

Church of God, The Eternal

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Can We Endure?: Personal Offense Is No Justification For Departure

September 1990

Dear Brethren:

We are facing the prophesied calamitous events of the last days. These are times we knew were destined to come. Since God reveals only the generalized time of these appearances, never any of the detailed specifics—such as names, times, circumstances, etc., we are usually surprised, shocked, and saddened by those particulars when they occur. This present specific time and the specific set of events are no exception. The scope of Satan's attack, subterfuge, and lying deception is, indeed, shocking. It is just because of this recent activity we have elected to entitle this *Monthly Letter*—as an outline—"Can We Endure?" For Jesus said, when asked about the events of the last days, ". . . he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." Though not customary, and also contrary to basic policy, we are making this *Monthly Letter* an extensive outline. Please take the time to read all the Biblical material indicated. Indeed, your life could depend on just such faithful study.

This *Monthly Letter* is intended to corroborate and substantiate the Eugene sermon of the same name, given on August 25, 1990. Much information not given in the sermon will be included in this outline.

I. Conditions of the Last Days.

Note: In order to understand events of the last days—in the body and outside—it is necessary to comprehend the prophetic events which Christ and the apostles indicated would transpire. Let us carefully take note of a significant number of these Biblically indicated events. They are:

A. **Wild religious deceptions:** Matt. 24:4–5, 11: ". . . Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Explanation: Who would do the deceiving? Not ministers and/or members who have existed through the centuries. Rather, those who would surface in the last days. The obvious context shows that the deception

will come from ministers and members who once understood the truth. The result is that many called to know the truth of God will be deceived. Verse eleven proves that these deceivers will arise in the last days. Did not Jesus say that the Temple typified His own body? Does not, therefore, verse two imply that the problems would occur to the church?

Luke 21:8: ". . . Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them." The time? Obviously the last days. Notice carefully, the tendency is toward lateral moves—not justified because all such is some form of deception. From the beginning of the apostasy, only one standard of evaluation is warranted.

B. Betrayal because of offense: Matt. 24:10: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." Internal conflict. Who is guilty before God? Those who depart for "perceived wrongs" or injuries and turn to hate and contempt which will become the basis of betrayal of faithful members who will not accede to the demands and expectations of the "injured." Where? In the body. When? In the last days.

C. Members losing interest: Matt. 24:12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Since the iniquitous conditions during the age of Noah typify these last days, it becomes obvious that Christ's warning cannot simply and exclusively refer to conditions of the world in general. These are conditions among members who once believed the truth. In general, Christ is saying that people would begin to judge the truth on the basis of member behavior. Because of what they see or think they see, Christ—the body—will be judged.

D. Instability: members making lateral moves: Matt. 24:23: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not." Though in all probability referring to the literal appearance of Jesus Christ, yet the context strongly implies a greater meaning, conceptually. Someone is attempting to dissuade others from faithful pursuit of the "faith once delivered" by claiming to be the true remnant—the ones holding to the truth. Yet they are deceivers. Since the body and the doctrine are one, the only justification for not being a part of the parent body is change of doctrine. In this present departure, the ones who depart are guilty before God. It is not the other way around.

E. Devastating destruction of members through miracles and wonders: Matt. 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall

shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Some who depart from the truth may be given power and ability to perform miracles and wonders. These will be so auspicious that only the very elect will be able to withstand the mental pressure—pressure in their own minds to subscribe to the concepts being advanced. The only basis for determining what is right before God will be the revealed truth—the truth which cannot change. The authors of this deception will either be ministers who apostatized or those men who arrogate office and responsibility to themselves—men who have not been ordained of God to a spiritual responsibility, by the laying on of hands of the ministry.

F. Social recklessness: Matt. 24:38–39: "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Luke 21:34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Members who cannot stir themselves up to do the will of God from the heart. Pursuing the way of destruction because of the strong pull of the flesh. Oblivious to the serious times in which they live.

