

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440

The Two Facets of Divine Revelation—Part XVIII How Can We Avoid the Tragedy of Lost Faith?

January 1983

Our Beloved Brothers and Sisters of the Faith:

Warmest regards to you all. We daily think of you—reflecting upon our experiences and times together. How deeply we love and admire you. Our prayer always is that you may consistently maintain that spirit of humility.

Mixed signals are issuing forth from the economists today. Some are forecasting a mild improvement in the overall economy. Others are still saying, "Watch out." At best, the year 1983 is going to be an interesting one. In all probability the greatest changes, ever, occurred in 1982. It would take volumes to describe those changes. The pattern is set. Can we imagine what 1983 will bring? Always remember, one of these years the literal events of Revelation, Daniel, and other Books are going to unfold. Will 1983 experience only the augmentation of the general events prophesied or will we actually see some of the specifics come to pass?

The hour is late! Let us take to heart Romans 13:11–14.

For the month of January, 1983, another issue of the series of letters on the subject of "Two Facets of Knowledge" is submitted. According to the present schedule the subject should have been completed with the May, 1983, issue. However, based on rather specific needs and the urgency of particular questions, we have decided to interrupt the series for the March, 1983, issue which I am scheduled to write. There is a need to cover an old issue, one which has not yet been thoroughly understood. Considering this interruption the series on the subject of "Two Facets of Knowledge" should be completed with the July *Monthly Letter*.

Rather exhaustively and in a detailed manner, we have attempted to explain the areas and limits of knowledge, both physical and spiritual. Man, of himself, can comprehend only what he was created to understand. Anything outside of that imposed

limitation, must be obtained, realized, and understood by some miraculous intervention apart from himself. Despite man's natural arrogance, he is unbelievably limited and restricted.

In previous issues we have come to see that because of a call, we are able to understand the awesome purpose and plan of God. Those called and enlightened can perceive another dimension of knowledge. It is a knowledge *given by God*—a spiritual knowledge. As we have come to see, those so enlightened and who aggressively pursue that spiritual way of life are made to understand "all things." Yet, that view and comprehension can be maintained only as long as we keep actively oriented in that spiritual purpose. For rejection of that revealed knowledge results in darkness and blindness more unsearchable and incomprehensible than that which existed prior to the initial call. "How great is that darkness," said God. Those so blinded will grope at noon day. They have lost all purpose—both physically and spiritually.

In November we came to realize how meaningful the spiritual ingredient of faith is. Without it no one can long endure. It is a tragedy to see this crumbling faith manifested in the lives of those once resolved, oriented, and confident. How can we, yet the possessors of faith, avoid the tragedy of lost faith? That explanation is the subject of this issue.

By way of introduction, a couple of peremptory statements are deemed essential. Faith is strengthened by hearing. If we do not really hear the Word of God—if it does not sink down deeply into our consciousness—we cannot remain spiritually resolved. Human minds are adept at effecting a "gloss over." Secondly, after we have really heard the Truth, let us in all fear before God, act on that revealed Word. Let us thoroughly examine ourselves without the aid of rose-colored glasses. The only one hurt by any gloss over is the self—even though the "SELF" wants desperately to be substantiated.

Now, to the subject.

What Is the Individual's Part in The Act of Faith?

Faith is a component of the Holy Spirit. It comes as a gift from God through the acceptance of the Spirit of God. Yet, it is not static. It is kept alive and active by virtue of certain actions and responses on our part.

What are those individual responsibilities? What actions are required to keep faith strong and purposeful?

A Beginning Response Is Meditation

David frequently spoke of meditation. He was thoughtful and acute in his interest of things spiritual. But no words of David are more poignant, poetic, and beautiful than those found in Psalm 119:97–104. He exulted in the knowledge of God's Law. So strong was his love and regard for God's Laws (ways) that he consistently thought about them. Though a king with enormous physical and jurisdictional responsibility, that which was uppermost in his daily consciousness was the Law of God. The Law of God was *central* in his thinking. He meditated upon it throughout the day.

