

Church of God, The Eternal

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Unthankfulness—Part I

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Dear Brethren:

Many years ago, God's chosen end-time servant said he felt, perhaps, "the greatest sin of the day is the sin of ingratitude." People are simply not grateful and/or appreciative for anything they have, experience, or understand. They are often calloused and indifferent. Responsiveness seems to be abhorrent to most. Our experience is, and has been for a long time, a confirmation of Mr. Armstrong's observation.

Why is it so difficult for human beings to manifest some form of appreciation—gratitude—for life, the creation, opportunities granted, and even the experiences encountered? Is there a fundamental defect in man? Initially one might be inclined to assume the problem stems from a basic deficiency of the needs of life. But the present conditions as well as the whole of man's history seem to indicate the exact opposite. Frequently, those with the least manifest the greatest degree of appreciation. In fact, the whole history of God's chosen people, Israel, is a long chronicle of disrespect and a calloused manifestation of contempt for the source of all the beneficence and abundance which they had received. A reality which occurred despite the fact they had been warned several times, in different ways, to remember from whom their blessings had come. Tragically, the called of these last days manifest a character—made obvious by circumstance of their call and existence—little different from that experienced by ancient Israel. They, and too many today, have forgotten God, the Source of all blessings. When we have no respect or love for that which is given we have a tendency to alter or change that which was received making it more conformable to fleshly likes and expectations. In fact, the Word of God speaks pointedly about these conditions of ingratitude and contempt. We are told the conditions specifically apply to these days.

Unthankfulness in the Last Days

The Apostle Paul when inspired to write about these last days wrote the following to Timothy:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, *unthankful*, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was (2 Timothy 3:1–9).

The English word "unthankful" is used in only one other place in the Bible. It comes from two Greek words—from a derivative of the word *charizomai* and the Greek letter which makes a word negative. An English word will help you to understand. The word moral is defined as: of or concerned with the discernment or instruction of what is good and evil. Being or acting in accordance with established standards and precepts of good behavior. Rules or habits of conduct. (*The American Heritage Dictionary*). If in Greek-fashion, one adds an "a" to the beginning of the word "moral" the meaning is the exact opposite of that given above. In like manner the word for "unthankful," is the word *charizomai* negated by the Greek equivalent of the English letter "a." The significance of this will become more apparent as we proceed with the subject.

For the present let us take significant note of the fact someone in the last days not only manifests ingratitude, but is intensely involved in a fabric of behavior that is diabolical and reprehensible. These traits and characteristics certainly describe the orientation of the world today. None will deny that fact. Yet, Paul is not addressing the conditions of the world. He is speaking of what has happened to people who once knew and understood the Truth. Take note of that fact. Continuing his thought that perilous times would come in the last days, he expressed the fact these very people, had "a form of godliness," but did not really live that which they knew. Then he added, "from such turn away." Here he instructs those who really live and love the Truth to "turn away" from those who live in this unsavory fabric. Of them, Paul further says they are, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." And yet again he says, "these also resist the truth: men of corrupt

minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (v. 8). They are members who knew the Truth but refused to live up to the knowledge which they possessed. They possess perverted and corrupt minds. They manifest the traits and characteristics Paul described in verses one through five. They are people who show no respect or appreciation for the invaluable Truth which God had given to them. They are reprobate. Though reprobate they still massage the Truth attempting to make it conformable to their evil, devious expectations. There is an abundance of Biblical evidence that the most hateful toward the Truth of God and toward those who hold to it are those who once understood but found no appreciation for it. They will malign and falsely accuse. Being inspired of Satan they will do almost anything to efface memory or destroy that which reminds them of that way. Just a few verses later the Apostle Paul said, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). Almost as an afterthought, Paul added, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (v. 14). From whom did you learn them? See Matthew 28:19–20. Christ was with some chosen servant in these last days. Through that man He spoke the same Truth He taught in His own day—the same message which was given to Moses. That message cannot change.

According to Paul, these members, for whatever reasons, became concerned with volatile machinations of mind and flesh. They maintain an aura of piety but were and are hatefully resisting the Truth. Their day of hatefulness is short. God has promised to intervene. At that time their real purposes will be made known. Until God intervenes on the behalf of the faithful children, He is allowing persecution and contempt to continue. His reluctance must surely indicate some purpose essential for the trying and growth of His children. Christ Himself learned by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). We miserably misunderstand if we think such experiences are not for our good. Unthankfulness—a lack of real appreciation—for such trials, is the foundational cause for far too many of the called losing their way. To the Jewish church in Jerusalem, the Apostle Paul said:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For

whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled (Hebrews 12:1–15).

