

January 2018

Dear Brethren:

Our warmest greetings to you all who are fighting the good fight of faith while walking in the narrow way that leads you to salvation. Here we are in the year 2018 according to the calendar established by man. Although the nations are gloriously celebrating this new year, it can be compared to an ocean hiding unknown dangers in its deep waters. The passing of time will reveal those mysteries—day after day and month after month.

As for us, we are given the same command as Joshua: ". . . Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee . . ." (Joshua 1:9). Of course that promise implies conditions that we must fulfill: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein . . ." (Joshua 1:8).

Whatever circumstances may occur in the course of the year, God says to us: "Be of good courage! I mapped out your journey; My will does everything for your good. Go forward, be not afraid. Be not weary in well doing; do all you can to serve others on your path." That was the conduct of Jesus Christ when He lived as the Son of man on this earth. Let us note one example: "When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart . . ." (Matthew 14:13). Having just heard of the death of John the Baptist, Christ was sad and felt the need to be alone to pray. But what happened? ". . . and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude . . ." (Matthew 14:13–14). Christ wanted to be alone, but when He went ashore, a large crowd was waiting for Him. How did He react? "[He] was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (verse 14). What a beautiful example of Christ's behavior toward those whom He met on His path and at a time when He had a heavy heart and wished to be left alone in order to pray. Read the rest of the story down to verse 23. It was evening when Christ sent the people home after having miraculously fed them. It was then that He could be alone and could pour out His heart to His Father.

Let us remember that all the faces that we see on our paths were shaped by God for their physical existence. It is He who gives the breath of life to every human being. At the appointed times, all will be called and offered the power of the Holy Spirit in order to

walk with God to their salvation. When we keep that in mind, we can only be filled with courage to continue our terrestrial journey with even more integrity in God's way.

Let us not be the ones described by the prophet Jeremiah:

O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return (Jeremiah 5:3).

What is the comparison that Jesus Christ makes to help us grow in our conversion?

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you [to all those who want to be His disciples], Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:2–3).

The warning is that no one can lean on his own righteousness, even were he the nicest and best educated individual. How can we be taught through a little child so that our conversion may be received by God on the Day of Judgment? Here are the words of David:

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child (Psalm 131:1–2).

How lovely is the peace of mind of a little child whose face lights up. He is serene, humble and trusting. His heart and his mind are not poisoned by hatred, bitterness and doubt. His face is beaming with joy under the care of his parents. Solomon stated: "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished" (Ecclesiastes 4:13).

All human beings must repent of what they have become. They are little children at first, but because they grow up with their carnal natures and under the influence of Satan, their behaviors deteriorate. Indifference, vulgarity, cowardice and hatefulness are showing on so many of the faces that God originally shaped. So many eyes revel in ugliness only. So many ears seem to catch the rumbling of anger and fury only. So many mouths are opened in order to slander and blaspheme. The prophet Ezekiel recorded:

And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among

scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house (Ezekiel 2:6).

Under numerous circumstances faces become distorted; they take on grimacing looks that resemble depraved carnival masks. "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not . . ." (Isaiah 3:9). Through conversion only, meekness will show on people's faces as it does on the face of a little child.

That is the way of human life. To a little child, everything seems beautiful and promising. Sin, death and grave are words that he does not know. But when he grows up and enters the battlefield of adulthood, he realizes that life is not a bed of roses. He seeks rest, but he is trapped in the feverish pace of his carnal nature. Very quickly his childhood and middle-age years are far behind him and he is approaching the time when what was taken from the ground must return to it. Then he looks to a future that is merely a dark abyss. Only his call from God and his faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will brighten his horizon. The Apostle Paul explains that transition:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:1–10).

When God called us, He opened up and lit up an awesome horizon for us. We were tired of fulfilling the desires of the flesh. As strangers and pilgrims on the earth, we are now—through faith—filled with a hope that sustains us, for we know that we are God's workmanship and that, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust" (Matthew 12:20–21).

Through how many circumstances have we been a smoldering wick in our obedience to God's way of life or in our trust in all His promises? However, we have always found Him faithful—ready to listen to our prayers, willing to accept our repentance and forgive our sins committed in weakness. How many times has God healed us? And while the trial lasts, He says to us: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matthew 9:2). His forgiveness is like a balm on our pains. How many times has God comforted us when sorrow darkened our paths? God does not forsake His workmanship. Day after day, night after night, He fulfills what He promised.

So let us not allow our confidence to weaken. Let us manifest the trust of a little child, even if the evil days seem quite long. Let us walk in the righteousness of God and leave a noble mark on the path of our conversion. It will benefit billions of human beings who will follow the same path at the times appointed by God.

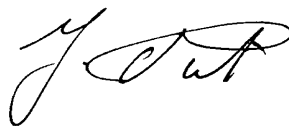
Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:12).

Let us trust God for the forgiveness of our past, and let us trust Him for the future that He has prepared and made attainable through the sacrifice of His own Son Jesus Christ.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:27–28).

As each season is faithful to the decree of the Creator, let us—who are His workmanship—be faithful too. May the Truth of God be our crown and our most precious treasure.

With our most sincere and respectful affection,
Your brother in Christ,

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

Jean Aviolat