G. Christ will again be rejected: Luke 17:25: "But first [preceding the Second Coming of Christ] must he [Christ] suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." Christ must suffer many indignities by the very members whom He had chosen to obtain life. Besides the sufferings to which He will be subjected, He must also ultimately be rejected. Since the Bible makes it plain that they did not reject the name—for He said they would appropriate the name—how do they reject Him? He is the Word, the Truth. He is the divinely revealed Truth in these last days. If these members still appropriate the name, yet are said to reject Him, such rejection can only be the refusal to be ruled and controlled by His revealed word, that which was given to His chosen servant of these last days.

H. Pressures to change/compromise doctrine: Luke 18:7–8: "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?"

2 Tim. 3:13–14: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou

hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." The faith is the doctrine. The question advanced by Christ is: Will the doctrine exist in the last days? Enormous pressure is being exerted in one way or another to compromise or change that doctrine which was given to the body initially. Obviously, there are some who once knew the truth who are advancing contrary doctrine—people or even ministers who are claiming to know what was delivered and by this deception are in reality advancing their own personal views of what was initially delivered. The faithful members are admonished to adhere firmly to something which was first given. The deceptions are, then, weird explanations by deceivers who attempt to dissuade members from adhering to the initial doctrine.

I. Members turning to themselves—trusting in their own concepts: Luke 18:9: "And he [Christ] spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." The time element is given in verses 7–8. Many members today cannot be instructed. They are laws unto themselves. They trust their own minds—not the "faith once delivered." Actually, in some cases they have formed their own opinions and then set about to find some minister who will concur with their convictions, which supposedly would give legitimacy to their existence. What deception! A common mark of disaffection among those who so trust in themselves is their attitude toward the faithful—they despise them. They do their level best to spread gossip, evil concepts, and hatefulness. If these people are so right, why do they never live the way of peace and accord spelled out in the Word of God?

J. The righteous subjected to internal ridicule: Luke 21:12: "But before all these [prophesied last day events], they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake." Who are the "they" in this verse? Without doubt there are political personages involved. But, in no way can they be the principle ones involved. Note verses 13–17, emphasis on verse 16. "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." If parents and kinsfolks refer to relatives, who are the brethren? The word can mean brothers and sisters of a physical household. But it is the same word used to refer to members of the household of faith. See Acts 1:16; 2:29, 37; 7:13; Rom. 16:17. For comparative purposes, please refer to Daniel 11:30–35. Here are mentioned members who departed from the truth and became accessories to the political powers which will prevail in these final days. Is it possible that Christ was stating that disaffected members of the body will

actually be the ones who will cause the greatest problems for the faithful members? Considering the statement in Daniel, there can be no doubt. Please be careful to make a necessary distinction between those who are forced to avoid others who precipitated and believe in doctrinal change and those who depart from the body due to "hurt feelings" and other personal reasons.

K. Doctrinal divisions continue: Rom. 16:17–18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." These conditions applied to the church of the First Century. Also, they are applicable to this generation. It was doctrinal rejection which brought about the initial apostasy. That same rejection will continue until the day of Christ's return. The remnant will have been forced into separation from the parent body. From that day on there is evidence of attempts on the part of some within even the remnant to change doctrine. The purpose will be for personal gain—"such serve . . . their own belly. . ."

L. There will be enormous contempt for the ministry: Titus 2:15; 3:1–3: "These things [chapter 2] speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." The time element is found in chapter 2, verse 13. Because of past difficulties, members generally attempt to cast all ministers into the same category. Such generalizations will not work. God *does* have some faithful ministers in the last days. It is your duty to know them (1 Thess. 5:12). How can any minister be effective in carrying out the instructions of Paul to Titus if the called servants do not respect their word and instruction? Or, if members resort to personalized explanations of "the faith once delivered," it would be impossible to rebuke and teach. Everyone would be determining what he would and what he would not accept. In the context of the above instructions please read carefully the book of Jude and the second chapter of 2 Peter. Read also 2 Tim. 3:1, 7–8.

M. The mystery of iniquity will intensify as time elapses: 2 Thess. 2:7–12: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy

with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Some members do not believe from the heart. They will evaluate on the basis of their feelings and emotions. Because of these facts God will allow terrible trials to befall them.

