

Church of God, The Eternal

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Greetings to the called children of God:

Warm greetings from the northwestern part of the US. I hope that this letter finds everyone in good spirits and with a positive anticipation for the time ahead when light, brilliance and splendor of the glory of God will be the reality on this earth to replace the present darkness, shame and dullness of human existence which man experiences by free choice. The conditions we encounter and endure in this world are brought upon man by doing what is right in his own eyes—doing what comes naturally to him. We must be alert and diligently seeking God for inspiration and direction. The prime time for doing just that is during all of the Holy Day seasons.

The way that time tends to get away, it will not seem long until the first month of God's sacred calendar will be here and we will once again begin to rehearse that great plan of God. The winter months seem to go by fast, probably because we have much less light in the days. Certainly we do not get involved in the pagan celebrations, in all of the spirit of this world, in the new year commitments everyone is all wrapped up in—clothed with all the trappings foisted upon men by the deceiver, Satan. Hopefully, while we have the winter months without Holy Days, we will be looking back on this past year to begin again an examination of our spiritual growth (or the lack thereof). As we well know, the Holy Days are a rehearsal of God's great plan for man affecting our near future and that of the entire world as it unfolds. Certainly this world has not been given this overview of our future. Even though our perception is limited, it is the most awesome plan—the reason for our very existence—and should be nothing less than inspiring and exciting. We were chosen thousands of years ago to be of the very firstfruits that will be a part of the government of God here on this earth. This is hard for a human being to accept and take in, but those that make it can and will be empowered with the Spirit of God. It is that same Spirit which gave our Savior Jesus Christ the very intense passionate desire and power to give His life in absolute love to allow each of us the opportunity to be a part of His very family.

I can think of no better subject for my letter this year than to emphasize the need for each of us to possess the Holy Spirit and allow it to guide our lives.

We have no business, no mission, no goal, or anything in our lives more important and absolutely necessary to us as Christians than to endeavor to seek God's spirit to rule and guide our lives.

We must be begotten of the very Spirit of God; pursuit of God's Spirit should be foremost in our minds and our chief goal. All else is insignificant. Our labor and desires will fail without the transformation toward salvation. Salvation means deliverance from sin and its consequences and admission into God's Kingdom. The Greek word for "church" is *ekklesia*, which means a chosen or called-out assembly. Jesus said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His *ekklesia*. Christ promises absolute safety. The gates of hell cannot stand against the power of God.

We see in Ephesians 2:18–22 that God built His church with Christ, the chief cornerstone on which the rest of the foundation—the apostles and prophets—is built. This forms the foundation for the entire structure of the government of God in the coming Kingdom in which His spirit will reign supreme. Verse 22 tells us that we are framed to be a part of the spiritual structure of the holy government of God in whom He will live through His Spirit.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18–22).

Brethren, that is not possible without the presence of His indwelling Holy Spirit. That is why we must consciously work on making the right choices in our lives, and God will grant us a measure of His Spirit by His mercy.

When God's Spirit is present and active in one of His called-out ones, it will be evident to another Spirit-begotten member by the overall fruits produced. We must not mistake anyone who is taken in a weakness or a fault as one void of God's Spirit and judge him wrongly. Truly, we should not be looking for faults in others. We are only accomplishing our responsibility when we are inspecting the self.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way (Romans 14:13).

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends (Proverbs 17:9).

It was Christ's desire that we accept His way and grow in the Spirit, but we are given free choice so we do not have the right to try and judge or force obedience upon one another. Christ stated that even He does not judge us for unbelief. We individually will be judged by the words of God that we all have been given. Christ was sent by the Father to deliver that message. Many within our former affiliation in past years did not practice that and tried to force obedience on the people, but it did not convert anyone. Obedience and conversion only comes from the willing hearts of called and chosen servants—children of God—and only then given to them freely by the tender and kind mercies of God. Our efforts toward others should be to nurture, encourage, and aid one another because we never know who is going to be victorious in their ends.

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 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 12:46–49).

