

March 2021

Dear Brethren:

In spite of all the deteriorating conditions around the world that Covid-19 is generating, we send a very warm and special greeting to all of you from all of us here in Maryville, Tennessee. Our prayers and thoughts are with you continually as we hold fast to the revealed Truth in these troubled times.

In this *Monthly Letter*, God has put into my heart and mind to write to you regarding the kind of repentance God requires from all of us in order to observe this coming Passover in a worthy manner. Is it just to repent of the sins we have committed in the past year? Would that make us able to take the Passover in a worthy manner? NO! Why? Because if our repentance does not include the sacrifice of the self in humility of what we are, it is not the repentance God requires. God wants and desires our total, unconditional surrender of the self.

The most terrible sin you can commit against the true God is to worship a false god, and as Mr. Raymond Cole has said repeatedly, that includes the worship of the god of your own mind. When we decide to do what is right in our own eyes, it is a sure sign of vanity that has puffed us up like leaven. When we do that, we may be acting like a proud peacock who struts and admires himself in a mirror. The mirror reflects what he is outwardly, but what does he look like inwardly?

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in an open letter as an introduction to the 1967 *Bible Correspondence Course* had this to say about a peacock that everyone admired as it strutted around the college grounds in England.

Again, I am writing from my study in our cottage on the grounds of Ambassador College in England. On one side of my study, double glass doors open onto a stone terrace.

We have a very beautiful and very proud peacock on the college grounds. His hen, at present, is setting on three of her eggs in a small thatched-roofed, one-room gardeners' tool house past the far edge of the beautiful Japanese gardens. She won't move from her nest. Our gardeners take food to her. But this strutting peacock is perfectly willing to move from the vicinity of the nest.

Do you know, I almost think he must be endowed with a bit of human nature! When the gardeners let him out for the day, I usually find him on the terrace just outside my glass doors looking in. And when he is not there, he

is quite likely to be found looking in the floor-length glass windows which extend across one side of our living room.

Repeatedly, again and again and again, I have tried to shoo that peacock away from our terrace. But always he comes back. Today our head gardener explained the reason. In his best Welsh accent, he said:

"That proud bird struts up on your terrace because he can see and admire himself in the glass of the windows and the doors!"

It is quite evident this peacock thinks very well of himself. He can't have many brains — there simply isn't room in his small but brilliantly colored blue head. But then it doesn't seem to take a large head to be filled with vanity, pride, and self-admiration! Yes, sometimes I think our peacock is almost human — and he can be just about as annoying!

This bird is ALL *SELF*!

Mr. Armstrong goes on to say that this self, with all its vanity and self-exaltation, is hostile to God. Why? Because this vanity becomes a substitute for God and His Spirit—another god before the true God—as Mr. Cole has said many times. It is the worship of the god of your own mind when your mind does not reflect the mind of Jesus Christ. This pride God resists, because it reflects our own puffed-up, carnal self in refusing to hearken or listen to God or to His true servants.

[T]hen you shall say to them, "Because your fathers have forsaken Me," says the LORD; "they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me" (Jeremiah 16:11–12, *New King James Version* throughout).

In other words, these very proud people wear their puffed-up vanity like a bullet-proof vest to protect and justify the self. God likens it to a girdle, sash, or loincloth wrapped around their bodies that needs to be destroyed if they are ever going to accept His correction and instruction. God tells us how He is going to do that in Jeremiah, chapter 13. God used this servant, Jeremiah, whom He knew even before he was formed in the womb (Jeremiah 1:5), to convey this message from God.

God told Jeremiah in chapter 13, verse 1 to get or buy for himself a girdle (or better rendered a sash or a loincloth) and wrap it around his loins or waist because God wanted him to act out a warning message for His people of Judah and Israel because of their pride. He also said not to saturate it in water before wrapping it around himself because this loincloth or sash represents the pride of Judah during a time of drought (Jeremiah 14:4).

Then God told Jeremiah to go to the river Euphrates, some 250 miles away, where Judah would eventually be carried away captive because of their pride, and hide the sash in a hole in the rock—symbolic of the captivity they would suffer there while in Babylon, which was situated next to the great river Euphrates (Jeremiah 13:4).

