

Church of God, The Eternal

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Be Patient Unto the Coming of the Lord

August 1991

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Warm greetings to everyone who, while waiting for the return of Christ, keeps the proper orientation in order to be patient in all respects, as we are exhorted by James, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord . . ." (James 5:7).

To be able to wait while manifesting a good attitude and a right orientation is not always easy, even through certain circumstances of this life which can be very trying. Job wrote, "Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like a hireling who looks for his wages, so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me" (Job 7:2–3, *RSV*). When one suffers from an illness or other circumstances, it takes a lot of determination and a lot of love for God's Truth to wait with serenity for His intervention. It is because one loves God's way that he waits with patience for the intervention of God. Job, who was deeply grieved by the death of his children and by the loss of all his possessions, also had to endure excruciating suffering due to his illness. He said, "So I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me." His patience was severely tried; and it is so for every human being. Through certain circumstances one's spirit takes a blow, and one has to fight discouragement. "What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life [that I should be patient, *RSV*]?" (Job 6:11). Those are moments of depression, but as Job was going through those things, God said, ". . . In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). So, he was able to keep a good orientation. Job added:

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: After I shall awake, though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; my reins within me are consumed with earnest desire [for that day] (Job 19:25–27, marginal rendering).

What gave Job such a hope, such a strength, enabling him to wait without sinning with his lips and see beyond the present? He added, "This would be my consolation; I would even exult in pain unsparing for I have not denied the words of the Holy One" (Job 6:10, *RSV*). Job loved God's way; he had confidence in what had been revealed to him, and he lived it conscientiously. Overwhelmed with hardships he could even rejoice over not transgressing the orders of God.

Job therefore set a wonderful example as a human being who was able to wait and keep the love of the Truth and a good orientation, taking a greater interest in the future than in the present.

This shows us that when we begin to lose our respect for God's doctrine, our love for God's Truth, our fear and regard for God's will by neglecting the instructions which were given to us, when our conceptions make us forget more and more of God's way, then we lose the capability to be patient and wait without sinning with our lips, keeping a right spirit and a good orientation toward God's promises. 2 Peter 3, verses 3 and 4 confirm this, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? . . ." They do not believe it any more, they lose that capability to be patient and wait with serenity. Why? Because they walk after their own lusts. And that is something very real among the people of God in the last days; yes, we have entered a waiting period. Some, because they love God's truth and fear God, will be able to wait for Christ's return with confidence and assurance, whereas those who take the liberty of walking after their own lust will not have that ability; and, in order to justify themselves, they scoff at God's truth, His promises, and those who, by their patience and faithfulness, glorify Christ and God the Father in their lives. The capability to wait is manifested in the fact that we are not prone to change our direction suddenly under the impulse of our emotions and whims.

The Bible records for our learning the story of a king who failed and was deposed because he was not able to wait. He had been commanded to wait for the arrival of God's servant in order to offer sacrifices. ". . . Seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do" (1 Sam. 10:8). On the seventh day, as Samuel had not yet arrived, Saul allowed himself to become intimidated and frightened by the circumstances around him; he let himself be ruled by the whims of his own mind, and he arrogated to himself the right to offer the burnt offering. The test lay in waiting for seven days, but Saul failed, not fearing God's orders, taking lightly the instructions which he had received from God's servant; he did not have the necessary patience to be victorious in that test. Samuel said to Saul:

. . . Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue . . .
(1 Sam. 13:13–14).

He certainly came very close to being a success since he had just offered the burnt offering when Samuel arrived, but that was enough to make him a fool and cost him his kingship. ". . . Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Sam. 15:23). This is what will happen to all those who are fools, because they do not heed God's commands and are not able to wait with the proper attitude

and do what God expects of them. And what God promises to us goes far beyond the office of king over a nation. The apostle Paul wrote:

. . . but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (Rom. 8:23–25).

In order for us to wait with patience, we must then have hope dwelling in us. It was that hope that Job possessed; he possessed it because he feared God and saw to it that he did not transgress the orders of God. To live with such an orientation is to show wisdom. Jeremiah wrote, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. 3:25–26). If we have the hope which enables us to wait with patience, then we prove to God that even in adversity we can love and live His way of life. That is what Job did, because he was "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." Whereas Saul, though sometimes creating a good impression with his words, allowed himself to live in a deceptive way; and deception always turns against its user eventually. So, Saul did not have the patience to wait and he failed the test.

We see by that example how important it is not to take God's instruction lightly. It is through obedience that we have hope, and hope gives us the capability to wait with patience. The story of Saul shows us that if we do not have the capability to wait, the result will be our ruin. Saul lost his kingship. Whereas wonderful blessings resulted from the patience of Job.

Brethren, this waiting period which we are going through is nothing else than a period of judgment. God wants to see what each one of us does with his own life; God wants to see if, through the storms, we forget His teachings or on the contrary we live them with perseverance. If we forget them, we are going to lack hope and we are not going to be able to wait with the right orientation. If we live them, we are going to be more and more filled with hope and we are going to be able to wait with patience. As we read in Proverbs 14:14, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." The behavior which is pleasing in God's sight creates hope and the capability to wait with patience; whereas all the other behaviors bring about turmoil, frustration, impatience and failure.

The Bible tells us that Christ "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). When Christ lived in the flesh, Satan offered the rulership of the entire world to Him; Christ answered Satan that He served God alone. Christ preferred to submit Himself to the orders of His Father and wait, rather than yield to the temptation to rule the

whole world right away. Only those who will follow His example will be filled with courage and hope, and will be able to wait without letting themselves be intimidated or destroyed by the things which happen and will happen around them. As we are exhorted by the Apostle Peter:

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace (2 Pet. 3:11–14, *RSV*).

Brethren, that is what will save us; it is that hope which enables us to see beyond the present and gives us the strength to wait with patience and in obedience for the return of our Elder Brother who will establish righteousness and peace on this earth.

With my deep respect for you all,
Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Aviolat', written in a cursive style.

Jean Aviolat