Generally, the test will not be to bring them back to the knowledge of His Way of life but to force them into an ultimate rejection of His truth. What a terrible cost for the "privilege" of nursing our own pet feelings and substantiating ourselves in wrong. Of course, such corrupted and deceived minds will believe themselves to be right—even when facing the ultimate Judge, Jesus Christ.

N. The prevalence of demonism among those who once knew the truth: 1 Tim. 4:1, 6: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [demons]. . . . If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words whereunto thou hast attained." Demonism was the cause of the apostasy. It continues to be the influence upon members who cannot orient themselves in continuous faithfulness. Even so, the faithful minister must continually warn. How surprising and shocking will the reality of revelation be in the day when Jesus Christ comes to make all things clear and known?

The above is a substantial list, though not all points which could have been mentioned, of conditions which were prophesied, and are now surfacing, in these closing days before the Advent of Jesus Christ. *We* are seeing them occur before our very eyes. Tragic things are happening. These very occurrences are a manifest proof of the times in which we live, as well as the circumstances through which the faithful must live. Can we endure? Will we allow these conditions to trouble and dissuade us from consistency and faithfulness to the truth to which we have been called?

II. What Is Happening?

A. Could this be the time the Apostle John mentioned? Rev. 12:12: "... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." These are

the last days. It surely appears that his wrath is being aggressively poured out against any who will attempt to remain faithful to the truth as it was initially given.

B. To understand the basis of this activity we must understand what conversion is: Acts 26:18: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance . . ." Conversion is a threat to the kingdom of Satan. Is it any wonder, as he sees his final days evaporate, that he has avoided no effort to destroy those called to replace him?

C. What is our resolve quotient? Mark 4:3–20: This is Christ's parable of the sower. He indicated four levels of conversion. In which category does each one of us fall? Are we seed which fell in the wayside? These are those who, though having heard the truth, are not making the necessary changes because Satan consumed the seed from their hearts and minds. Are we seed which fell on stony ground? Such are those who have heard the truth, responded for a time, but who do not have the depth of conversion to weather the storms of trial and persecution destined to be experienced by everyone called of God. Note these are the ones who become offended—offended because of some element of the truth. Are we of the seed which fell among thorns? These are those who heard the truth and responded but could not endure the pressures of personal lusts. Desire for personal possessions and responsiveness to conditions and circumstances of life render these, once called and faithful, unfaithful. Finally, there are those who are sown in good ground. They have depth of conviction and a genuine love for the truth. They weather all storms of doubt, fear, and contempt. They know the truth and refuse to abandon it regardless of charges leveled by some in the body.

D. What advantages does Satan seize? Below is listed four specific ones.

1. Marital problems: 1 Cor. 7:5: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." How many of the world's problems are related to conflict in the home? Why would Satan be interested in marital bliss of the human family? The family typifies the Kingdom of God. If humans cannot resolve their problems in this family relationship, how can they be considered fit candidates for the Kingdom?

2. Hard and unforgiving attitudes: 2 Cor. 2:7–11: ". . . Ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." No human being should be personally demanding toward another individual. There is no mortal who does not need the ultimate mercy of God and Christ. A hard attitude toward anyone else leaves the affected party open to Satanic influence.

3. Church assistance: 1 Tim. 5:8–16: Men are responsible for their families. Widows over sixty are entitled—if a genuine need exists—to consideration if they have been faithful in serving the church. The Bible shows, however, that widows should be first relieved by family members in the church. Younger widows are not entitled to church help. Being yet marriageable, they will probably marry. The Apostle Paul was inspired to encourage just such marriages. By so doing the opportunity for adversarial influence is mitigated. In Paul's day some of the younger women had already turned aside after Satan. How subtle his influence is. Those women were not, in all probability, aware of whom they were following.

4. Ministerial responsibility: 1 Pet. 5:1–9: Peter was inspired to give instructions to all the ministry. They are to feed the flock, take the oversight of the body with a ready mind and not for money's sake, be appropriate examples; the younger ministers are to be subject to those older in responsibility; and all are to manifest true humility of mind and heart by showing total trust and confidence in the benevolence of their Creator God. Failure of any minister to do these things is open to the deception of his chief enemy, Satan. How can they successfully resist the deceit of Satan? By remaining steadfast in the faith—the Way of life and responsibility to which they have been called. It has become obvious any minister who does not honor and respect the doctrine which he was taught, and which he in turn taught for years, is under the adversarial influence of his archenemy, Satan. Of

course, he is not going to believe such is the case; neither will he acknowledge the verity of his past.