We, today, cannot hope to remain spiritually strong, to manifest mental control and divine character, if we are not equally meditative. It is imperative that we orient ourselves to the Law—the Truth of God. We must be cognizant of God's Word *consistently*. Then we must act upon it. It does little good to contemplate the Truth and do nothing about it. The purpose is to live it.

Those who have a sense of mission and purpose want to know—to understand. Technical knowledge is temporarily satisfying only. The curious, alert, and contemplative want to understand *cardinal issues of life!* But most will remain in darkness! Who, then can understand? David continues.

"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers . . ." (vss. 98–99). Why? ". . . for thy testimonies [words] are my meditation." Having been called and then exercising deep contemplation, David had come to profound understanding—understanding of the significant issues of life! Why? Because those answers are encased within the Truth which God gave. A truth of life and purpose existing outside of the restrictive confines of man's natural mind. Man can conceive and understand only the physical realm. The real questions revolve around beginnings and purposes. To the natural mind there are no answers to these issues, only haphazard guesses—such as evolution.

How wise had the knowledge of the spiritual realm made David? Verse 100 says, "I understand more than the ancients [old, seasoned men], because I keep thy precepts." Amazing! To the man of the street, one who turns to religion is regarded as mentally

deficient. While this may be true of those grossly deceived—those following cunningly devised fables which have been foisted upon a gullible and unsuspecting populace—it is far from true regarding those who are the called and enlightened spiritually. As Paul said, "The called of God understand all things [that is, both spiritual and physical things]." Obviously, they do not understand all knowledge which exists—in either the physical realm or the spiritual one. Only God has ALL knowledge.

But once a man *really* possesses that spiritual knowledge (not superficially but from the bottom of heart and mind), he is equipped with that knowledge which is requisite for personal mastery. David succinctly said, "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me" (vss. 101–102).

The natural inclinations of the flesh are to do evil. But in the wisdom David received from obedience to God's Law he had willed not to walk in sin. He refrained his feet from evil. Why? So that he could keep the Word of God.

Did David obey grudgingly? Was he constrained, melancholy? How did he react to this way which required him to resist the self and willfully walk in a way which was *not* natural?

He exclaims: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" (vss. 103–104). Through this new-found wisdom, David actually came to hate the self and exult in the Law of God. This was an 180-degree turn from the natural nature—a nature which abhors God and opposes the Law.

Continuity of faith is entirely dependent upon an individual response initially. That response is meditation. A meditation made all the more joyful and meaningful because of an intense love for the Truth.

But such affection and regard does not come spontaneously. There is another imperative step. An act of individual volition.

Understanding Is Manifested by Fervent Request

The Kingdom of God is like a man in search of a precious gem. He forsakes all and aggressively pursues the hunt. He tirelessly digs with ever-increasing hope. So said

Jesus Christ. Solomon said only those who seek wisdom as does a man search for rubies will ever find it.

Things of quality do not normally come to us. They must be pursued aggressively by the individual. The Kingdom of God and all it represents would assume a meaningless image if it were given to the derelict. Jesus said, we must *seek* the Kingdom. Its location on the docket of priorities *must* be at the top—first.

In this world, men are preoccupied with transitory things. They are greatly influenced by what they can see, handle, and touch. Spiritual things are unseen, albeit eternal. Even God, a Spirit being is spurned and rejected or made over to suit the image of the individual man. How much less do men, in general, understand those concepts of life which proceed from Him! For they too are spiritual and unseen (or not demonstrable) physically.

For all time God has been aware of this state of men. Through David He said, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Ps. 14:1).

Man was created for the honor and glory of His Maker. Yet he has become totally evil—obsessed with humanism: the idolization, and worship of all natural aspirations and emotions. Yielding to the base element of an ugly and lustful nature.

How did God react to this unsavory condition? David continues, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, *to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God*" (vs. 2).

Our day is clouded with evil—the worst that is in man. It seems that the incessant quest is for those things which are more evil and corrupt than practiced in the past. It is a downward thrust of immorality and degradation.

