

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren,

We have just returned from one of the most glorious and inspirational Feasts of Tabernacles any of us have ever observed. I have heard many and varied comments from a significant cross-section of those who were privileged to attend.

Further, thankfully, and certainly not unexpected, we have heard of not one single major problem encountered by the members returning home. It is most comforting and encouraging to know that the promises of God (Ex. 34:24, Prov. 16:7) are valid and always upheld for those who love and honor Him with faithful obedience. If we encounter problems we should never hold God accountable. As always, when difficulty strikes, the only correct orientation of mind is to begin to question the self. Historically this is where most men fail. They do not want to judge and condemn the self. Usually, they will find some excuse which justifies their spiritual failures. How can we grow in the Spirit and mind of Jesus Christ until effectuating a critical evaluation of the self, admission of wrong, and a willingness to thoroughly repent of wrongs contemplated and committed? Evaluation and censure of another party will not assist us in any way in required personal growth.

Even though there are several issues to cover yet before the subject of "The Purpose for the Written Word of God" is completed, it is deemed necessary to suspend the continuation of the subject for this issue of the *Monthly Letter*. Following such a successful Feast, we would like to capitalize on the inspiration, enthusiasm, and hopefulness generated. Therefore:

"Let Us Go on unto Perfection"

In Hebrews 6:1 the Apostle Paul used this expression to urge the people to resist the tendency to mark time in education and growth, spiritually. Equilibrium is essential in many areas of life. It is a curse in others. Above all, let us never be satisfied with our own growth and development in the areas of required improvement and self-mastery. How carefully do

we evaluate the self? Do we tend to use rose-tinted glasses when we evaluate the self? Do we seek the help of those most spiritually capable of helping and advising? Or, do we assume that our own mental conclusions are sufficiently accurate? If so, how do we explain the concepts which occur to us naturally—those things which are simply the manifestations of concepts which seem right to us? None of us can change that which we refuse to hear, accept, and for which deep repentance is required! How you view the self is probably the least effective yardstick by which to begin the daily duty of self-mastery. At the same time the least desired is terrifying persecution and/or horrendous personal loss. Yet, those who do not personally seek the help needed for self-mastery are destined to experience the ultimate attention-getter—that personal loss or hurtful persecution.

Let us turn our attention to the past Feast. Let us carefully evaluate what happened. Why? Conditions and circumstances are produced. They do not just happen. Therefore, a successful Feast came about because of acceptable planning, good execution of responsibilities, and broad participation of all who attended. And perhaps as important, yes, even more important than most of the others combined, the hearing of the people—hearing demonstrated by the fact there was a visible, observable, manifestation of the principles taught. A teacher is always most pleased and mentally rewarded by an observable manifestation of his concepts and principles as they are being employed—in this case lived—by his students.

Our Petitions before the Feast

James was inspired to write: ". . . ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2-3). We received! Does this assure us that our prayers were honorable and that God gave to us the petitions of our hearts? Yes, indeed, if that which was received was a permissible item and that which was a promise of God. Far too often people are inclined to judge God on the basis of the physical things obtained. Of course, physical things are not wrong; however, they are at best secondary. What really counts is an abundance of spiritual blessings. Those truly called are motivated by things spiritual. The carnal will always look to the physical. Therein lies an observable line of demarcation. The truly converted mind is capable of judging all things.

What were our petitions? Weeks before the Feast we were asked to pray that God would give us a time free from the influence of Satan and his troubling activities. We sought the favor of God in granting us good weather. We sought a time of enjoyment and fellowship with those of like minds and hearts. And if we did that which was required, we asked God to grant us amiable minds and hearts—attitudes of self-effacement and a willingness to bear the burdens, of whatever nature they may be, imposed upon us by virtue

of close contact with one another and the stress generated by the ritualistic grind of an eight-day meeting.

To whatever degree understood by God, we were successful. The fruits borne are living proof. Those same fruits now leave us without excuse or rational justification regarding the future. We can live the ways of God. He knows it. We, also. We are now expected to go on to perfection.

Before getting ahead of ourselves, we need to return to those foundational principles which were involved. Our personal relationships with God. The degree and fervency of our prayers before God. And the basis of our confidence in God.