E. God will allow Satan to influence adversely even the righteous.

1. God allows Satan to try Job: Job 1:6–12, 22.
2. God allows Satan to try Job a second time—more severely: Job 2:1–6.
3. Job seeks counsel but finds no answers: Job, chapters 3 to 37.
4. God speaks to Job: Job, chapters 38 to 41.
5. God's message gets through to Job; he sees himself finally: Job 42:1–6.
6. Compare the above with God's intervention in the last days.
 - a. Those refined by trial: Rev. 7:14.
 - b. Those whose attitudes would not allow them to effectively use the call which God tendered: 2 Thess. 2:1–4, 7–12.

F. Christ set the example of how to meet Satan face to face.

1. Christ's personal experience: Matt. 4:1–10.
2. Do we recognize Satan?
 - a. Matt. 16:21–28: At this time Peter did not recognize him.
 - b. Luke 22:3, 31–32: Satan still after the disciples. Judas succumbs. Christ prays for Peter. What was Christ's petition for Peter? That his faith fail not. Faith in what? That Christ was the Christ and that He was the revealed Word of God. It is the same test of faith we experience today.

c. Acts 5:3: Anyone attempting to leave a false impression before others. Ananias was attempting to leave a sacrificing image before the membership, while in reality attempting to gain personally.

d. 2 Cor. 11:7–15: Ministers taking advantage of the people. Making merchandise of the membership by putting on an image of benevolence and kindness. Remember: There is one test only by which to know a true minister. Does he preach the same truth revealed from the beginning?

G. Manifestations of Satanic activity.

1. Members who, because of trials and problems, have given themselves over to total carnality: Eph. 4:18–32.
2. Ministers and fellow-laborers who do not have families under control. Those who do not have a good report from the outside world. 1 Tim. 3:1–7.
3. Vacillating, arrogant, unteachable minds of members: Jas. 4:5–11
4. Members who generate strife, division, contention confusion and unrest in the church: Jas. 3:13–16
5. Any member who mitigates the force of the law, or anyone who teaches the mitigation of the law of God: 1 John 3:4–6
6. Members within the body who despise government, authority, and responsibility in the church: Jude 8–13; 2 Pet. 2:1–21

H. Considering the above, let us ascertain what our duty is.

1. We must stand against the wiles of Satan: Eph. 6:10–20.
2. We must *know* who he is, recognize him: 1 John 3:9–12.

Note: God's word is powerful (Heb. 4:12). The ministry is required to preach that unalterable word uncompromisingly. It

does cut. But it hurts only when we do not want to change and conform to the will of God.

I. Why does a faithful ministry preach so powerfully and uncompromisingly?

1. We do not want to feel responsible for the following conditions when they occur: 2 Thess. 2:7–13.
2. Hoping that some members can be captured before being destroyed by Satan: 2 Tim. 2:24–26.

J. What is the epitome of satanic deception in these last days?

1. A false concept of mercy—kindness of God, love: Jude 4: In many ways these members had been influenced by a concept of love, mercy, which mitigates the force and power of the law of God. By this concept of mercy they had rejected the efficacy of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. Interestingly, as Jude 5 reveals, the ancient children of Israel, typifying the called and chosen today, who could not remain faithful to the purpose of their call, were destroyed because they did not really believe. Will the lesson of history go unheeded by those called today?

2. As defined by God, what is love? 2 John 6–11: "And this is love, that we walk after the commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. [That is, the present manifestation of the Word, the doctrine at any given moment.] This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." In order to carry out the above instructions it is imperative that the doctrine be first revealed. How is it possible to use it as a guide if it is not known with certainty and conviction? Once called to

know the doctrine, we must remain faithful. Further, if anyone comes attempting to dissuade members from faithful obedience to, or in some way compromising, the revealed doctrine, faithful members are instructed to avoid these people and give them no encouragement.