Brethren, why cannot professing Christians endeavor equally and industriously for knowledge of God and His way? God is looking down from heaven to see if *any do seek Him!*

Our part in this act of faith is to *seek God*. To grow daily in knowledge and character. A dimension possible only if we truly love God's Truth and desire to be spiritually successful.

When called, we first think about these things—ponder them in our hearts. Next we effectively search for broader understanding. Once understanding comes, we are obligated to act (Jas. 1:22, 25).

How? Passively? Indifferently? Or, as though life really depended on total comprehension and commitment?

The third step is a matter of urgency.

Be Objective and Aggressive

In all things of life there exists both a positive and negative consideration. If one labors diligently, he avoids indolence. If a man is truthful, he avoids falsity. If we are sincere, we avoid hypocrisy. Our service to God is no different.

Too many times the temptation is to attempt serving God with apathy and indifference. This is sheer futility. We are obligated to be "*on fire*," stirred up to maximum dedication. As the Apostle Paul once said, "Addicted to this way of life." And the Apostle John said, "God will accept only those who are 'hot.'" Lukewarmness is tantamount to indifference. We cannot be divided in our allegiance. The base pulls of our nature attempt to thrust our spiritual purposes down to a state of equilibrium, at least.

In this state of futility, we flounder, grow increasingly anxious, troubled, perplexed, and discontent. The next step is either up or down. If we do not gain a hold of our own emotions and purposes we will abandon totally all commitment to Truth. From that point hardness begins to set in. Progressively, we lose all interest in Truth and thereby manifest contempt and disdain.

Centuries ago, a servant of God instructed His (God's) people, Israel, in the areas of this very problem. Human nature remains the same up to this day. Let us learn the objective lesson from this Biblical example.

Israel had come out of bondage. She was a free people. To keep her free God had given to her "the way of freedom"—a way which Satan, in the hearts and minds of men, has perverted and called the way of bondage.

Now Israel had crossed the Jordan River and was the possessor of her promised inheritance. She had been given the way of freedom and the foreordained inheritance.

What would she do with this glorious opportunity? Life and health stood before her. But a wrong choice meant a way of misery, destruction, and death.

Just before his death, Joshua—the successor to Moses—made the options clear. He laid out the requirements. The people had to make a choice.

Joshua said, "Now therefore *fear* the Lord, and *serve* him in sincerity and in truth: and *put away* the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord." (Josh. 24:14).

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, *choose* you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites [those who had filled the earth with sin, Gen. 15:12–16], in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

Israel could make a choice. She was called to understand. To her God had given His priceless way of life. The responsibility of a right decision was borne squarely on her shoulders.

There is further responsibility, too. A simple choice was not sufficient. On the contrary, she should have evaluated her will, intent, and purpose. Did she possess sufficient character to compel herself to act favorably *at all times*? Or, would she soon lose interest? Would she grow insincere, apathetic, and indifferent? How one begins is not the test of character, but rather how and where one ends his life!

This example is most significant to us—even today. The line of demarcation between the past and present (old way versus new opportunity) for Israel was the crossing of the Red Sea ("the other side of the flood and in Egypt"). Our line of demarcation is baptism, historically depicted by the example of Israel (1 Cor. 10:1–2). As Israel was required to put away strange gods and customs on this side of that line of demarcation, so must we overcome, reject, and put away customs, habits, and practices indulged in prior to baptism.

Spiritual mastery is the pursuit of this very objective. But transitions are not usually clean and precise. As Israel kept many of their strange gods, concepts of minds, and a rebellious spirit, so do those called today have great difficulty putting away former conceptions, practices, or beliefs. A form of tolerance and peaceful coexistence prevails. The Name of God is used but too many patterns of behavior are not of God.

Our part in the act of faith is to comprehensively believe and then ACT on that faith. By keeping our minds and hearts fixed upon God and His way we can remain objective and aggressive. But to take our eyes off the real goal and become troubled with the present is to invite apathy and indifference soon to be followed by rejection and a return to spiritual blindness.