After many days Jeremiah was instructed to return to the Euphrates to retrieve the sash, only to find it totally ruined and profitable for nothing (Jeremiah 13:6–7).

Jeremiah 13:9–11 explains why:

Thus says the LORD: "In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing. For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me," says the LORD, "that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear."

They would not hear because of pride! Therefore, God instructed Jeremiah (Jeremiah 13:12–14) that he should fill every vessel or bottle (symbolic of the inhabitants of the land) with wine until they became so drunk with their own self-importance (pride) that they would turn on each other and begin to destroy one another. Even fathers and sons would turn on each other. Why? Because pride stirs up strife (Proverbs 28:25), and if not repented of will lead to darkness. Continuing in verses 16–23:

Give glory to the LORD your God [How? By repenting and becoming an obedient, humble servant of God] Before He causes darkness, And before your feet stumble [because of your pride] On the dark mountains [or governments of man where there is no light to guide you], . . . But if you [who are of a proud heart] will not hear it [God's correction], My soul [or heart] will weep in secret [or loneliness] for your pride; My eyes will weep bitterly And run down with tears, Because the LORD's flock has been taken captive [to Babylon]. Say to the king [Jehoiachin] and to the queen mother [his mother, Nehushta (2 Kings 24:8)], "Humble yourselves; Sit down [come down from your high thrones and sit in the dust], For your rule shall collapse, the crown of your glory" [meaning your Kingdom of Judah is about to be carried away captive]. The cities of the South shall be shut up, And no one shall open them; Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it; It shall be wholly carried away captive. Lift up your eyes and see Those who come from the north [referring

to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon]. Where is the flock that was given to you, Your beautiful sheep [meaning God's people]? What will you say when He punishes you? For you have taught them To be chieftains [or captains], to be head over you [not God]. Will not pangs seize you, Like a woman in labor? And if you say in your heart [all puffed up with vanity], "Why have these things come upon me?" [God answers:] For the greatness of your iniquity [coming from your pride] Your skirts have been uncovered, Your heels made bare. [This verse bares this out with a question:] Can the Ethiopian change his skin [color] or the leopard its spots?

The implied answer, without God's intervention, is NO! But by and through God's Holy Spirit the answer is turned to YES! Verse 23 goes on to say:

Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

Acts 8:26–40 proved this to be so when Philip, God's true servant, was inspired to join an Ethiopian eunuch of great authority in his chariot and to explain to him the scriptures in Isaiah 53:7–8:

He [Jesus Christ] was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a sheep before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. [He was treated unjustly.] In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation [of which the Ethiopian was a part]? [For His life was taken, not for His own sin, but for the sins of the world.]

Philip, in this case, was the one who would declare this knowledge of salvation to the Ethiopian, whom he baptized after he believed, and then Philip disappeared to another place to teach others. Philip taught this salvation message using the Old Testament scriptures because there was no New Testament at that time.

"Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north [Babylon] and from all the lands where He had driven them' [to destroy their pride]. For I will bring them back [who have turned away from Me in pride] into their land which I gave to their fathers. [And how will God do this? The next verse tells us:] "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says the LORD, "and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters [or ministers who will seek them out], and they

shall hunt them from every mountain [or empire] and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks [where they are being held captive]" (Jeremiah 16:14–16).

This, of course, will happen after their pride is destroyed, because before honor is humility (Proverbs 15:33; 18:12). God will not honor or exalt anyone who harbors pride in his heart. The reason pride must be destroyed is that it is like a bushel basket that can hide the light of God in us.

Let your light [of God] so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

For this to happen, the covering of pride must be removed, or destroyed, and it can be destroyed by becoming a servant instead of a ruler who is all puffed up in his own pride.

In conclusion, brethren, pride can cause us to keep the Passover in an unworthy manner. Why? Because pride will hinder the true repentance that honors God. So, let us honor God by dishonoring the self at the Passover this year, which is just weeks away, and remember to observe it in a place where God has placed His name.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard W. Litz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'R'.

Richard W. Litz