

# Church of God, The Eternal

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## Avoiding Ingratitude

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Dear Brethren:

It is with pleasure that I greet you at this time of the year—a time when we celebrated the Lord's Passover wherein we expressed our profound gratitude and fervent prayers as we renewed our commitment and unity with Christ through His flesh and blood.

## A Solemn Reminder

All genuinely baptized members of the true Church of God are supposed to be prayerful and grateful people. In whatever situation we are in and in any place we stay we ought to pray and give thanks to our loving Creator. Whatever we receive from Him or from other people we ought to express our genuine thankfulness. Yet it is so easy for someone to presume to be prayerful and thankful for everything. But what really counts most is how we live it in our spiritual nature. When you listen to others talk, even among believers, you can soon tell whether they speak from a thankful heart or one that has forgotten the blessings received in the past. It is a fact that while all claim to be grateful and prayerful, there were those who ungratefully deviated from the revealed truth and caused division in the Church of God, manifesting not only ingratitude for the blessings and truth they once received, but also an open contempt for the one whom God used as an instrument of those blessings. This is to remind you, brethren, to be truly prayerful and thankful for everything, that we may not be influenced by the dominant end-time attitude that Paul described 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, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (2 Timothy 3:1–5) [emphasis mine].

The perils of this time of the end are not so much in the rampant crimes and abuses in our society, but more so in the influence of the above-mentioned evils upon us, whose impact upon our spiritual lives could easily sway us to those carnal attitudes while having a form of godliness. Due to lack of thankfulness many have fallen by the wayside, become hateful, arrogant, unteachable and disobedient.

To quote Mr. Raymond C. Cole from the August, 2000 *Monthly Letter*:

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.

It is my purpose, brethren, to remind you of all these tendencies, especially that of being unthankful, so that we can effectively guard ourselves against them. It is human nature to presume to be prayerful and thankful. But in reality it calls on God only when it is in pain, in great danger or when loved ones are really suffering. Do we often forget to thank God when we are well and have plenty, complaining and murmuring when we are in want? How easily are we swept and swayed toward those end-time perils in our Christian way of life? Let us be thankful to our God that He mercifully provides us His Holy Spirit, empowering us to discern and overcome the influence of the perils of this end-time.

### **Effects of Ingratitude and Prayerlessness**

Ingratitude and prayerlessness are deterrent factors to blessings we should receive, in the same manner that blessings taken for granted are the greatest deterrents

to having a grateful attitude. When we become accustomed to our blessings we oftentimes fail to come before God with thanksgiving, but rather murmur and complain for the many things we desire and have not. Our focus becomes temporal—things of pleasure and physical appetite. The Israelites in the wilderness murmured against Moses. They certainly were not thankful when God miraculously provided all that they needed. They complained for having manna. They wept and cried and desired for the former things they had in Egypt. They were unsatisfied with what God was providing them. They felt leanness had entered their souls and murmured, "our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Numbers 11:6). Ingratitude for the blessings received, whatever they may be, makes one's heart unsatisfied and longing for something else. It was ingratitude for the man whom Christ sent that drove many to desire changes. Like the children of Israel who cried to return to Egyptian slavery for a change of their diet, God's people today desired doctrinal changes as well so they could eat foods prohibited by God, divorce their wives and marry again, work during the Sabbath, and avoid attending God's feasts as anything but optional religious seminars. In desiring to be free they became enslaved again in worldly traditions. This analogy of the children of Israel is a solemn reminder of the fruit of ungratefulness and insisting on our own way, rather than being thankful for God's truth which we had for at least forty years. To reject God's way of providing us the revealed truth is rebellion against Him and brings His judgment.

. . . because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? . . . And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague (Numbers 11:20, 33).

Ingratitude produces a spirit of forgetfulness. Many forgot the past blessings they received in their earlier days in the Church of God. After the death of the late Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, one of the top ministers in the Philippines, in explaining the changes, proudly prefaced his sermon by saying, ". . . for fifty years Mr. Armstrong wasted his life and I wasted mine for twenty-five years," referring to his twenty-five years of service in the Church which was then changing its course. What happened with this man? What made him deny and forget those years of material blessings and spiritual truth he preached for twenty-five years? Ingratitude makes one forgetful and arrogant. It can sweep us into the full magnitude of those evils enumerated by Paul as perils of the last days. It is not surprising that so many of God's former people have forgotten the very blessings they once valued—the truth revealed—prior to changes

beginning in 1974. Will you permit ingratitude to creep into your hearts, to forget even the very precious promises of God?

Another effect of ingratitude is a rebellious spirit. Spoiled children who cry to have their own way are certainly not grateful to their parents. Many who were not thankful for the initial truth they had received went their own way, establishing their own groups, assuming to themselves authority to add or change a little here and a little there of the doctrines once established through revelation. This worrisome attitude and unthankfulness for God's government once established are manifestations of rebellion. Let us be reminded that to reject the truth once delivered to us and to go our own way is ungratefulness and rebellion against God.

Again, ungratefulness prevents us from internalizing true spiritual values. It darkens spiritual vision and heightens the carnal mind to uphold human wisdom and intellectual folly rather than God's truth.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were *thankful*; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things (Romans 1:21–23) [emphasis mine].

Ungratefulness prevents the flow of God's blessing and favor, like those unthankful intellectuals mentioned by Paul who were given up by God to their own "reprobate minds" (verse 28 of Romans, chapter one). These are none other than those previously enumerated in 2 Timothy 3:1–5.

In these perilous times the greatest antidote is prayer with thanksgiving to God. Paul said in Philippians 4:6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

In this worrisome environment, Paul is simply admonishing us to be careful not to worry about anything, but with a thankful heart let God fill the needs and desires of our hearts.

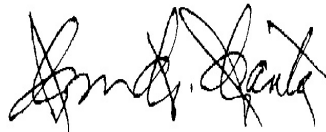
"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).

In our relationship with God, thankfulness and prayer are two inseparable daily exercises. It is the mode of the mind that connects us to our Creator. It comes like breathing to sustain life. It is not conditioned by favorable situations nor by motives to gain any favor. It comes naturally from an appreciative heart no matter what the circumstances are.

Can you be thankful, brethren, amidst trials, tribulations and persecutions that are now upon us?

My brethren, count it all joy [be thankful] when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2–4).

Yours in His service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corsino C. Canta". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Corsino C. Canta