

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Through these few words I renew the expression of my deep affection for all those who with patience and serenity do not grow slack in doing what is good.

The life of a called out one is not a dream; it is a struggle in the arena of time which is allotted to us wherein we must leave a noble mark of our behavior, our faithfulness, and our dedication so that the spirit agitated by doubt and fear can find hope, courage, and faith again. As we are exhorted by the Apostle Paul, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as light in the world" (Phi'p. 2:14-15). It is, therefore, at all times that we must do what is good, being very careful not to put off those actions or neglect them, for time is short and it devours anything that is not immortal. After that, as Jesus Christ said, "[Men] shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29).

An extremely difficult act is to accept trial, circumstances without complaining, and to be patient. Like Peter, we must let ourselves be girded and led where God wants. That school can seem very long sometimes, but, it is in turn, step by step, that we are carved into the perfect stature of Christ. That is the purpose of this life for those called of God. And for God this life is but a very short moment. "For the creature [that is man] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:20-21). The called in the flesh just cannot live the perfection of God, but, because he has wanted to do what is good, the day will come when he will be delivered from that lack of capability by finally partaking of the glory of the children of God. That glory will be the permanent destruction of the physical with all its weaknesses, as well as to be born into the state of the divine, with divine character, divine power, with divine goodness. This is a promise which God made to His creatures whom He first made subject to vanity. The Apostle Paul, understanding perfectly God's purpose for

humankind and having faith in this promise of God, said, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). The Apostle Paul was fully aware of the discipline to which he had to subject his own life and the trials which he had to endure before he could partake of that transition—which is to be born into the divine family. This is why he exhorts his fellow-warrior, Timothy, saying, "Thou therefore endure hardness [take your share of suffering, RSV], as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3).

From time immemorial God has tried those whom He has chosen and who have had faith in His way of life. In Noah's time already the wickedness of man was great in the earth, "but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). What was special in that man for him to find grace in the eyes of the Lord? ". . . Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (v. 9). So God entrusted him with the task of building an ark in order to save his entire family—which was going to be a test of faith for Noah. For a long period of time, while exposed to the scoffs and the wickedness of people, he had to trust in God's promise that he and his family would be saved from the flood. In verse 22 we read, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." The Apostle Paul wrote about it in Hebrews 11. He said, that by his faith, Noah condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Another test which is recorded for us is Abraham's—who, after having waited for the promised son until his old age—received the order to go to a specific place to offer him for a burnt offering.

What did Abraham do? "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass . . . and went unto the place of which God had told him" (Gen. 22:3). And there in that place Abraham was willing to do what God expected of him. It was only at the last moment that he was given the order not to slay his son. The purpose of that great trial was that God wanted to know to what extent Abraham would be obedient to Him. The angel sent by God told him, ". . . now I know that thou fearest God . . ." (v. 12).

Jacob mourned for his son Joseph many days, thinking that he had been devoured by a wild beast; instead he had been sold by his brothers into slavery. It was only late in his old age, Jacob had to go down into Egypt, that he saw his son Joseph again.

Joseph, as a young man, was not only separated from his family but he also had to live God's way of life alone in the midst of a foreign nation, and he spent several years in prison because he refused to sin against God in accepting the advances of his master's wife who made false accusation against him. Thus he had to bear his difficulties with patience and wait for God to get him out of them. Having shown faithfulness, his character having been

shaped by years of trials, Joseph finally became the governor of Egypt and an important link in God's purpose toward His people.

In Hebrews 11 we read that Moses chose ". . . rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward [for he looked to the reward, RSV]" (vv. 25–26).

Job had to lose his children, his possessions, and his health. God let him be attacked by Satan in order to try his integrity, his faithfulness. We read, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly [Job did not charge God with wrong, RSV]" (Job 1:22). ". . . In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). After having been tested and taught by that hard trial, we read that ". . . the Lord turned the captivity of Job . . . the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10).

Jeremiah made the following statement, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones" (Lam. 3:1–4). "And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity [my soul is bereft of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is, RSV]. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (vv. 17–18). *Jeremiah suffered grievously from the opposition to God's way by his fellow citizens who were God's people.* He spent many years in prison; he was thrown into a cistern. God let Jeremiah be very sorely tried to the point where he felt the deepest discouragement sometimes. But in spite of all the miseries, all the slanders, all the persecutions which he had to endure, Jeremiah was a servant faithful and dedicated to God. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. 3:24–26).

