

Church of God, The Eternal

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Greetings, Brethren:

The Feast of Tabernacles 1986 imminently approaches. To observe it without purpose is meaningless. As this letter will show, to make a pretext of keeping this holy, sacred command of God without acceptable will and determination is even more personally indicting and tragic. God is a God of purpose. All His commands are replete with meaning and purpose for those who are called and who understand. Those only who truly do the will of God, Jesus said, will know the Truth and Way. It is time for those who really do know and love the Truth of God to uncompromisingly act upon the Word which has been revealed.

Since last year's Feast, it became obvious we all need to be more perfectly instructed in the Way of God. For this reason, a long series of cassette tapes has been made, from a series of sermons delivered here in Eugene, apprising us of our spiritual obligations before God. With the imminent approach of the Second Advent of Jesus Christ, it seems fitting and appropriate that due and necessary preparations be made.

Considering the foregoing instruction and correction, it seems even more fitting and appropriate that this issue of the Monthly Letter should capsulize those instructions and re-emphasize the need for personal mastery. With any extended activity which we undertake, a certain amount of preparation is essential. More significant, by far, than any mundane activity of this world is the required preparation inherent in the keeping of a rewarding and meaningful Feast of Tabernacles.

Since time is of the essence, let us prepare now to keep the Feast in a manner totally pleasing to God. An accomplishment achieved only by will and determination -- as we shall soon see.

Prepare NOW to Keep the Feast!

How does one prepare to keep a spiritual Feast? Out of what fabric is success in this endeavor achieved? Missing, failing to realize, or rejecting any of the steps of success will automatically consign us to the wretchedness of unhappy failure. Let us all give special heed to these Biblical obligations.

Human Beings Are Not Automaton: They Are Controlled by Mind

Animals, birds, and all other created creatures act according to a built-in feature -- instinct and/or an inborn pattern of activity, response; as Webster states it, "A largely inheritable and specific response to environmental stimuli without involving reason. . ." (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary). Man, however, was created different. He possesses the powers of reason, mental capability. He is not an automaton. He is accountable for the decisions he makes and the actions which he carries out. At the time of creation, God said, "Let us make man in our image [form and shape], and after our likeness [form and shape is involved, but the likeness of God implies powers and capabilities far beyond that possessed by any previous creation]. . ." (Gen. 1:26). The next statement of God assures us of this awesome power. He said, ". . . let them have dominion . . ." -- over all other creations. Such rule implies charge and responsibility. Though God did not put men under the rule of men, the whole context of the Bible makes it plain that each individual is held accountable for ruling himself. We shall see more of this point later. For the present, we want to emphasize only the general concept of mental capability -- the availability of mental power of reason and action. Men were created with minds.

Under inspiration the Apostle Paul stated: ". . . what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit [word often translated "mind"] of man which is in him? . ." (I Cor. 2:11). To know is a mental, learning process. It is the product of comparative experience and determined acquisition. And with the educational experience comes the requirement of acting on that knowledge.

Again of significance, at this juncture, is the understanding that man does not act by instinct. He is endowed with mind. He knows specific things by the usage of that mind.

Created with mind, yes! But what kind of mind was he given? In Biblical language, the natural mind (flesh mind) is called a carnal mind (Rom. 8:7). It is the mind of flesh -- a mind by which man can come to know and understand almost anything which is of a physical nature. But that natural mind is not harmonious with the mind of the Spirit. These two minds are in conflict with each other (Rom. 8:7, Gal. 5:17).

Physical men are subject to natural inclinations (Jas. 1:14). A nature which will destroy resolve and purpose unless we are determined. We can possess all the knowledge available of good, moral, righteous principles; of good laws of health and fitness; of honor, honesty, and integrity; and of business ethics -- yet that knowledge is of little value without the character to will, resolutely, obedience -- conformity. The avenues of justification for failure are legion.

Man a Rational Being: He Can Decide and Will to Do Right

As a mental, rational being, man can will to do right. He has the capacity to secure facts and make decisions. The problem is: By nature he is wrongly oriented (Jas. 4:5). His sense of direction is erroneous even though he may not realize this bad orientation.

Man was created in the likeness of God. He possesses options. But his problem is a lack of character. Even so, by nature and circumstance he is required to make decisions and learn from these inherent experiences.

As God has incisively stated, we are the offspring of our forefathers -- an ancestry which wrote many bitter, profound lessons for us. Can we learn the lessons vicariously? Or, must we, too, experience the actual pain and suffering for wrongs committed? The wise will always hear!

If Israel had listened and heeded the warnings of God, how convenient and rewarding would their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land have been. But these natural minds wanted to exercise their own powers of reason and responsibility. When confronted with final victory -- the inheritance of their promise -- they desired the right to evaluate and make decisions regarding entrance into the promised inheritance. But true to their natures, they reasoned themselves into monumental problems (Deut. 1:22-45). When affairs went bad they again reasoned themselves into deeper problems. Their second act was even more defiant than their first (vss. 41-43).

