

March 13, 2017

Dear Brethren and Friends,

In a little less than a month from now, baptized members of the Church of God will be observing the Passover, and members and prospective members will also celebrate the Days of Unleavened Bread. Are we preparing in our minds, hearts and homes for these occasions?

The Passover gives us the opportunity to remember and recommit to our covenant with God; to realize who we are; to take note of changes we have made; to recognize that we have more room to grow; and to make sure that we are willing and wanting to make all necessary changes. God promises us that we can come to Him at any time and ask for forgiveness, and He will grant it to us, based on certain conditions. The Passover also helps to remind us of the supreme Sacrifice that Christ gave on our behalf, and just what that Sacrifice should mean in the life of a true Christian.

1 Corinthians 11:17–34 should be well known to us as it describes proper conduct, true personal examination and warnings about the Passover. Partaking in it is sacred to God. Paul's mighty warning is that those who did NOT take the time to properly examine themselves, before partaking of the Passover, may become weak and sick (spiritually and maybe even physically) and may die prematurely. We read in Matthew 26:36–44 that Christ instituted the new symbols of the Passover and then went to the Mount of Olives to pray to God for strength in the ordeal He was about to face. He was distressed and deeply sorrowful. He was a human being who had emotions, and He did not want to have to go through the terrible, painful things He knew were coming.

Christ prayed three times to God for strength and the will to obey. Each time He came back, He found the disciples sleeping. It was night, and they might have been full from supper and inclined to sleep. But Christ wanted them to watch. He told them explicitly that He would be praying. He let them know just how deeply distressed He was at that moment. He knew it would be an hour of temptation both to Him and them, and therefore, He advised them to stay awake and watch; but when He came back, they slept. In verse 41, He specifically asks them to pray both for themselves and for Him; but they slept.

Are we asleep today? Are many in the Churches of God asleep today? It is easy to become tired, to become weary from so much trying. Does it feel at times that we are not moving forward but falling backwards? Does it feel like we are weak, without power, unable to overcome, depressed or unmotivated? These are typical human reactions. We can all feel this way at times. Christ was going through a very tough moment in His physical life, but He prayed very zealously three times for about an hour each time, so that He could accomplish what He needed to do.

We HAVE to take note of Christ's example and His strength, and rely on the Word of God that what He says is true. In Isaiah 11:1–5 we read about Christ's characteristics. Notice how it talks about the things in verse 2 which made up Christ's character, but as it says, the Spirit of the LORD (the Holy Spirit of God the Father) accomplished these things in and through Him:

"The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."

We can have the same powerful Spirit working in and through us if we are willing to submit to God and work out our own salvation with fear (true Godly fear) and trembling (Philippians 2:11–13). Paul was quick to tell the Corinthians that even though his letter to them caused them sorrow, he was actually glad because their sorrow was in a godly fashion, causing them to truly repent and draw closer to God (2 Corinthians 7:11).

We ALL fail at times. We all do our best to put on a good face. But God knows. He is the one who searches and knows our hearts and us more than we can even know ourselves, or anyone else, for that matter. God looks upon our attitude. God truly loves us and cares for us. He tries us because He loves us. But again, it is something that we have to believe. Matthew 11:28 tells us that when we are heavy-laden with problems, with issues, with sin, with anything that may be affecting us, then we are to come to Him to place our issues on His shoulders, and to seek Him first in our hearts, minds and actions.

God has inspired the Bible to be written in just the way that He wanted. And so, when we read Scriptures such as Isaiah 40:28-29, we can find hope and courage:

“Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.”

There are no limits to God’s stunning power and love. Unlike the disciples who slept through a few hours of a crucial time, God will never fail to watch or protect us if that is what we want. Psalm 121:1–8 shows us that it is God and ONLY God who can do these things. We will not prosper if we try on our own to accomplish our will, goals and ideas.

As we come to the start of the spring Holy Days, let us keep these things in mind. If we are asleep in any way, we need to take this time we have left to seek God and then take the Passover in a worthy manner. It may be a good idea to revisit our booklet, The Meaning of God’s Spring Holy Days (as well as any of the other booklets and articles on this topic which can be found abundantly on our website, eternalgod.org), to fully comprehend what we need to do in the coming days to prepare for the Passover night and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

We hope that this coming festival season will find us closer to God than ever before, and with a willingness of heart to try even harder. We cannot say when Christ will return, but based on world events, the time of our salvation must truly be near (Romans 12:11). So, let us all become and stay encouraged and strong.

With much brotherly love,



Kalon Mitchell