The points above are all perfectly illustrated by Samuel when instructing Israel following her rejection of God and demanding a king like all the other nations (1 Sam. 12:20–25). She had committed a great sin. But, above all, Samuel instructed Israel not to allow this initial step away from right to become the beginning of a total departure from God.

All things which we may ask or even demand are not always right. We must not allow one act of independence to lead us into a total rejection of Truth—or the way of life. God knows whom He has chosen. If we remain sincerely honest in our efforts, God will continue with us. Remain diligent, eyes fixed upon Him, and serve with all the heart.

Sometimes the flesh is weak. We become deeply disturbed, troubled, and in need of well defined encouragement. What should we do at such times?

If we have kept ourselves close to God during times of well-being and favor, kept our eyes fixed upon Him—through daily meditation, we have a covert and refuge in the time of turmoil and doubt. God knows that we are but flesh. He wants us to remain cognizant of that fact. Only the arrogance of man deludes him into thinking he can handle his own problems and situations.

Recognize Need—Effect Urgent Appeal to God

Why do some people "miraculously" pull through accidents or sicknesses that would have taken the lives of others? The answer lies basically, in the nature of "will"—the will to live.

The situation is no different with people (once called of God) who know the Truth but are now rapidly dying the spiritual death, Some have no will to go on—no will to make changes or seek appropriate help. Spiritual demise may not be readily noticeable because the physical appears to be well. Oftentimes, the feeling of those dying spiritually is: "I have never had it so good. How can this be wrong in the sight of God? I have never been so greatly blessed." The problem is: The wrong "yardstick" was being used by

which the measurement (evaluation) was made. This condition can only transpire if we allow ourselves to sink progressively to the level where we cannot correctly evaluate. The principle is this: Recognize defects early—before one is too weak to care. Then, manifest the will to change before the burden becomes excessive. Employ the will to live. Others do, for purely physical reasons. We have everything to gain: The abundant life here and now and the promise of life everlasting.

David, a man of great experience, had traversed this unique area of life. He said, "I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me . . ." (Ps. 119:26). He honestly laid his life out before God. It isn't that God needed to be told. He made man and therefore knows his nature, that he is but flesh. What God wants is honesty from us! He wants us to see and admit what we are.

Once we have admitted to God that we recognize ourselves for what we really are, we can then petition God as David, ". . . teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts . . ." (Ps. 119:26–27). Comprehending the ways of God is absolutely proportionate to our ability and will to see ourselves for what we are.

What brought David to this critical point in life and the appeal to God for comprehension of that which is right? Psalm 119:25 makes the appeal understandable. He said, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust . . ." David was down. He was distraught. But he knew that the only way out of this bewilderment was through God's ways. Not the course pursued by far too many—giving up the Truth altogether.

How do we keep our attention focused upon God? Again, David said, ". . . so shall I talk of thy wondrous works" (Ps. 119:27). See what God has done. Talk of those works often. Commit the self, verbally, daily. How can one walk away from that which he has daily praised, extolled, and favorably defended? In other words, the means of spiritual success is personal commitment—daily. We must keep our attention focused upon the real issues of life. Our consideration here is only secondary. Put the Kingdom of God *first*.

Our part? To make a complete and firm commitment? We must eliminate all doubt. And what is the basis of such blanket faith? One thing and one thing only. Divine revelation. We must believe God gave that Truth to His chosen people of the last days. And those who are called and are recipients of that Truth know who they are, even though they have never seen Jesus Christ. Remember the lesson taught through the trial of Thomas (John 20:24–29)? Real belief is to know. How? By faith!

The first part of our personal responsibility is to believe—to KNOW! Where do we then go from the stance of personal belief? James was inspired to write, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him" (Jas. 2:14)? Belief and faith are useless unless they become the basis for future action. Then, the next step in the pursuit of God's objective in the lives of those called is *action*.