To this concept must be added Paul's statement in 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12:

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.

To the reader of understanding it is obvious, God is either allowing or specifically bringing to pass trials of deep significance by which His children are being tested in areas of faith and conviction. How many have already failed because they did not recognize the purpose of the trial or probably, more particularly, were offended by it? How carefully and honestly must we weigh our every thought and carnal inclination! In the final analysis, what we acceptably love, respect, and appreciate cannot be taken from us. The called of God lose their way only when they allow their minds and hearts to be evilly affected by the very conditions and/or circumstances God allows them to experience. The faithful are strengthened by such trials. The defective are destroyed by them. By those very experiences God is eliminating all potential rebellion from inheriting the Kingdom He has promised to the worthy faithful.

The Crucial Test

God deliberately hid the Truth from carnal man (Genesis 3:22–24). Such blindness was a very great blessing. Only at the appointed time can any man come to know and understand the Truth. That time would be an optimum time as determined by God. Once called, God will work with them favorably from call to maturity. The successful will be those who come to know Christ and remain faithful unto the end. They are the ones who love the Truth, those who by genuine obedience manifest heartfelt appreciation for and loyalty to that Truth—which is Christ, for He is the Truth—the unchanging way.

In Christ's own personal day, the test was in the acceptance of Him as the Son of God in the flesh. In our day the test remains quite similar to that which He personally experienced. Today we must accept the fact He is present doing the same work He did in His own day (see and compare Matthew 28:19–20; John 14:15–24; 2 John 7; and 1 John 5:20). Christ promised He would be with someone in the last days—that He would be with someone to the time of His Second Coming.

My Experience

In the last days of my time in Worldwide Church of God, I saw, and even experienced, the depth of the contempt and unthoughtfulness the Apostle Paul mentioned in 2 Timothy 3. The contempt and ingratitude of the people led them out of the church. Many of them became a law unto themselves. They who had learned the Truth from that last-day servant had now become his critic and judge. Every condition of which we are knowledgeable had come to pass. Tragically, that same hate continues to this day. Why? It was not the man for whom the contempt and disrespect existed. It was exactly as Christ said: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Being inspired of Satan, men hate the Truth of God. They cannot stand the brilliant light of that way of Truth. Therefore, for the same reasons, we, today, experience the hateful and diabolic manifestations of man's archenemy.

From the day we determined to remain faithful to that which God had given, threatening calls and actions have occurred. Almost from day one, someone called saying, "We know who you are, and we are watching you." This strange call occurred twice. Following these threats, several ministers came along claiming "equality." In process of time each has attempted to merchandise the people, pulling away a number of sheep to satisfy their own evil purposes.

One young woman even claimed her mission was to destroy the church. What arrogance exists in those minds—the same attitude which existed in Lucifer when he decided to invade the throne of God and demand equality.

These vicious attacks will continue. We have no doubt of that fact. So many had no love for the Truth. How can they manifest genuine thankfulness for that which they disrespect and hate? But, we are clearly told, they will falsely accuse and in other ways manifest their underlying contempt for the Truth. In this fabric of present day circumstances, as the called of God, you will need to be merciful and kind and yet allow none of this hate and arrogance to influence you. Just remember these former members are not teachable. They have become laws unto themselves. As the Bible clearly shows they are unthankful and unholy. In one breath they will proclaim their affection for Mr. Armstrong. In the next breath they are ridiculing and expressing deep contempt. They are expressing deep contempt for Mr. Armstrong but also the same disrespect toward whomever God is using from the time of Mr. Armstrong up to the time of Christ's Second Coming. Take time to read again Paul's inspired prophecy of the fabric of these last days in 2 Timothy 3:1–14.

Few Chosen

Did not Jesus say, "many be called, but few chosen"? A parable given by Christ—actually a true story—shows just how few, and whom, we can expect to really manifest genuine thankfulness for the priceless Truth given. In Luke, chapter seventeen, is found the story of ten lepers healed by Christ (Luke 17:12–19). Only one returned to give Christ thanks and he was a foreigner—a Samaritan. Apparently the others felt Christ owed them that blessing of healing, that they owed nothing, even thanks, for what had been done for them. I have a partial understanding of what Christ experienced. I, too, have been treated in that manner—not once, but several times.