Being blessed with the opportunity to observe the Feast of Tabernacles half way around the world in Hermanus, South Africa, and the last four days in Suna-Migori, Kenya, I was not surprised to experience and see the very same Spirit in God's people there. I believe and have confidence in the divine Truth that was given God's people, and I expected to see peace and unity. There was a mutual love among all of those converted of God, and certainly I desire to see them again. God's Spirit creates the desire for unity and peace and cooperation. It does not matter in what part of the world we may be or who we are. If we are begotten of the Spirit, we will have those very same traits.

Christ's Body is one with many members, and I might add, many scattered members. Having large numbers and having churches all over the world is hardly any qualification that proves any group is the true church of God. The proof is whether or not it is the true divine revelation of God that binds a group as the Church of God.

The Apostle Paul said it was only one body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1Corinthians 12:12).

He also said in verse 27 that we are the body of Christ. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1Corinthians 12:27).

The Body of Christ will have these fruits: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Galatians 5:22).

We see God's people in all walks of life, and we need to realize that if they were given the understanding of the truth, then it is sure that God had a great desire for them to be His begotten children. If we are also a begotten child of God, that means that we must accept God's choice and likewise have an impartial desire that they too make it into God's Kingdom. Whenever possible, it is our duty and responsibility, as a labor of love, to help, to aid and to assist them in this way because they are begotten children of God.

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men (1Thessalonians 5:14).

As we diligently seek to receive the power of God's Spirit, we must desire the fruits also, so that we can apply them in our interaction with other members of the Body, and as a part of God's mercy working in us. We need to be working to please God in obedience, allowing His Spirit to rule in our lives; then our interaction with one another will be rewarding and uplifting. Sometimes our actions can be discouraging to others if we are not aware that we are lacking in certain areas.

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise . . . For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth (2 Corinthians 10:12, 18).

Unity and harmony are always traits that take work and effort and have been an issue at all times in God's church. It has to be desired and striven for by a deliberate choice of the mind, as stated by the following apostles and teachers:

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (2 Peter 3:14).

Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it (1 Peter 3:11).

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (James 3:18).

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful (Colossians 3:15).

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

God gave us a divine way of life in the revealed truth which does not reside in the makeup of the selfish, rude, carnal, vain, arrogant generation of this end time. "O vain man" (James 2:20)—an adjective that should be rather easy for a humble, meek child of God to recognize. I hope we are working toward that humility rather than the former and slowly but surely beginning to take on those fruits of God's Spirit.

The love for one another and the desire for peace and harmony does not merely consist of some feeling we might have for someone. It is an act of making a positive decision to do the right thing and show true love for one another.

We see that Christ gave Himself for the church so that He could sanctify and cleanse it through washing of His Word:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:25–26).

Study of God's Word needs to be our continuous quest for guidance and instruction through prayer to our Heavenly Father so we will be given the wisdom to understand and to properly apply scriptures such as Ephesians 4:32:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Remember, when we forgive someone we set two people free, ourselves and the one we are forgiving.

It is my desire to be there to assist, encourage and give my time—to give it in some small way that might help keep each of you on that right path. It is only by the mercies of God that He gives life, and I do recognize if I do not allow Christ to wash me with His Word by constant study, prayer, occasional fasting, and seeking God to clean me up, I do not have

a chance of making it into His glorious Kingdom. We cannot take anything for granted. We must strive to master this self, and if we do not, and think we will slide through, we need to notice this scripture:

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

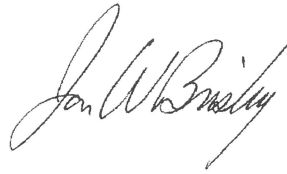
When we go through things that are very trying in our lives it is for a reason, and looking toward the self and correcting all that we can is our responsibility, not censuring the other party and judging him. It makes us feel better if we can pass the blame on to others. If a person has wronged you and you cannot resolve it, have faith in God and place it in His hands rather than be vindicated.

My desire is for all of us to make it and be there together. Working together in this life will lend help toward the realization of our goal of being members of the God Family. May God's deepest love be your guide and direction to help and assist you to have that lighted pathway.

Sincere love and dedication

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leon S. Whitaker".

Leon S. Whitaker

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby".

Jon W. Brisby