Your Personal Responsibility—Act on the Word

When called, we are afforded the privilege of understanding. But what is the purpose of understanding what we do not will to obey? The knowledge of God is not merely interesting information with no further purpose. It is knowledge of a way—way of life. It is knowledge of what those called to understand must act on.

The Apostle John instructed us, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). What we read and understand we must translate into deed. Why? Because it is Truth—*the* Truth. Too many can portray a good act. But it takes courage and determination to act on the instructions heard and received. If we love God, we will act on His Word—all of it, not just that which suits our desires.

Can the called of God KNOW that they are of the Truth? Indeed, they can! But, how? Again, John says, "And hereby [the action defined in verse 18] we *know* that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (1 John 3:19).

Apparently some in the days of the Apostle John were distrusting their call. Probably because of the many divergent groups who had splintered from the Truth in that day. Regardless of such circumstances John was inspired of the Holy Spirit to reassure honest servants there was a way to *know*. How? By acting on the Truth. And how would they have known what the Truth was? That which was initially given! Once received, if they had remained steadfast to that Truth, there would be no doubt. The only way men and women of these last days will ever be able to reassure their hearts is by a *complete return to the faith once delivered*.

Our responsibility is to act on the Word received. When was it received? At the time of God's call and the initial revelation of a way of life! Before any changes, alterations, corruptions or perversions!

If we can regain and consistently maintain this faith and confidence in the Truth—the original revelation—then we can manifest the attitude described by John. He said, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:20–21).

Let us really trust God. Have faith in the revelation. Implicit obedience is the manifestation of that faith.

We must think soberly—meditate. We are obligated to make a diligent search for the way! We must be diligent and aggressive in all things. We must recognize our human limitations and thereby call upon God for strength and help. And we must act upon the Word which we know and understand. What is the next step based upon this action of faith? Continuity!

Continuity Is Our Responsibility

"The pathway to hell is paved with good intentions" is a classic truism. It is most fitting and appropriate with respect to our spiritual endeavor. How one *begins* his life of responsibility has little to do with the ultimate objective. Setting out for any specific goal, i.e. the initiation of the endeavor, is not an end in itself! Purpose is achieved only if those so oriented maintain vision, aggressiveness, purpose, and determination until the specific objective is realized. The goal is never realized, no matter how close we come to it, until the reality is experienced.

When addressing His called disciples—the Jews who believed on Him—Jesus said, ". . . *if ye continue* in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). The beginning was relatively unimportant. Consistency is the hallmark of success—the will and determination to bring to a conclusion any endeavors. This consistency results in KNOWING the Truth. Then, on the contrary, doubt and confusion result from turning away from revealed Truth. For a statement to be true, the opposite of that statement must also be true. For example: Success is a product of a wise application of energy. The opposite is equally true. Lassitude, indifference, and apathy result in failure. Opposing philosophic or mental consideration is not always stated but it is always implied.

What, then, was Jesus saying in John 8:31–32? That those called Jews received the words which Jesus was commissioned to preach. That continuity of belief and action were requisites to discipleship. That this faithfulness results from an active and living

faith. And finally that *consistently* KNOWING the Truth results from the above action of faith.

By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul corroborates what Jesus pronounced. In 1 Timothy 1:18–19 we read, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest *war a good warfare; Holding faith*, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck."

By faith, Timothy, had received the Truth of God. Faith, if we will recall, is the evidence of things not seen. Spiritual things are not seen. They are received by revelation and maintained by faith. Once these things of the Spirit are received they are kept in place mentally by faith.

As Jesus said, "one remains a disciple [child of God] if he continues in the way initially received." Paul calls this action, "Holding faith." The result of rejecting this initial faith is a host of shipwrecked lives. How abundantly we have seen the modern-day manifestation of this shipwrecked condition.

Evaluating the usage of the Greek word for "holding" proves to be quite interesting. Let us compare a number of texts. Two or three texts initially will make the meaning graphically clear.

A. Matthew 1:15—" . . . she [Mary] was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Literally translated: "*HAVING* in the womb."

