

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren,

Our dear, beloved brethren. Love and regards to all. Until we understand and possess the necessary dedication and will, the called of God face a daunting, intimidating, and sobering expectation. We are told: "... and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). And Luke in the book Acts quoted Paul saying: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Satan, his demons, and the world—which belongs to Satan—hate the truth and anyone who would dare to believe and practice it. As deadly enemies they are constantly seeking advantageous opportunity to create trouble, strife, and difficulty for the children of God. When this happens we usually are faced with two options. One, we can all let such circumstances distress, upset, and destroy our spiritual orientation, or two, we can allow patience to have her perfect work. That is, we can accept the trial knowing that it has purpose, is allowed by God, and that through these very circumstances, Satan, who is the perpetrator of such trials, is undoing himself. With Satan, life is like a "betting game." He is betting that human beings cannot, or will not, accept the cost of character refinement. He believes all humans have a top value they will pay to achieve eternal life. Remember the story of Job? (Read the first three chapters). Satan believed that anyone—including Job—would compromise spiritually in order to protect the flesh. This, basically, is the same test all those called of God experience.

The above concept was reduced to a question by the Apostle Paul. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him

that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31–39). Is our resolve equal to that described by the Apostle Paul?

Here is the appropriate and fitting place to emphasize the statement of Solomon, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18). Vision here may be defined both physically and spiritually. In essence, where do we place real value, in the observable present—the physical, or the future, the yet unseen—the spiritual? The many trials and experiences allowed by God intellectually reveal the answer to the above question. Those with acceptable vision, wrestle not against the will of God. Peace and purpose continue to reign in their lives regardless of the external physical conditions. They manifest great confidence in God. Indeed, they are the ones who can stand with assurance and resolve in the day of Christ's return (1 John 2:18–28).

What God is allowing to occur in our lives today has eternal value. Let us never lose sight of that fact. For as we noted earlier, the people who lose vision perish. That on which we place great value is enhanced by every sacrifice made, every obstacle overcome, and every temporary disruption encountered. The faithful do not lose sight of the real goal and are soon reestablished, by determination, vision, and perseverance.

How we take or respond to a situation has much to do with our growth and success. James speaking by the Holy Spirit said, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2). Christ set the perfect example. Of Him it is written: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:1–7). Notice especially verse three. There is a human tendency to lose perspective unless we keep vision and purpose uppermost in our minds. By understanding purpose we can endure much more than if we lose sight of the real goal. With vision and purpose we can avoid one of the great human pitfalls—weariness in well doing (Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13). It is in the loss of hope that the future turns bleak and forbidding.

How long, you may ask, should one be required to endure? Christ, who knows the hearts and minds of all human beings, answers: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:12–13).

Brethren, nearly all business and personal failures in life occur just before the last tortuous turn would have brought success. Let us not be among those who stand on the wrong side of the chasm which separates the faithful from the failures. Many on that fateful side will probably realize that a few wrong decisions put them where they did not want to be—in the position to know and understand that they could have changed their whole destiny by continuing in vision and loyalty. In other words, they would have been victorious if they had manifested deep love for the Truth, unwavering determination to live and practice the Truth until God's appointed intervention, and the vision to sustain themselves until success was assured. Please, brethren, do not give up just before victory could have been yours.

Now let me speak of a related matter. What will be said is in no way a contradiction to what is stated above.

Like Moses, who said of himself, "And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in" (Deuteronomy 31:1–2). I am not a hundred and twenty years old. But, relative to ages lived then and now, I am not young. I have lived my allotted three score and ten. Most men my age have long been retired. I did not want to retire. I still do not want to sit back and do little or nothing. Many years ago I made the decision I wanted to serve God's people as long as He gave me the physical and mental energy to perform acceptably. That decision still stands today.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that I cannot always find the energy to force myself to live according to the schedule once maintained. Physical limitations begin to impact the amount of work I can effectively generate in a given period of time. This is a natural progression I am sure with which many of you can identify. I realize I do not have the luxury of endless hours and days for the job responsibilities during this time of heavy sermon preparation for regular Sabbath services—including the widely circulated tapes for the members in many parts of the world, the Holyday tapes which are made at the office and sent to all on a regular mailing list, as well as the study, preparation for, and writing of letters, especially this *Monthly Letter*. This does not even address the daily administration and routine duties both Mr. Jon Brisby and I face.

For a number of years, for reasons I would prefer to leave unstated, as I advanced in years, recognizing my inevitable reduction in energy, I became more troubled about what would happen to the church. From my earlier writings, you will recall that I had made a promise to God that if He wanted me to serve His people as He sent them to us, *the church*

would remain faithful to those truths He first gave to Israel through Moses, magnified and made honorable through Christ, given to Christ's chosen apostles as the foundational doctrine to preach to all areas to which they were sent, and finally given to a chosen servant for a "work" in these last days. In essence I had determined that the faithful would not depart from that way.

But, I was growing older, to whom was I to turn to carry out that promise? True to the character of God, He never fails! Our endeavor is not our own. It belongs to God. So, He took action. A young man—the son of a family whom I had come to know, whom I loved and respected very highly, dramatically came to the front—not of his choosing, but as God ordained. He showed remarkable growth, maturity, and loyalty. Time and time again, Mr. Jon Brisby proved his intended loyalty—loyalty not to a man, but to that Truth which we all had accepted, believed, and desired to honor to the end. I feel comfortable in giving broad latitude to Mr. Jon Brisby as the one whom I occasionally think of as "my Joshua." I know of no one more determined to remain absolutely loyal to that way which we accepted.

No, brethren I am not stepping aside; nor will I disappear from the scene. I want to serve you with all the energy God provides for as long as I am able. Further, I want to be there to help Mr. Brisby in his growth. At this point, what I am saying is that as time progresses, I will allow more of the responsibility to settle on his young frame and broad shoulders. He is capable. He wants to serve you, even to the extent I have been inspired greatly by his mature and loving approach to his work. I can recommend to you in the awesome love of God, the young man whom I have seen come to the top. I recommend him to you in the love of God.

Please rest assured, I will endeavor to serve you all as effectively as I can in my twilight years. I could not stand the emotional loss of being totally cut off from those whom I have loved, admired and respected with my life. Between the two of us, we hope to provide even greater energy, thereby giving you the loving devotion, concern, and care of good shepherds.

Brethren, let us be praying diligently, "thy kingdom come." None of us are growing younger. Surely these conditions themselves must speak powerfully of the proximity of the return of Christ. How great and desperate is the need for that event. An event which will initiate the changes necessary for this world to endure. There is no area of life in which these changes are not necessary.

Thanks, brethren, for your attentive ears. May I ask you to remember us in your daily prayers? We will appreciate them greatly.

With profound love and respect to all, I remain your devoted and willing servant in Christ.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'R'.

Raymond C. Cole

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'J'.

Jon W. Brisby