond C. Cole