Based on a past year of unbelievable experiences, we knew that we had to seek the help of God. We needed overt action on His part. To know that He was still among us and that we could expect His great blessings and manifested love. As was the case with King Jehoshaphat many years earlier. He was confronted with a visible army; we with an invisible. Action required was comparable. Fearing God, we knew, as he did, that a very real intervention was necessary. It is written of him: "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord" (II Chron. 20:3-4). We did not call a fast. But, we did ask that all pray and that they should earnestly seek the will of God.

In what lay our confidence and assurance? In the inspiring promises of God and Christ Jesus. Let us note just a few of those promises.

1. "Ask, and it shall be given you . . . For every one that *asketh* receiveth . . ." (Matt. 7:7-8).
2. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22).
3. "And *whatsoever* ye shall ask *in my name*, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).
4. "If ye *abide* in me, and *my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).
5. "And *in that day* ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall *ask the Father in my name*, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24).

God Delivered

Many prayers ascended to God. He heard. And He answered in a most magnificent and rewarding way. Indeed, our joy should have been full. However, the depth of our appreciation will be manifested only in continuity of that initiated behavior—behavior exhibited at the Feast. The divine nature is eternal—consistently the same. Unless we exhibit the enduring nature of the Spirit, we will most assuredly slip back into the erratic and rollercoaster orientation of the flesh.

In many respects efforts of Satan and his followers were observable. In every case, however, the effects of his actions, or the influence designed to injure or disrupt were held back. The camp of Israel was kept free of the taint of Satanic activity. For instance, a hurricane which created much devastation in other areas, went directly through the area appointed by God for the Feast, yet without any visible damage in the appointed area. At the beginning of the Feast, the weather was nearly perfect. We scarcely see how it could have been much better. Those conditions continued until the very end. As the closing hours approached so did inclement weather. God favors and greatly blesses His own obedient people. In Newport, though a cold front passed through at the very beginning, the remaining days were grand and so very greatly appreciated by many.

A virtual epidemic of flu struck Townsend. For the people of God the duration and severity of the illness—for the most part—were incredibly limited. Usually a day of rest and those struck were back at services. God was beneficent and very compassionate to us all. Certainly Satan was not allowed to devastate the people of God and in turn destroy the meaning of the Feast. There is always so much for which to be thankful. Yet, the scourge should give us sufficient reason to ponder. The question is, why? Perhaps we will understand in due time. It is our prayer that the concept of time and chance will not cause us to dismiss the situation without appropriate spiritual evaluation.

God answered. He did bless. We were marvelously protected, inspired, and assisted by His benevolence and compassion. Now we must use the experience of the Feast this year as a springboard into the future. The foundation upon which to build our future aggressive and purposeful spiritual orientation. There are five basic areas which need to be analyzed and comprehended. From this action we can profit much.

The Sermons

The Feast is truly a time of spiritual feasting. We come together primarily to hear the Word of God. Having done our part earlier, God had inspired and guided in the formulation of the messages which He intended to be delivered. The spiritual meat given is of value only when acted upon. It was that very response which produced the glorious Feast which we

experienced. Now we must continue to live those same truths in our daily lives. Let us not relax our vigil. We do not want to lose any ground. What can be lived in that appointed place for eight to ten days can also be lived on a daily basis in our own home areas. God holds us accountable.

The Fellowship

An integral part of the Christian way of life. Our fellowship is in the Father, the Son, and with one another (I John 1:1-7). Such relationships are the very essence of "that way of life." The antithesis of man's natural response—the way of the flesh. Indeed, by our very relationships within the Body of Christ we can know our "God," our spiritual orientation, and our anticipated future glory (I John 3:10-16). In fact, how we respond to those called and chosen of God can and does tell us what our relationship with the One and only True God is (I John 4:20-21). If we cannot love, admire, and respect one member of the Body of Christ, how can we love the Body—that Body which is the Body of Christ? Let us not be deceived by words! (I John 2:9-11) Actions speak much more loudly than do mere words. Would we be perfect? Then let us guard the portals of our mouths (Jas. 3:2).

Insight

Without doubt we saw ourselves in a light which is quite different than customary to us. We knew that restraints were necessary. We knew that self-control in all areas of life was essential. We lived many of the things which we had come to understand and those concepts which we were then hearing via the sermons. Good things do not just happen. They are produced. Hearts and minds were in tune with God and His marvelous ways of life. Nothing can, or ever will, efface the fact we experienced one of the most meaningful, if not the most meaningful, Feasts He has allowed us to attend. Now we have been granted the insight to know what we should do constructively and that which we must avoid. Doing it is not going to be easy. It will require the will of God, Himself. Thankfully, that power has been promised to us. All we need do is ask for it.