In Proverbs 10:12 the real truth is made plain. Those who feign love and kindness are usually the ones stirring up strife and contention. God calls this hate, not love. Why? Because love covereth all sins. A concept seemingly overlooked by anyone who is involved in contention. This spiritual principle is so significant that God had it repeated (Prov. 17:9).

3. What is the real test of love? Prov. 9:8: "Reprove [the duty of a faithful minister] not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." We are made to wonder. Did we make a mistake? Were the people we tried to help, scorners; or were they wise? By the fruits they can be known.

4. The tragedy of feigned love: Prov. 27:5–6.

K. There comes a time when the ministry must take drastic steps, in hope.

1. Contentious and unteachable members must be put out and delivered into the hands of Satan—for reason: 1 Cor. 5:5: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

2. Paul practiced what he preached: 1 Tim. 1:18–20: "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: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

3. The prayer of David toward those who incessantly blasphemed him: Ps. 109:1–31. Why do people, especially in the name of religion, find pleasure in the denigration of other people? There is no way the habit can be Biblically substantiated.

4. Through deluded human beings, usually inside an organization, body, or whatever, Satan manages to buffet the called and chosen of God: 2 Cor. 12:6–10. Christ was endlessly subjected to the contempt and hate of Satan. The apostles were given little rest. Christ said the same would be true of any who would be faithful servants of His in the future.

III. Division Is Not of God.

The church is the body of Christ. He had but one body. There are many members (individuals), but only one body. If one is separated from that body, he must be grafted back or suffer the eternal consequence of destruction (John 10). We, the Church of God, The Eternal, have never claimed to be a separate body. On the contrary, we claim only to be estranged brethren waiting until our brothers and sisters are refined and purified. In God's own time we will be united once again with a faithful body—the wife of Christ.

The above being true, how do those who depart justify themselves? In every case, those who have departed did so not for doctrine but to uphold themselves in some specific way. If they all agree with the doctrine, why then are they separate? We do adhere to the doctrine which was taught through the years since I was made a minister in the early 1950s. The two areas to which some are inclined to refer, in an attempt to legitimize their existence, have been explained previously (holy day offerings seven times in a year and third tithe paid twice in each seven-year cycle are not Biblical, nor were they instituted as such in these last days). But, the big question: Why did these issues mean nothing to them until they were met with personal situations which they refused to face and overcome? It seems to me that God calls such behavior hypocrisy. Worse yet is the fact some men, not ordained of God, have preempted God and Christ, assuming a ministerial role to which they were not called and will therefore encounter the wrath and punishment of God Himself.

Is Christ against Himself (Matt. 12:22–30)? As stated above, we are not against the instrumentality which God chose to proclaim the truth and through which we came to the knowledge of that priceless Way of life. Because the ministers of the church changed the doctrine, they are in essence against themselves. Further, it can be stated with certainty, I did not depart from the body because of any "hurt feelings." I let it be known time and time again that I would not change the doctrine. Anyone who knew me in those trying years would be forced to admit that fact. If those who have departed, and some who now attempt to justify their rebellious actions, would be honest, they would be compelled to admit that they did not leave because of doctrine. In some cases, they are insisting on a reinterpretation of the doctrine based on their concepts of right and wrong. In other cases they are attempting to justify their departure on the basis of "hurt feelings" or an unwillingness to

correct their lives in accord with the revealed instructions of God. God has plainly revealed that such circumstances would occur in these last days. Are we sufficiently strong to endure the mental pressure such conditions impose upon us?

A fitting conclusion is a statement of Christ: ". . . Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall *endure* unto the end, the same shall be saved." Brethren, can we endure?

What set of events or circumstances will you allow to trouble you? Remember, there is no justification for separation or departure short of doctrinal change, and we do not mean someone's interpretation of a doctrinal change.

Brethren, you have been given an opportunity to remain faithful to the truth which was initially delivered. We know that you can manifest faithfulness with consistent prayer, daily Bible study, and heartfelt fasting. Our hearts and minds are with you always.

With much love and affection,

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