For the kind, benevolent, and merciful, the reality of such behavior is hard to grasp. Such minds are shocked and troubled at that kind of behavior. Causative questions leap out begging for answers. Why would anyone want to practice such behavior? Love, respect, and thoughtfulness are so much more rewarding. But, to practice self-discipline and self-control requires the recognition of office, responsibility, and the total rejection of self. Such recognition comes only once—once to the called, converted, and teachable mind. Is it any wonder we are told:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy [Spirit], And have

tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4–6).

The "impossibility" does not seem to stem from some technical blockage which keep such individuals from true remorse and repentance. On the contrary, the problem appears to be one of heart and mind of such individuals. They simply cannot find it within themselves ever again to regret, abhor, and hate any manifestations of the flesh. How thankful we should be, God in His wisdom will bring circumstances to pass in the lives of some before they sink to the level of depravity mentioned in Hebrews 6:4–6!

What are some of the causes for which called children can lose their way—even years after their call was received and certain growth manifested?

Why Some Turn!

First, they lose interest in curbing the aspirations and dictates of self. Since the Word of God is incisive and deeply cutting they cannot accept the clear intent of what is revealed. Yet there is something inside of them which will not allow them to admit what they "know." The result is a perverting and corrupting of the Word. Such human beings will religiously endeavor to massage, and change, the Truth to make it more acceptable to carnal likes and dislikes. Further, they not only hate God's Word but they equally hate anyone who dares to proclaim that way of life.

Second, because of the pulls of flesh, and societal pressures they lose a love and respect for that which they, by call, had come to recognize and respect. Love for it diminishes as they yield to the more carnally acceptable ways of flesh and mind. They no longer have a desire to suppress the self—to call out to God for the power to master—overcome—the defects which they had come to see. Once the practical worth of the Truth is lost, it is but a simple step to manifest contempt for it. Then, because of this changed attitude they feel it necessary to force others to see things their way. When and if this does not happen, they become more contemptuous and hateful. Finally, the whole affair becomes a vicious cycle—a cycle of destruction, of themselves and anyone they can drag down with them. When one is no longer teachable it is by far best to just leave him alone. He will destroy himself; but, that is far better than allowing such to destroy others at the same time.

A lack of thankfulness can work in many devious and hurtful ways. As we have always known, and taught, once any man sets himself on the wrong path the spiral is downward. He will grow worse and worse.

Third, they manifest a contempt for others. God's Way is to esteem others better than self. That, of course, does not change Truth. The Truth will always remain unchangeable. Yet, our orientation toward Truth does not necessitate a wrong attitude toward anyone. The called can be benevolent and kind toward all mankind yet never condone their wrongs.

The major problem here seems to lie in the inability to recognize, admit, and honor different stations and areas of responsibility. Without delving too deeply into the very broad subject of authority allow us to advance just a few observations. God is over Christ. Christ is over humankind with whom He is working. Angels are subject to Christ. In general, men were placed over women. Employers are placed over employees. Parents are over children. Husbands are over wives. The truly called ministers are over the flock—God's children. There are other greater and lesser responsibilities. Break down this organized structure and chaos rules. Does this explain why the world of humanity is in such confusion today?

The reason for the above information is to make plain to you that a responsible individual's actions and words cannot be used to judge him or her regarding some other areas of responsibility. For instance, a father's actions toward his disobedient children would be totally unacceptable toward those over whom he has no responsibility. All areas of responsibility are clearly determined and established by God—the One who has authority over all things in His creation. Failure to recognize, admit, and honor such offices of responsibility is one of the basic causes of hateful confusion which prevails in the world today.

On the other hand, hypocrisy is the only word which defines the behavior of, for example, a husband who insists on his right to rule his family and then denies the validity of office borne by a true servant, minister, of Jesus Christ. This is the very type of behavior practiced in Christ's day and still prevails in these last days. That behavior is injurious, hateful, hypocritical, and destructive. The only exception to the above is this: All authority has God-given parameters. For instance, the Bible states that children must obey parents in the Lord. The same is true of wives. Though not specifically stated, the examples given clearly indicate, that all authority has definite guidelines and/or parameters. We can rightly deduce that all, or nearly all if not all, difficulties experienced by men stem from a failure to recognize office and limits of office borne. Tragically, the human tendency is to minimize responsibility borne by another human being and at the same time to maximize that borne by the self.

