

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

It gave me much pleasure to be able to see the faces of many again through the videotape which my son Jean-David brought back from the Feast of Tabernacles. The brethren here had a good Feast, too. Several years in a row now, before our arrival at the chosen place, God made it snow on the mountains and on the glacier which overlook the village. He turned them white, He cleansed them from the blackness caused by pollution, thus giving us a panorama of magnificent purity and showing us at the same time what He expects of us as far as our hearts and our minds are concerned.

Now the winter season has arrived. In some areas snow, flake upon flake, has covered the plain, and the trees which lost their golden leaves are clothed with white wool. Except for the noises of human civilization it is the season of silence. It took only a moment to make the sap numb, to make the singing of the birds cease, to make life become dormant everywhere for a while. God's law alone lives for ever, for a resurrection is promised. In a few months from now the sap will flow in all the branches and the bushes again, thousands of buds with beautiful shades will appear and the birds' chorus will start again early in the morning. It is spring which arouses hope in the entire creation of God. "The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter" (Psa. 74:16-17). "God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend. For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength" (Job 37:5-6). Yes, indeed, God accomplishes great things which exceed our knowledge. But everything He accomplishes is done for a purpose. In Psalm 147:16 we read, "He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes." The prophet Isaiah wrote, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:10-11). These texts show us that God is in charge and that

He knows how all things must be carried out so that His purpose may be fulfilled on this earth and in the life of each of His called.

It seems that the most difficult thing for us as human beings is to believe in the activity of God in our lives, to believe that what God does, He does in order to achieve an objective. In Revelation 3:11 Jesus Christ said, addressing those who have received the truth of God, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." The purpose of that knowledge which we have been given and which must be lived in our lives, is that we may finally be crowned. The Apostle Peter speaks about it, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4). We must therefore hold fast, that is, live fully what we have received lest we be robbed of this promised crown by the deceitfulness of our own mind, of our own conceptions, and by the deceit of men. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [the temptation to live as one pleases and not according to God's instructions]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (Jas. 1:12).

The problem encountered by many called in our generation is not the lack of knowledge, but it is a lack of perseverance in the knowledge which they have received and understood; it is a lack of patience for the intervention of God and a lack of confidence in the faithfulness of God. In Hebrews 10:22–23 we read, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)." Holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering is believing in the truth and in the faithfulness of God without growing slack. At the time of our call, our joy, our confidence, were unlimited. In those bright days of our spiritual spring, no trial, no shadow, could alter our vigor. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions" (Heb. 10:32). Then came the day when God deemed it good to subject our faith to a severe test. It was a new horizon for everyone. We understand that our call is a great responsibility which rests on our shoulders and that it is through many struggles, many afflictions, and much perseverance that we are not going to let our crown slip. But some, being unwilling to endure the trial of faith, have sought rest by establishing a dreadful system—a system of compromise and slackening which leads them to borrow the ways of the world which they had once forsaken. While others still hear the imperative voice which says, "Continue in the difficult struggle, you will rest when night comes." Could it be true that from the trials which present themselves to our eyes, and which are sometimes worse than the night of the first death, result a supreme good? That is a question which creates doubts in many minds. Only the one who really believes in the work of God and in His faithfulness remains a pilgrim. Although tired, sometimes he or she climbs the last peak to see the horizon brighten. Nothing can darken the hope which sustains such a pilgrim. With patience he or she believes and waits, wanting no part in the dreadful system of the unbelievers. Brethren, we must always remember that God called us,

cleansed us by the blood of His Son, gave us His way of life and that we are His workmanship. We have already borne many things, faced numerous battles in order to honor the call which we received. But it is until the end that we must persevere with the same vigor, the same determination, for He is faithful that promised.

Can we manifest that confidence, that belief, which Abraham and his wife had? "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11). The Bible tells us that from this couple was created a posterity which was going to become as large as the number of the stars of the sky. That was not within the power of those two beings. Then how could that be realized? They considered God trustworthy. They just simply believed and accepted God's promises, remaining faithful and obedient. What are our reactions toward the promises which God makes to us and which we have understood? An incorruptible crown of righteousness is reserved for us. It will be given to us when Jesus Christ comes back if we have believed, held fast, lived to the end that knowledge which God enabled us to understand. Can we accept the promises of God in all their simplicity—with the trust of a small child? And do we act in all simplicity according to those promises because we know that God is trustworthy and that He is faithful in the promises which He made? Depending on the circumstances which we go through, we may sometimes have some difficulty in orienting ourselves. But it is easy to get ahold of ourselves if we accept and believe with simplicity what God enabled us to understand. The difficulty increases when we let ourselves be influenced by doubt. But we can act and repent. What God expects of His people is repentance and confidence in the absolute truth of His Word. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). What a promise if we can recognize the areas in which we fail in God's sight and if we can repent. That should fill us with courage, for nothing is lost. God is even willing to be extremely patient until the coming of His Son so that we will have attained the necessary spiritual maturity and we will be judged worthy to receive that promised crown. In II Peter 3:9 we read, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Who are these people for whom God is longsuffering? It is us, all those whom God has called in this generation of the second coming of Jesus Christ. And we see why God shows such patience to us: ". . . not willing that any should perish [that is, should be condemned to eternal death], but that all should come to repentance." *All!* That is all those who have received this priceless gift, which is the opportunity to live by the truth of God. God shows clearly here by these statements that His people in the last days have grown slack and that they have not come yet to manifest the belief and the sincere obedience which God expects of them before He can finally present that crown of life to them. Therefore God is still granting us time so that we can repent and prove to Him that we love

His way with all our heart and have come, like Abraham and Sarah, to manifest that patience and that confidence in the work which God is performing in our lives.

Let us not forget, brethren, that every day, every week, every month, every season, brings us closer to that day when God will have put an end to His patience and will send His Son back. Therefore let us not despise the patience of God, but let us take advantage of it to repent and put on the spiritual qualities which are essential for inheriting that crown which is promised to us. For those who will persist in listening to the voice of their own mind in order to live according to the ways of this world, their disappointment will be profound at the end of the patience of God, for God has set a day when He will send His Son back.

Yes indeed! He is faithful that promised. Every day, every night, every season, gives us irrefutable proofs of it. Brethren, let us take advantage of the time which we have left to exhort one another, to encourage one another to manifest that confidence, that continuity in obedience so that our faith will be strengthened, and we will be judged worthy of the crown of life. "I come quickly" says Jesus Christ to us; "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

I greet you all warmly. May the God of patience bless you by the accomplishment of the work which He has begun in your lives.

In most respectful friendship,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J. Aviolat', written in black ink.

Jean Aviolat