B. Matthew 1:23—" . . . a virgin shall be with child . . ." Literally translated: "*SHALL HAVE* in the womb . . ."

C. Matthew 24:19—" . . . unto them that are with child . . . Literally translated: ". . . that *HAVE* in the womb . . ."

Now let us compare the above texts to "holding faith" of 1 Timothy 1:19. Faith is likened to a growing embryo. Though unseen it still exists. If it does not abort, its presence becomes more and more apparent until the actual time of parturition. It then becomes a reality.

By Paul, we are actually instructed to hold and nurture the faith which we were originally given. That faith is defined as the way of life which we originally received.

One cannot separate the element of trust from the required responsibility. In other words, to have faith in God implies required ACTION, not a mere expression of hollowness. James said that real faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17, 20).

It is obvious, "holding faith" means the maintenance (continuity) of the ACTION to which we were called. We nurture and safeguard it as a woman does a growing fetus. How, then, can any change be justified? Only two possibilities exist. One, the fetus grows and develops—features added, and body expands—no change, or, the immature fetus aborts. We should hold to the first. Stay in place and come to full maturity ready to be born at the Second Coming of Christ.

Three other texts will make the substance of required faith understandable. They are Romans 1:28, ". . . *to retain* God in their knowledge . . ." 1 Timothy 3:9, " *Holding* the mystery of the faith . . ." 2 Timothy 1:13 says, " *Hold* fast the form of sound words . . ." Obviously the substance (works) of the faith to which James made mention is the knowledge of God, the revealed mystery of God, the sound words which have been given.

Our responsibility, having been called of God, is to continue in the way to which we were called. The Scriptures above apply to us in our day. The Bible was written for us upon whom the ends of the world are come. To relegate them to the historical past is to do violence to the Word of God.

WE MUST CONSISTENTLY ACT UPON THE WORD GIVEN TO US! The Word which we received and which formed the basis of our baptism.

If urgency is incumbent upon us to maintain faith, there must be some grave reason. What could dissuade us from continuing in the way of life originally delivered?

Know the Truth: Be Not Swayed by Heresy

"Second thoughts" have destroyed more adventures, businesses, and purposes than almost any other known cause. "Second thoughts" are doubts manifested in mental questions. Doubt is an impediment to aggressiveness, orientation, and continuity. Such doubts may stem from unwillingness to expend the necessary energy or a distrust of one's own ability. Or, we may begin to distrust advice given or the guarantees and promises proffered. Or, altogether too frequently we become enamored with the "swan song" of some more cheery and personally acceptable alternative—described as heresy in the Bible.

Initially, as far as we are concerned there is never a question about the call of God. It is a miracle, a change from human direction to the spiritual way of life. There is no question about the Truth given. (Do not confuse this with people who presume or have appropriated the name of Christ. We are speaking only of those genuinely called to know and understand.) The prophets of old and the apostles of the New Testament did not have any problem with the initial call and the Word given. The only real area of problem existed in the realm of steadfastness—continuity, the exercise of real faith.

After the initial call and receipt of Truth, too many began to doubt, thereby losing direction. This loss of direction occurred because of the various reasons given above. They did not hold that faith firm and resolute. Doubts crept in! Questions arose! It was a spiritual disease which was eating away as does a cancer physically.

John warns us of the need to daily evaluate what we hear and receive mentally (1 John 4:1–6). What John states in this text is based upon the absolute presumption of an *unalterable standard*. How can anyone try the spirits (influences motivating what we say) if there is no standard of comparison? It is not possible! An absolute standard of evaluation is imperative. In fact, a variable standard is always unjust, dishonest and creates partiality and confusion.

What is the standard of judgment by which all those chosen of God must evaluate what they hear and read? It is *the avenue* by which we can know the Spirit of God.

The Spirit which proceeds from God conforms to the life lived by Jesus Christ. That is, Christ, the unchanging One, lives the same life in present-day servants as He did in His own body almost 2,000 years ago.

