

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

January 2004

Dear Faithful Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Warm greetings to you all in this period of time which is winter for some and summer for others.

Time is flying by in a mysterious way. Think how fast days, weeks and months are going by. Before we know it, we will be about to observe the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread once again.

But, as we look forward to those spring feasts, we must structure each day so as to allot a space to every need. Speaking of the brevity of human life, Moses prayed, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). There are therefore specific responsibilities which we—the called of God—must fulfill. The called people of God know the purpose for which God chose them. They know that God intends that they should eventually be born into His Family. That is why every day we must apply our hearts unto wisdom in order to do what God is expecting of us.

Let us consider the statement of Jesus Christ, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). Since Christ says to us that we must endure unto the end in order to be saved, then there is something which we need to endure. In the Epistle of James we read, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job . . ." (James 5:10–11). Why are they happy? Because their enduring will result in an awesome reward in the future. So those who apply their hearts unto wisdom and will be successful, will receive that reward only after they have endured with patience, having faith and confidence in God and living the righteousness of God with resolve.

Applying our hearts unto wisdom every day is allowing Christ—the Word of life—to dwell in us abundantly and make us active and determined people who are producing the wonderful fruits of God's Holy Spirit.

The parable of the talents demonstrates that God wants us to make the most of the knowledge which He has given to us—of the teaching which we have received for many years. We see that God gives to everyone according to his abilities. And the story further shows that the wise turned that knowledge to good account according to their understanding and that their reward was basically the same: "Enter into the joy of your Master."

Thus, in God's sight, what counted was not the number of possibilities one had received, but what one did with what he had been given. In the parable there was someone who received only one talent. Sadly, he did not apply his heart unto wisdom. He did nothing at all with what he had been given. He remained idle and merely watched the days, weeks, months and years passing. He did not allow the Word of God—Christ in him—to improve his human life and accomplish the work which would have led him to be born into the Family of God eventually. He did not want to endure the testing, which is to persevere with faith and confidence in what God delivered. Let us remember that it is God who has given us everything we have received and understood. And God expects us to use and build upon all that which He has given to us. He wants to see wonderful fruits in our lives as a result. That is why we must ask God to teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

The idle servant lost his talent. That talent was given to the one who was able to make it productive. This means that whoever remains passive with the knowledge and the understanding which he has received will finally lose the opportunity to enter into the joy of his Master. Therefore, it is needful to remember what God delivered to us and grow by faith in that Way which will allow us to take part in the joy of our Master in the future.

In Hebrews 12:7 we read, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons . . ." God derives a great joy from the things which He is accomplishing in our lives that we may become His sons and His daughters. That is why this physical life is the means through which God is trying us in many different ways. And if we endure discipline as we undergo our trials, we are employing our talents, and spiritual gifts are being added as the years go by.

Jesus Christ stated, ". . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). We persevere with strength and conviction in this wonderful Way because we know that it will lead us into the joy of our Master along with many other brothers and sisters.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Even if God gave us a measure of understanding—of His purpose and His way of life—that is equivalent to one talent, He expects us to make it profitable. We must maintain what we received and understood; and

we must live it with faith and conviction. Now is the time when God is pleased with our enduring. Now is the time when God is observing to see whether we are applying our hearts unto wisdom every day because we are eager to attain to the stature of the fulness of Jesus Christ.

It is so easy to forget the instructions which we have received. It is so easy to be idle. In the times in which we live, it is so easy to grow weary of everything and say to ourselves, "Let us wait and see." It is so easy to have negative thoughts when it requires all our energy to overcome difficulties, grief or distress. God does not want us to be passive and merely watch time going by. And short is the space of time which God is allotting for us to make the most of the talents with which He entrusted us. As we grow older, we realize that life is shorter than we thought. Let us therefore manifest will, endurance, perseverance. In faith and with God's help, let us show diligence to make fruitful that with which we were entrusted—the knowledge and the instructions of God. God gives everyone the responsibility of judging his own life. He expects each one to build upon the foundation which was laid in his own life—to act according to the measure of wisdom, knowledge and understanding which he received from God. What would we gain by neglecting to accomplish, through Christ, the work which needs to be done in our lives in order for us to be born ultimately into the Family of God? Nothing! The parable of the talents teaches that the unprofitable servant will be cast into outer darkness.

He who endures to the end will be saved. "For our conversation [our citizenship—French Bible] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:20–21). Let us have that vision of our salvation. Though we are living in a turbulent world, with the help of the Spirit of God in us, let us make ourselves capable of enduring God's discipline and enjoying the end result which He promises to us. Let us live lives which forbid our turning back in any way, because, as Jesus Christ stated, "... No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

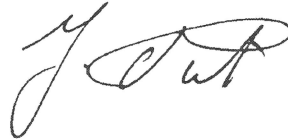
When we see good results being wrought in our lives, we are encouraged and motivated to strive toward the ultimate goal when we can take part in the joy of our Master in the Kingdom of God. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5–6). Whatever the times and the circumstances, God will give us the direction which we need. The message which leads us to salvation was delivered to us; and now, before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the Eternal—as the prophet Malachi explains—we are living through a period of time when we are being tried more than ever. God is testing

our diligence, our constancy, our zeal in wanting to live this way of life to the full. God is observing what we are doing with our lives: whether we are merely watching time passing or we are each day applying our hearts unto wisdom—not ours but the wisdom of God—in order to make profitable use of God's gift, the knowledge and understanding of His way and purpose, that we may finally be His vessels to honor, filled with the magnificent fruits of His Spirit.

It is then that you yourselves will hear the statements of your Master, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

To you all, the young and the old, those who are rejoicing and those who are grief-stricken, I send my most affectionate and respectful thoughts.

Your friend in the Christian fight,

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

Jean Aviolat