The point is this: They used the powers of mind -- a capability given to man only of all physical creatures. When making these decisions, they thought they were right. This is an inherent weakness of man -- one of two major weaknesses. The second area of weakness is the natural inability to carry out a resolve. The natural will of man is well intentioned, but it lacks the character to perform (compare Deut. 5:27 and 29).

Other weaknesses include the following. (A) By nature we are not consistent -- holding a firm, unbending resolve (Deut. 11:28). According to the old saying, man is as changeable as the wind. Circumstance rules in his life. He does not maintain dominion over himself. (B) The carnal will is frequently presumptuous and defiant (Deut. 17:12). It is whimsical and indifferent. Fundamental logic and reason are spurned and ridiculed. In its demand for recognition, the carnal will will refuse to consider the true picture, all the facts. At its worst the carnal will is wholly selfish and refuses to entertain doubt.

David is an example of Christian will to do right. He unequivocally said, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. 116:13). David had purposed in his heart and mind. He was mentally determined to live the knowledge of Truth which he possessed. He willed and then counted

on God to back him up in his endeavor. Based on revealed knowledge he was convicted. As a thinking, rational being, he acted upon this conviction, putting it into practice. He personally decided on the course of action he intended to pursue. Animals cannot perform in this manner. Only human beings were created with this Godlike trait -- mental will, purpose.

In many issues of life we must confront the apparent facts and then make some resolve. Remember, even failure to act is a form of will. It is thoroughly negative, but is nonetheless a decision to make no specific decision.

In I Corinthians we find an excellent example of the above decision-making process (I Cor. 7:37). The specific incident mentioned here may not apply to many people, but the general process applies to all human beings. A decision is needed. Once the right decision is made, we must have the character and resolve to carry that which we willed and purposed through to an absolute conclusion. Will and purpose are of little value if time and circumstance are permitted to progressively erode the conviction and dedication manifested initially. Will and consistency are absolutely vital. To manifest stubbornness and obstinacy without purpose, direction, and honesty is foolhardy. Notice a good example of right will in I Corinthians 8:11-13. Our will and purpose today ought to have the same premise.

In spiritual matters, much help from God is essential. We can will, but performance will remain elusive until we are imbued with another power whereby we can overcome the natural weaknesses of the flesh (Rom. 7:18). To some, God has promised that extra help. Who are those sufficiently blessed to manifest mastery over the natural, weak self?

The Called Can Obey by Will of Mind

In a prophecy of long range significance, through Moses, God made a most interesting promise. He said, ". . . the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul [body], that thou mayest live" (Deut. 30:6). That which differentiates between the "circumcised of heart" and an ordinary human being is the matter of action taken. The circumcised of heart can live according to the will of God. They obey. Others either make no effort to subscribe to the will of God or they employ a host of self-rationalizations regarding failure or actions taken. The honest, righteous, are struggling to live the whole of God's Truth -- His Word. Others are doing what comes to them naturally -- by a carnal mind or the lusts of the flesh.

Since the days of Jesus Christ, specifically, some are called -- their hearts are circumcised. They have come to abhor the self. They want the nature and character of God. They crucify the old self and make every effort to manifest the true nature of Christ and God, the Father. In this change lies a dual responsi-

bility. Initially, God wills our call -- the opportunity for change. Secondly, we must lay hold of this opportunity, effecting the required changes by the power of God (John 1:12-13). That power is the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9). In a very real way that Spirit is the mind of God. By this miraculous conversion, the called are now endued with the mind -- power, will, purpose, conviction, dedication -- of God. They have traded the weaknesses of the old carnal mind for the powerful, invigorating force of the new promised mind -- the mind of God. Those using the powerful mind of God are characterized by self-control. Through that mind, the will of God is made manifest (Eph. 1:9). The called act upon it. They live it. They wisely understand, evidenced by their controlled actions (Eph. 5:17). Willful obedience results (Ps. 119:8, 16, 47, 69). In a broader, more observable sense they keep God's statutes and laws. They come before God at the appointed place and in the appointed times (Ps. 5:7).

We cannot pray the prayer Christ taught (Matt. 6:10) unless we live according to the will of God. If we sincerely and earnestly desire the will of God manifested in the lives of others, surely we equally contend for that influence in our own lives (Ps. 143:10).

Who can hope to experience the promised brotherly relationship with God? Only those who do His will (Matt. 12:50). These are accepted and approved of God. They manifest willful mastery in their lives -- in all their relationships with other members of the family of God, or of the larger human family.

Christ lives no doubt! Though many claim a relationship with God, only those really living the will of God are offered the opportunity of everlasting life in His glorious, perfect, and undefiled kingdom (Matt. 7:21).

