

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Very fraternal greetings to all:

Here we are in the month of July already, and in only two and a half months we will be observing the Fall feasts. All of us here were very happy to have Mr. Cole among us for a few days; his visit and his messages were a source of blessings and encouragement for everyone.

At certain times and under certain circumstances, we tend to show by the various attitudes or remarks we make that we are somehow put at a disadvantage in this life because of the call which God tendered to us. We do not consider what we would have become, the conditions we would be living in, if God had not called us.

I remember meeting a man in the Church many years ago who had gone through very painful and tragic experiences in his life. This man was a prisoner in a concentration camp for a time. From the beginning I had a great liking for this person and we chatted with each other quite often. One time, as he was telling me the kind of existence that he had endured in this concentration camp, he said to me, "I will never leave the Church, because I don't want to have to go through what I went through again." At that time the Church was synonymous with the Truth. It was the pillar and ground of the Truth. As Paul said, ". . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). And at that time we all thought that the Church would continue without any difficulty until the return of Christ; we thought that our remaining faithful to an organization was sufficient to be saved. Thus the statement, "I will never leave the Church."

So, for this man, the sacrifices and difficulties which he had encountered due to the changes which he had to effect in his own life since his call were nothing in comparison with what he had lived through in the past. This man had lost everything; he had suffered from hunger, cold, and brutality; he had lived without knowing what was happening to his wife and children. His incredibly horrifying past could still be read on his face and in his eyes. He had lived through a period of his life when he knew each day could have been his last. As we know, human beings are subjected to the most horrible conditions in a concentration camp. These conditions are intended to dissuade people from their reasons for living; and yet many showed courage. Without the help of God's Spirit they manifested a certain dignity in their sufferings; they refused to become traitors, and did not let things get them down. As long as they had life, they had hope, hope of having health, family, happiness, a good job, and all the other things again.

We who were called and chosen by God should ask ourselves the following questions: What irreplaceable loss have we suffered because we want to obey God? Are we really put at a disadvantage in this life because we are prisoners of Jesus Christ? This is difficult to believe! Is it God's way which creates problems for us? Or is it not rather our own reasonings and conceptions which we do not want to get rid of because we have not yet realized that we are not as important as we think? "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Ps. 62:9-11). Without doubt, whether rich or poor, our condition is extremely modest in all respects, except in our behavior which expresses pride or a lack of humility. Man is nothing else than a little dust; of himself, he has no intrinsic value. So compared with God, we are less than nothing, but we are not convinced of it. Our thoughts full of vanity make us believe that we are somebody, and that we are put at a disadvantage in this life by having been called by God. Such is showing arrogance in God's sight.

It is therefore *our* minds which cause us problems, minds full of pride, which through conversion must come to manifest humility. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down [be humbled], and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isa. 2:11-12).

The day will come when human beings will be put on their true level, and this is what God wants us to do now, voluntarily. Does He want us to be losers? No! For "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). Then when our thoughts are puffed up with pride to the point of believing that we are put at a disadvantage in this life by having been called to the knowledge of the Truth, we are going to find ourselves in a very bad situation. This is why we read, "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth" (Prov. 30:32). In other words, have control over yourself, humble yourself before God.

How many of us when called said, "I have found the Truth"? "I have found it"! An exclamation which is false and full of pride. For *God gives the Truth*, reveals it; we did not find it at all. Such an attitude is manifested in many areas. So God finds Himself forced to humble us; and He does it so that we will come to walk humbly in the way which He gave to us. How many people compromise with God's laws and judgments out of pride? If God has given us the understanding of His Way of life, we should remember that it is dangerous knowledge, for God holds us responsible for the use we make of it. God wants us to learn to humbly conform our lives to every one of His words. How serious is this attitude and behavior which expresses pride, a lack of humility? The Bible shows us the advantage of being humbled and remaining humble, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15). He whose heart is contrite has nothing to boast about. He puts his trust in God and implores God to help him to stay humble. Yes, God progressively creates humility in each one of us. To put us at a disadvantage in this life? No! Quite the contrary, He does it so that we can enjoy a most intimate relationship with our God. "For know, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your

mind to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard. . ." (Dan. 10:12, RSV). What a priceless privilege, in the times in which we live, to be able to address God knowing that He hears us. But what troubling situations we have to go through sometimes to become humble, to be fully aware of our powerlessness and to learn to walk humbly in the way which God gave to us. As long as we think that we are capable of directing our lives with the Truth of God mixed with some of our own conceptions, we are not humble; consequently, God does not hear us, and when God does not hear us, we receive no help from Him. Then we start sinking until, completely helpless, we are humbled. There lies the cause of our problems, the reason why we are sometimes put at a disadvantage in this life. It is the pride of our natural mind which causes us so many problems. But when we let ourselves be humbled, then God listens to us again.

David said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted [humbled]; that I might learn thy statutes." Why do we have to be humbled in order to learn? Because we think that we know everything or that we know enough; we persist in defiling the Truth of God with our own conceptions. In other words, we are puffed up with pride in God's sight. Brethren, we must absolutely overcome our pride, haughtiness, and arrogance, and stop thinking that we know everything, that we do everything perfectly to the point of accusing God when things do not go as we would like.

Christ Himself became obedient unto death; and what death? The death of the cross. He humbled Himself. In the same way, humility must be manifested in our thoughts, attitude, and conduct.

How are we going to reach the level of humility exemplified by Christ?

There are two ways. The painful way: The great tribulation when excruciating sufferings will be comparable to those suffered by the people who went through the concentration camps. For some, it will be the only way of bringing them to walk humbly with their God. In distress we are humbled, and this is the painful way of being humbled.

The other way is that God wants us to humble ourselves voluntarily. How? By submitting ourselves, with a right spirit, to instruction, training, and trial in all forms, since they are necessary to bring us to this state of humility.

Yes, we must suffer a loss in this present life. It is the loss of pride, but it is a loss which will bring us great advantages now and in the future. Christ emphasizes to us, "Take my yoke upon you [in other words, let yourselves be subdued, accept the will of God, His Word in all its purity], . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29). Jesus Christ says to us: Do not make a failure of your life by getting tired of being humbled. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls." It is the simplest and least painful way of reaching humility.

Brethren, let us quench our thirst by resorting to the true spiritual waters which God has given us, instead of becoming intoxicated with adulterated conceptions which flatter our vanity but cause us many difficulties.

God loves us. He did not call us to put us at a disadvantage; on the contrary, He is always willing to succor us if we show humility. Let us not grow weary of putting our trust in Him. Let us not run the risk of pointing our finger at Him because of *our* difficulties, or accusing either His Way of life or someone else in order to justify a difficult situation we may be going through. To do so is to bring the anger of God down on oneself.

Let our conduct be honorable in the sight of our Savior, who humbled Himself by giving His life for us.

Thank you, brethren, for your efforts. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your firmness and your honesty.

My family and I express our sincerest respect and affection for you.



Jean Aviolat