The three Hebrews in the service of King Nebuchadnezzar preferred the trial of the burning fiery furnace rather than submit themselves to the orders of the king which were to serve his gods and bow down before a golden statue.

The faithfulness of Daniel was tried through a decree forbidding for thirty days to address prayers to other gods than the king. Daniel ignored the king's decree and continued to kneel three times a day to praise his God. The test even brought him to the den of lions.

All those examples show us that in the most various and painful trials we can always count on God's interventions, favor, and direction.

Stephen was a young man who accepted death without the slightest hesitation rather than compromise with any point of the Truth of God in order to please men. And just before dying he asked God to forgive those who were stoning him; for he too had God's intervention so that he could endure that trial; he ". . . saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

The Apostle Paul went through hard trials. "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself" (II Cor. 1:8, RSV).

Jesus Christ had to face and bear men's most ignominious actions. Even His disciples could not watch with Him in that moment of sorrow and anguish which He went through before being betrayed by one of the twelve.

In Acts 14:22 we read, ". . . we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The trial is therefore allowed and even approved by God. But ". . . God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted [or tried] above that ye are able . . ." (I Cor. 10:13). That is why there is diversity of trials, there are different levels of intensity. God wants called human beings who are completely faithful and devoted to Him—that will be proved through a test. We do not know in advance the ultimate trial which God will make us or let us undergo.

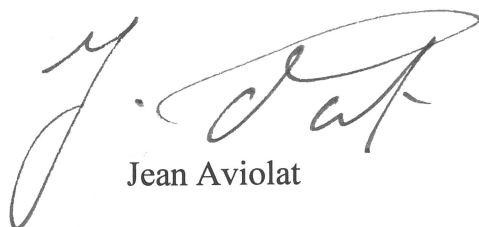
Concerning the last days, we see in Revelation 15:2 that for some the test will be to face the established diabolical system and refuse to walk in its footsteps. ". . . them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name . . ." In Revelation 7 we see that others will go through the trial of the great tribulation. ". . . [T]hey . . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v. 14). Others are chosen by God to complete the number of their fellow-servants and brethren who are to be killed as they were (Rev. 6:11). In Revelation 2:10 we see that God is going to allow Satan to attack certain called out ones. God gives the following advice: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days . . ." Here is a tribulation which brings about great mental suffering. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places [the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world, *Living Bible*]" (Eph. 6:12). Here God is going to let some be subjected to the attacks of Satan, be cast into prison, that is, feel forsaken by God, as Job experienced it, as Jeremiah who cried out, "Though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer" (Lam. 3:8, RSV). Even the Son of God, nailed to the stake, cried out, "My God, my God, why have you



forsaken me?" Thus, in the last days God will let some called undergo such a trial. And what God expects of them is faithfulness to His way unto death. God says, ". . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). So, brethren, whatever trial God makes or lets us go through, we must have the courage to remain faithful unto death. For God says, ". . . He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2:11). "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). God can allow a trial which requires our life; but, as Jesus Christ stated, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing . . ." (John 6:63). For ". . . flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God . . ." (I Cor. 15:50). God allows trial not in order to lose those called, "For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (Lam. 3:33), but He does it so that He can make sure of our faithfulness.

Then, brethren, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?" (Rom. 8:35) To encounter such circumstances is not a defeat in itself, for if we have faith in our call, the victory comes from the Holy Place. This is what the Apostle Paul affirms, ". . . we are *more* than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Job, after having been tried, said to God, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" (Job 40:4). To withstand adversity remaining silent, to show by our attitude in trial that we have an implicit faith in the promises of God, let this, brethren, be our motto throughout the time allotted to us by God to live in the flesh. Then the day will come when we shall partake of the liberty of the glory of the children of God. But while we are waiting for that day, let us watch and pray so that we do not fall into the temptation to become unfaithful for the momentary satisfaction of the flesh. ". . . [T]he spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" states Jesus Christ in Matthew 26:41. To fight against the self is the most difficult war, but to conquer the self is the most beautiful victory.

My respectful and brotherly greetings to everyone,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Aviolat', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name 'Jean Aviolat'.

Jean Aviolat