

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren,

Once again I am taking this privilege to reach you by this letter from the Philippines. Warmest greetings to all.

I hope that everybody in God's family is maintaining a quality life, as one who possesses that most valuable gift initially bestowed—eternal life.

In a series of Bible studies in the Luzon area, we learned that life eternal is the most important gift that a true Christian can possess. Through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit one becomes acquainted with the true God and Jesus Christ, His only Son. He said, ". . . this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

What does Christ mean "to know" in this particular instance? Of course everybody claims to know who God is. Some base their knowledge from traditions, others from stories they heard or read, most from their ministers, or from delineations of scholars and exegesis of Bible students. But do all who claim to know God have the true knowledge of the true God as Jesus meant? You meet your friend on the way, you recognize his face, you call him by name, does that mean you know him? Yes, to some degree but not really. The person who really knows one is one's wife or husband. To the Jews during Jesus' times, although they claim a good knowledge about God, being the sons of Abraham, even claiming God as their father (John 8:39-47), Jesus said, "Ye are of your father the devil . . . Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also" (John 8:44, 19).

To those who claim to know God through the world of nature or through their human capabilities, Paul said, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21-23, 25). So, they did not really know the true God.

The Israelites were often rebuked, even punished for their idolatry. Modern man may not be worshiping graven images like ancient Israel, but *is* worshiping a kind of god he conceives of based upon his own interpretation. For ". . . no man knoweth who the Son is,

but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him" (Luke 10:22). See also Matthew 11:27.

Brethren, do we really know God and His Son, Jesus Christ—the way He meant to "know" that we may have eternal life?

Knowing God Through Whom God Has Sent

If we had known God from tradition, from stories, or from someone who is not sent by God, sadly our knowledge of Him would not warrant eternal life. Paul said, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? . . ." (Romans 10:14–15). Many have assumed that they are sent by God, but unless they are *really* sent by God we can only hear *their* words. They speak more of their ideas and concepts attempting to support them with Scriptures and philosophies of men. "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God . . ." (John 3:34). "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49). To the Jews who were listening to Him, He said, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47). When one is sent by God, he speaks God's words and one can recognize God's voice and understand and know that God speaks to us. When one comes to us who is not sent by God he speaks his own words. He even asserts changes of the revealed truth with cunning deceivableness, establishing human reason rather than faith.

Christ's end time warning is: ". . . Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name [but are not sent], saying, I am Christ. . ." (Matthew 24:4–5). "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven . . ." (Matthew 7:21). Not all who say they know God really know Him.

How can we know God and His Son Jesus Christ in order to have eternal life? If we hearken to the one whom God has sent, even to His only Son and are one with Him (John 5:17–24), He is in us as we are in Him, just like the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. Indeed, Christ has come in the flesh revealing the Father to us. While those who are not sent by God are worshiping and introducing strange gods from their own concepts; to us we have the only true God, "the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Corinthians 8:6).

The Holy Spirit Dwelling in Us Is Knowing God and Having Everlasting Life

Brethren, have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? This is the same question Paul asked the Ephesian disciples. This is a valid question because eternal life depends on whether we have the Holy Spirit in us or not. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:9-11).

Is there any other way of knowing the true God than knowing Him through His presence in us? And is there any other way whereby we could have eternal life aside from His Holy Spirit dwelling in us? The answer is no! Then how can we know the Holy Spirit is really in us? Everybody seems to claim they have the Holy Spirit, anyway. Is there any sign or proof that we are in Him [Jesus] and His Spirit dwells in us, and that we know the true God, our only hope of eternal life? In 1 John 2:3-6, we read: "And hereby we do know that *we know him*, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that *we are in him*. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he [Jesus] walked." The commandments mentioned here are not new commandments but the old commandments from the beginning, as pointed out in verse seven.

When the rich young ruler asked Jesus how he could gain eternal life, He answered, "keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). Jesus walked on this earth keeping the commandments of His Father, so we ought to follow His steps. Not that we can gain eternal life by just following the commandments by ourselves, but with His Spirit in us we walk with Him removing all barriers and leaving behind all deterrents from following Him no matter how important they may be. Jesus said, ". . . Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18:29-30).

How to Gain Eternal Life

Romans 6:3-14 shows that through our baptism in Christ, we were buried with Him, counted as dead in sin. We were forgiven of our sins and were given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Sin has no power any more over us. But prior to baptism something happened—we

became aware of sin. Through the commandments, sin became exceedingly sinful to us (Romans 7:13). By the grace of God we experienced "godly sorrow" and we repented (2 Corinthians 7:10). Peter said in his Pentecost message, ". . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit]. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39).

Brethren, we are called to eternal life. When we were called, we left behind our wicked ways and struggled with our unrighteous thoughts. We came to God in godly sorrow and He accepted us; we were baptized in the name of Christ. Can God extend this call to our loved ones, to our families and friends? Yes, indeed by living here and now the potential of eternal life is bestowed upon us, radiating the spirit in us, putting off our former conduct, ". . . the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit, Christ, and His Father living in us. Please follow up by reading Ephesians 4:25-32.

Let us continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Father and His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, until His soon Coming.

With much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corsino C. Canta', with a stylized, cursive script.

Corsino C. Canta