Human beings, though born with mental capacity, do not have the power of conviction and purpose to live the will of God. How, then, can man be saved? The life of Christ is our example. He will live His life in us if we submit. To understand, please read and evaluate the following texts: John 5:19, 30; 6:44, 65; 15:4-5, I Corinthians 2:14, Philipians 4:13, I Timothy 6:16.

Man is visible. Even though the Spirit is invisible, it nevertheless acts upon our minds and hearts to produce visible fruits. What are the manifested fruits of God's perfect will?

Fruits of the Will of God

For your benefit, these points are given succinctly and in outline form. They are essential and must be manifested in the lives of all who want to live the life pleasing to God and to inherit the promise of everlasting life. Note Matthew 7:15-20.

1. Love and outgoing concern: I Cor. 13:1-10.
2. Patience: Heb. 10:36, Luke 21:19, Jas. 1:4.

3. Faith: Heb. 11:1-40.
4. Control of all physical members: Ps. 39:1, Jas. 3:1-18, Ps. 1:1-2.
5. Understanding and compassion: Rom. 14:1-23, I Cor. 8:1-13.
6. Joy and happiness: Ps. 118:24, I Pet. 1:8.
7. Forgiveness: Pss. 32:5; 38:18, Matt. 5:14-15.

Peter was inspired to write: ". . . if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1:8-10). The Feast of Tabernacles is our time to annually rehearse these things in a closed atmosphere. We are all together. What a glorious time to live and derive the benefits from these actions -- ways.

The intent of this Letter is to prepare those who will hear and heed to receive full measure of God's blessings at the Feast this year. By knowledge and conviction (purpose) we can live exemplary lives -- an actual foretaste of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. It can be a time when Christ will rule in hearts and minds. The choice is ours. We are rational beings. We have minds with which to prepare and execute.

Let us take a brief look into what the Feast of Tabernacles 1986 should be to us. Indeed, it should be, and can be, if we really want that Way controlling our hearts, minds -- and manifested in all our actions and thoughts.

The Feast of Tabernacles: A Time to Manifest the Will of God

Man with his weaknesses and shortsightedness needs periodic spiritual renewal. God provided that in the annual observance of the Holy Days. Through those holy, sacred times, the plan and purpose of God are in a very real way imprinted upon our minds and hearts. Paul spoke of this activity as a renewal (Rom. 12:2).

By nature of the convocation itself, we are afforded the opportunity of self-examination. How do we react to other people? What kind of mental control do we possess? Do we luxuriate in the physical or the spiritual? Can we truly divorce ourselves from the fears, troubles, problems, and entanglements of this world? The Feast is a time to really evaluate (examine) the self (Ps. 26:1-6, II Cor. 13:5).

If we really love God, that fact will be abundantly manifested throughout the eight-day convention. We will manifest the operation of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. We will live all the Word of God to the full (John 14:23). Knowing our own natural weaknesses, we will emulate Christ -- our example (John 5:30;

6:38-40). Our service to all will be plainly observable (Eph. 6:7). We will make a renewed effort to see that the whole will of God be written permanently in our hearts and minds (I Pet. 4:1-2).

The Final Appeal

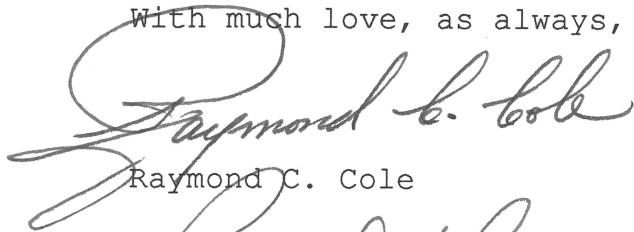
The Feast draws nigh. We have but little time to prepare to keep the Feast -- to meet our God in a very special way. If you will remember, the annual Holy Days were specially designated times on which God came into the congregation of Israel. Would God treat His spiritual tabernacle any differently? We think not.

Regarding the literal kingdom, the Apostle John was inspired to write: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). How many of us are athirst? How many are heartily desirous of living the Way of God, in a kingdom atmosphere? All who really want that Way are welcomed into the presence of God. But no man will be forced. This Way of life is too priceless to be compelled upon the reluctant. It belongs to those who love the laws, commandments, and ways of God (Rev. 22:14).


Since 1975 we have longed for the Feast when the will of God would be abundantly manifested by all those who attend. Yet, all too frequently, Satan has been able to efface the real meaning by manifesting his ugly character.

We can draw from God all the power necessary. Are we sufficiently converted to draw on this power and live God's Way? Let us, at the Feast of 1986, prove we can live the Word of God fully. We believe we all can!

With much love, as always,



Raymond C. Cole



Bryce G. Clark