Did Jesus observe the Holy Days? Then He is doing that same thing today. What Christ lived and taught in His own physical life is exactly what He is doing in the physical lives of those called today.

Those who do not live (allow Christ to live) the same life He lived are a part of the antichrist. Just remember the spirit of the antichrist applies in a secondary sense to the masses of humanity who have never heard of the Truth. Why? Did not John say that those called in his day had heard that it *should* come—future tense? The pagan concepts of life existed thousands of years prior to the time of the Apostle John! Therefore, the spirit of the antichrist could come only after the time of Christ and is related to those who once understood. Those who have resorted to clever explanations of the Bible by which they avoid obedience to the Truths espoused and lived by Christ.

The true ministry is preaching the same things Christ did. Those called of God hear those ministers because the standard of judgment has never changed. And those who have subscribed to the spirit of the antichrist do not hear that Word. By that standard (unmoveable, unalterable) we can *know* those of the true Spirit and those of the spirit of error.

Our responsibility? For the benefit of the self, judge all things which are heard and read. Do not be swayed by the spirit of the antichrist—the spirit of heresy. **KNOW THE TRUTH! DO NOT BE MOVED BY ANY SPIRIT OF ERROR!**

Why is it essential to be spiritually alert? To keep faith and conviction strong?

In the Last Days Some Will Depart From the Truth

As human beings, we tend to be influenced by what others do. If a sizeable group organizes, we tend to want to follow. It is comfortable to be identified with group activity. We hate to stand alone. Too many are swayed by the motility of the masses. Division and confusion become the order of the day.

Most human beings are not deliberately pursuing the spirit of Satan, the devil. Rather, one feels he is right in his own eyes. But what did Paul say about these last days? He said, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits [antichrist], and doctrines of devils [demons]" (1 Tim. 4:1).

To depart from anything one must first be in it. From Paul's statement, it is evident that the faith (doctrine, way of life) was first delivered because the people *departed from it*.

What were they turning to? To the doctrine of demons. Why? Because they were seduced. Seduction is an orientation of mind. It—the new or strange concept—was mentally and emotionally appealing.

Once these advocates of the "new doctrine" are "enlightened" they feel compelled to "force" others to accept their dogma. Those who submit are entangled in the bondage from which they had been freed. Yet, they call their bondage, a new-found freedom.

Our responsibility? Maintain the freedom God granted in the way of life to which we were called. Just remember, men will always be the servant of something. Either the servant of self which is bondage or the servant of God which is freedom (Rom. 6:16).

In conclusion, what is our final responsibility? How should we behave and react to the trials and situations encountered in life?

Walk in Confidence

If we do not doubt, if we manifest optimum faith, why should we react negatively to *any* situation in life? The called of God KNOW who they are! Those chosen of God KNOW the revealed Truth. And they KNOW God. Their beginning is ordained of God. How they fare from that point on is entirely dependent upon the continuity of faith and conviction. If they doubt not, then they have confidence in God. They will walk confidently day by day. Paul succinctly stated this fact when writing to the Philippians. He said, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ [His Second Coming]" (Ph'p. 1:6).

Man's experience in life is to *exercise* that faith. Genuine faith is just like a muscle. If not exercised it tends to loose force, strength, and vitality. What is happening to us is called the trial of our faith (1 Pet. 1:7).

Our responsibility? Walk confidently—but not arrogantly. We must be humble at all times—but never open to the seduction of strange spirits. The true Christian walks confidently in the way of life which he received at the time of baptism—and then grows in spiritual understanding—not change.

The summary of all which has been written this time can be found in Proverbs 2:1–9. For a conclusion, let us quote Solomon verbatim.

Conclusion

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his

mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path."

How can our responsibility be more beautifully or perfectly stated? Let us accept the charge given to us. Let us not fail, but be successful. We are afforded the most awesome opportunity ever given to man.

Again, our love, prayers, and thoughts always. Please accept our gratitude and appreciation for your Christian endeavor. We count it a privilege to serve you.

In deepest love and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'R' and 'C'.

Raymond C. Cole