

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440
www.cogeternal.org

The late Raymond C. Cole
Founding Pastor
Jon W. Brisby
Pastor, Director

Offices in:
United States
Philippines
Switzerland

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Dear Brethren:

To you all who are called and beloved of the Lord Jesus Christ, greetings!

As our car was traveling the span of almost 300 miles to our destination, I sat relaxed beside my driver as we began to ascend the winding Santa Fe Trail. My mind was focused on how much God values His elect and chosen ones. You, brethren, are beloved of God, called and elected out of this world to be the firstfruits of His coming harvest. Few as we may be and scattered in the world, even a lone member in one remote place, is precious to God. So we spend our time and efforts to come to you for a visit, for worship and Bible study. Are you conscious in each and every passing moment of being called and elected by a forgiving and merciful Father in heaven? Are you striving to live up to that calling through overcoming whatever obstacle or trials you meet in life? Do you realize how great a salvation Christ has freely bestowed upon you as elect children of God?

Making Our Calling and Election Sure

Brethren, the perils of this end time as Paul enumerated to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:1–5) are so great an influence they can easily beset us if we are not consciously making sure of our calling. Let us always bear in mind that our election from the very foundation of the world and our response to our calling in our present time is indicative of God's prerogative to shorten the coming days of the great tribulation.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened (Matthew 24:21–22).

That is how much love God has for us whom He has called. For our sake He intervenes in every way that jeopardizes our salvation. As firstfruits of His coming harvest He preserves us for a very important purpose. He is molding in us His character for that great task ahead of us at Christ's return.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5–11).

Our Calling: The Great Salvation

We are recipients of the revealed words of God at this end time. We are the remnant Church of God, a portion of the called-out ones. Upon us is the responsibility to realize how great a salvation is promised to us with those who had lived before. To the early Christians of Paul's time, his admonition was:

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . . (Hebrews 2:1–3).

Why was it called a great salvation? That admonition, which also applies to us who are called today, points out to us that great salvation for the called-out ones. It spells out the difference between those of the vast majority who are not yet called at this time and to be called later in the appointed time. It is great because of the promise of a blessed first resurrection.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years (Revelation 20:5–6).

That is how so great a salvation is promised to His called out ones. They are not even made to appear before the Judgment Seat of God to be judged (having already been judged according to their works) but by the grace of God are sealed by His Holy Spirit. That is why they are expected to overcome, to struggle against the self, against the influence of the world around them, and against the evil one. And that is what we are, brethren. We are

empowered to overcome by the Spirit of God and the blood of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:11; 5:9; 1:5). But the rest will come to judgment according to their works as written in the books of life.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Revelation 20:12).

How awesome is the truth of our calling! We belong to that chosen generation to be priests and kings under Christ.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9–10, please read also Ephesians 1:4–6 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13–17).

God's Call Versus Human Nature

Human nature is by-and-large seeking after its creator. It is inherently and physically inclined to worship God in its own way. It values its own concept of truth and demonstrates its thirst for it, but ironically can not obtain spiritual truth nor discover God by its own efforts and ingenuity (*Monthly Letter*, February 2002).

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44).

All things are delivered to me of my Father: and 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).

But human nature is inclined to seek its own and fills its own desire; forms its own concept about God resulting in erroneous illusions and human frivolity, thereby giving rise to idolatry or worshipping God in vain.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things (Romans 1:22–23).

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their

heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:7-9).

That is how human nature acts without the Spirit of God in it; when one is not yet called and elected by God. He gropes for truth in darkness while all the way thinking himself right in his own mind (read Proverbs 21:2).

Yet God calls and elects whom He has chosen for a defined purpose. And it is absolutely essential, brethren, to make our calling and election sure. Not all, but few, are chosen and elected from the foundation of the world.

Apparently, of the great number who joined the Worldwide Church of God, many were not yet called at this time. Like the proverbial moth that was attracted by the light, with their human inclination they were attracted by the truth. So they sought membership without a genuine calling or else they would have stood fast to the revealed Truth originally taught in the church for the first forty years. Others were confused and troubled so that even though they were called they permitted their human nature to lead them to that way which seemed right in their own eyes. So they preferred to stay alone, joined a group of their choice, or assumed the "come what may" attitude. A few even assumed the responsibility of teaching others. Still others, although they came to understand the truth and were led by all circumstances to accept the revealed way of life, evaded their calling for fear of the responsibilities they might face as one who is called today. So now they evade Bible studies and fellowshiping with those who stick to their calling.

Brethren, let us make sure of our calling and act on it as we are led by the Holy Spirit. Let us not be led by our own imaginings, by our own carnal nature, or by our self-imposed fleshly judgment, for we are, here and now, being judged in the Church of God (1 Peter 4:17). Let the Spirit of God in us prevail to illuminate us and give us understanding and peace.

For those who feel they are being led to understand the revealed truth but are evading Bible study and baptism for fear of being called at this time, may I admonish them to be brave and have courage, for the fearful and the unbelieving are counted with others who will suffer the second death (Revelation 21:8). Let the Holy Spirit empower you for "all things work together for good to them *that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28) [Emphasis mine].

May you all with certainty and diligence keep your calling and election sure through the power of His indwelling Spirit.

With much affection,

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

Corsino C. Canta