

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

From all of us here in Mindanao, Philippines, we convey our greetings and love to the members of the remnant group of God's true church.

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, it speaks of three great fruits of God's Holy Spirit: faith, hope and love. We understand that love—called the greatest of these gifts—and faith are necessary for salvation. But what about hope? Hope, as coequal with love and faith, is one of the most important spiritual gifts which should be exercised by God's people.

In daily conversation, most people say hope when they mean wish. Hoping is not wishing. Hope is not weakened faith. To hope means to cherish a desire with expectation of fulfillment. This must be true with God's people—being positive, looking ahead to the future. Hope lifts our thoughts beyond the trials of the present. Hope sees God's plan at work—God producing His character in us, by what we experience, to qualify us for eternal life.

Our spiritual lives should be filled with hope. We should be alive with spiritual energy to keep us growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Each one of us fights a daily spiritual battle against sin. Even the Apostle Paul was frustrated by his own personal failure in the goal of spiritual perfection that is in Jesus Christ. He cried out:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not (Romans 7:18).

At times we fail to overcome the thoughts and attitudes we know are contrary to God's perfect law of love. Our inability to void sin completely from our lives even makes us

consider the possibility of losing salvation. Certainly, the pull of sin on our flesh is very strong. Paul said: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14).

As we go on with this spiritual life, the battle against sin intensifies. Sin is our mortal enemy. The Apostle John, during his ministry, said:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

God inspired Paul to describe the problems common to God's people and to show the way out of them. By the power of God's Holy Spirit working in our minds, we have to produce a total change of character. It is required that we completely repent of past sins and surrender to God. Once begotten by God's Spirit, we began a life dedicated to growth and overcoming, developing God's character. This is where the fulcrum of our hope for the future lies. Paul said:

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live (Romans 8:13).

At baptism, God gave us His Holy Spirit, granting us power over sin and making it possible for God to develop His holy righteous character in us in order to qualify to receive the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23). This is the essence of our spiritual existence and the foundation of our hope for the future. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). We are not yet born into God's Family, but we are heirs, inheritors of the promise. If we qualify as firstfruits, then we will be born into His Family when Jesus Christ returns.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3–5).

God created human beings to qualify for His Family (1 Timothy 2:4). This marvelous opportunity will be lost if we fail to act and we will be like the one described in the parable of the talents who failed to produce with the single talent given to him. He justified his failure and said, "And I was afraid" (Matthew 25:25). He had no vision for the future. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

The Apostle Paul had no fear despite the undesirable circumstances that held up progress toward his goal. He believed that God inspired him with the desire to be in His Kingdom, his ultimate goal:

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? (Romans 8:31–32).

Man rebelled against God's government and way of life from generation to generation, but God and His Son, Jesus Christ, carried on through. The time is coming very soon when mankind will be delivered:

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:21).

The end of Romans 8 provides a very inspiring note:

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 8:38–39).

Hope is a gift from God that we need to develop in our spiritual lives, like the fruits of the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22–23).

Hope will grow as we dedicate our lives to God by talking to Him always through prayer, regular Bible study, and living with much focus on our goal of God's Kingdom, knowing our future inspires us to overcome:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:2–3).

We are looking forward to the majestic return of Jesus Christ when the parable of the talents will be fulfilled. Let us make it sure that we will be among those to whom our Lord says:

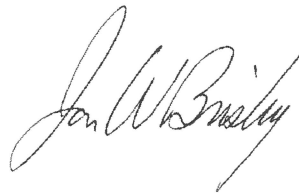
Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Matthew 25:21).

It is the hope of God's Kingdom that keeps God's people strong. Through all the trials and sufferings, the hope of the Kingdom—the hope of membership in God's perfect, joyous, immortal, governing Family—is the anchor that keeps us firm.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mario Y. Roque'.

Mario Y. Roque

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon W. Brisby'.

Jon W. Brisby