Consistency

Eight to ten days is a relatively short period of time, even for mere human beings. Eternity is a long, long, time. Those born into immortality, must have proven the will and determination to be consistent, not just for a short period of time during the Feast. Let us seize this opportunity to go on to perfection—to pursue the same principles applied at the Feast, and even expand upon them. Let us not begin to look back. If consistency is not desired today, how can we possibly desire the reaches of eternity? Such an orientation is

possible only when we love the way of truth and righteousness far more than we do the momentary pleasures of a physical orientation.

Purpose

God knew the end from the beginning. There is nothing occurring which is not by the express will of God. Nothing can interfere with that plan or purpose. We, however, cannot so will. Our aspirations and purposes must always be regulated in the context of that which is "according to the will of God." In those areas with which we are most concerned, that will has been made known. We must make it a part of our will. The avenues of self-expression are innumerable. Only the one whose mind and heart are fixed in faith and confidence will refuse to deviate even momentarily from the visionary objective. The one who can and will find that promised life (Matt. 7:14). Do you realize that you can, and should, will yourself to be faithful and to make it into the Kingdom of God? To do so requires only the total surrender of the self. To submit yourself to God and His Son, Jesus Christ. To do those things which are right and are pleasing in the sight of God.

And finally, the future: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34). Sage advice regarding those physical things which seem to be so all-consuming, important, to men. Yet, "Where there is no vision, the people perish . . ." (Prov. 29:18). Life objectives are of grave significance. Or, as Christ put it, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). In other words, the purpose for man being here on earth goes far beyond the mere fact of existence. In that sense we must be visionaries. Our lives must, therefore, be regulated daily on the basis of that purpose for which we exist. The daily fruits borne are always revealing. By them one can know both the children of God and the children of Satan. For that person who carefully evaluates himself, both frailties and strengths can be ascertained. The strengths can be enhanced. The frailties can be overcome and eventually destroyed. For the overcomers are the ones who will inherit the kingdom.

Let us keep our eyes fixed upon that goal. As the called, and faithful of God, you have the privilege and opportunity to be successful. You are the children of God. Future success remains the responsibility of each—alone. No one can take you out of the hand of God. You alone have that charge. Further, you are not judged on the basis of how well someone else has done. Nor are you accountable for pointing out the flaws, defects, and needs of others. You are accountable, with respect to others, only for assisting them in carrying heavy burdens encountered. But, never forget, you are accountable for judging the self—incisively. Others will be able to read the product by the fruits which are borne (I Cor. 3:2-3).

Since we must not mark time, next year should reveal great improvement and growth. In vision let us begin planning what that next occasion will be. Let us set the standard high, and then set about reaching for that goal. With the help of God all things are possible. If we cater to the evil whimsical self, we cannot achieve any worthwhile spiritual objectives.

Today—The Present

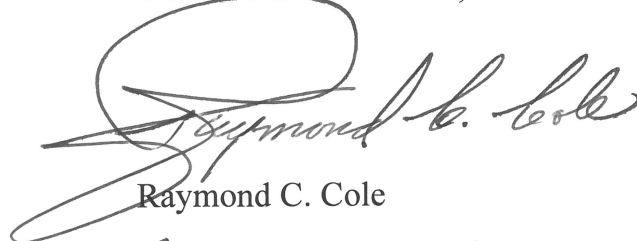
Tomorrow is made up of today's successes and mistakes. And the richness of tomorrow is invariably proportionate to the objective lessons learned today. These being self-evident facts let us ask ourselves:

1. What did we learn this year? Be specific.
2. What things did we do which contributed to the success of the Feast?
3. What personal weaknesses surfaced? Changes which need to be made?
4. Are there amends needful?
5. What responsibilities do I personally bear before God—those for which I am accountable?
6. What about my attitude—in heart and mind?
7. In what condition do I hope to present myself next year? Growth necessary?

Use the mind of Christ to evaluate the self. Find satisfaction in self-mastery. It is a game of life—real life, life everlasting. With dedication and purpose what a gigantic difference can be made next year.

God called us to be successful. We also are counting on you. One of these days, the tally must be added up. We do not know when that day comes. Let us begin now to make a difference.

Your servants in Christ,



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