Giving of acceptable thanks to God and others is impossible short of a heartfelt recognition of the above facts.

In general, the one area over which we have absolute authority and responsibility is the self. The basic cause of problems or difficulties is twofold. First, we too often forget the limits of our responsibility and second, we involve ourselves in the affairs of another's responsibility. True and genuine thankfulness is possible only when we, each, and collectively as a body, recognize God-given duty.

The classic divisions of responsibility are generally understood. For example, parents over children. But problems abound when we do not recognize the Work of Christ. For instance, where is the spiritual body of Christ—the church? In these intangible areas the potential for lying and hypocrisy abound. Only the truly called of God will see, know, and understand. They cannot concern themselves with those of the world. For the uncalled and the willfully blinded, all the help in the world will do them no good. For that reason the called, knowing their own part and the value of the Truth now given, must manifest the same character God does: "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and [to] the evil" (Luke 6:35). This is the second place the English word "unthankful" is used. If the called do not behave different than those of the world are they not all the same? Why should the one be honored above the other?

The fourth reason why people are really unthankful is the fact most, if not all, refuse to accept a basic human fact. That fact is this: God at Creation created man as a mixture of good and evil. That is, by the action he first pursued he became a being of good and evil. In Genesis, chapter three, is the story of man's need to make choice. God had first instructed Adam. We are told:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life (Genesis 3:15–17).

Through a chain of circumstances Adam and Eve both were induced to take of that which they had been forbidden to eat—an act of defiance. They had been instructed by none

other than God Himself. Obviously the fault was not the Instructor. The fault lay at their own feet. They simply did not believe what they had been taught. They did not love and respect—were not thankful for—that which had been given to them. Therefore, just a short time later another spirit being came along (Genesis 3:1–7) and was successful in changing the minds of those whom God had instructed in the Way of Life. Since they did not respect and manifest a grateful appreciation for the Truth of God taught, they could be swayed by the reasoning of their own minds (Genesis 3:5–7). This is the same battle we must fight today. The Apostle Paul wrote:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3–5).

In both cases, the example of Adam and Eve and the generalized instruction of Second Corinthians, foundational knowledge is made obvious. To Adam and Eve God had spoken directly. In the example given by inspiration through Paul, the same knowledge is referenced. By what means was this foundational, unchangeable knowledge given? To the Romans Paul made the answer to this question very clear. He wrote:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Romans 10:13–15).

The conclusion to this fourth point is this. By call through a chosen instrument who preaches that unchanging message, the elect people hear and respond. From that point forward the battle of faith begins. The carnal demands of flesh and mind seek to be heard and satisfied—especially when those minds are evilly influenced by other spirit beings. Paul wrote to Timothy:

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (2 Timothy 2:23–26).

The significant conclusion to this matter is this: When men refuse to recognize the perverse, evil, and dishonest orientation of the human mind and to accept the fact that by divine revelation they came to know God and His true Way of Life, it will not be long before Satan plays on those minds bending them into diabolic error. All this simply because they could not bring themselves to love, respect, and hold inviolate the Truth given. Indeed, they can only be classed as unthankful and unholy.

Gratitude Not a Natural Inclination

If you had a life-threatening illness and someone healed you completely does it not seem likely that such an individual would be incredibly expressive of appreciation and respect? Yet, a story which Christ taught reveals the exact opposite:

And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole (Luke 17:11–19).

People are not naturally grateful. The tendency is to take others—including God—for granted.

How grateful, brethren, are we for the fact, even in this time of unthankful and unholy orientation, we were allowed to recognize what was happening and were given the courage and determination to stand tall for Truth which we had received as a blessing from God, our Father? Only our faithfulness will prove it. That is the very reason for the manifold trials which we all are experiencing today.

Since there is much more to the subject of ingratitude, please allow me to complete it in my next *Monthly Letter*. When I spend the time to sort out an issue completely, I am not satisfied short of giving you all I have learned.

In conclusion for this time, allow us to express once again, all our love and affection for the faithful. You are priceless to us and will always be so as long as you do well. When you honor God, just remember He is our Father, too. I would never have tolerated anyone disrespecting my earthly father, how much more is it true of my Heavenly Father. You are our brothers and sisters of the common faith. May God keep you in our hearts and minds always!

With deep and profound love,
your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'R'.

Raymond C. Cole