

January 2019

Dear Brethren:

We greet you, hoping that you do not allow yourselves to become discouraged by the trying circumstances within and those that we see in the world around us. They must not alter your confidence in God and your faithfulness to your call. On the contrary, they must prompt us to walk more and more obediently in the Way of Life that God revealed to us.

There are situations that affect the entire Body, as the Apostle Paul stated: "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). If we are insensitive or indifferent to the trials that God allows in the lives of others, or in our own lives, we have "become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1).

God wants us to interrupt for a moment our fast pace in this restless world and take the time to meditate and carefully examine ourselves. We have read and heard so much material. Furthermore, we all have the Book of the Word of God by which we are warned and taught.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:12–13).

We must not read the content of this Book with a spirit of indifference, ignoring its warnings and instructions. It is a document that is the basis for all judgments. The lawyers and judges of this world possess countless books of laws and regulations to which they refer in order to render their judgments in the lives of others. We need to turn to one Book only as the yardstick by which to judge ourselves—our thoughts, our words and our actions. If we are honest with ourselves and with the Word of God, we become capable of differentiating between what we must do and what we must not do, what we can think and what we must not think, what we can say and what we must not say.

If we—with the help of the Spirit of God—accept the admonitions and teachings of that Word written by the authority of God, we understand what is good and the resulting benefits versus what is evil and the resulting consequences. We are also fully aware that "we

wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Our enemies are lying in wait. We cannot grow slack in our fight. We all know these things, but knowing them is not enough. We are commanded to take action: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:13). You cannot do it for me, neither can I do it for you. God has made that armor available to each of the called: "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." The evil day! The experiences through which God is testing us and showing us our weak points. Do we let our enemy have a hold on our minds and our human natures to the point where we forget that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6)? Do we forget that even with the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives, human nature remains a powerful, evil thrust? If so, we must immerse our hearts and minds again in the teachings that can help us to repel our enemy.

Let us choose Psalm 19 as an example: "The law of the [Eternal] is perfect . . ." (verse 7). Sometimes we may forget that the Law of God is perfect, and we may apply it in our lives as we see convenient. Are we not living in a time when many among the called do as they please? "The law of the [Eternal] is perfect, converting the soul." It converts the soul when our thinking is permeated with the content of this Book and with the Spirit of God. "The testimony of the [Eternal] is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the [Eternal] are right, rejoicing the heart . . ." (Psalm 19:7–8)—a great blessing that is promised to us if we do our level best to regulate our lives by God's statutes.

[T]he commandment of the [Eternal] is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the [Eternal] is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the [Eternal] are true and righteous altogether (Psalm 19:8–9).

The Word of God enlightens us; it teaches us; it warns us. It helps us to understand—if we examine ourselves—that many of our troubles and frustrations are the result of our behaviors that do not reflect that Word. The church was a living example of it. The old-timers who knew the church before 1975 are witnesses to what happened to it. When the church was sticking to the doctrines that God had revealed, it was prospering. It was abundantly blessed by God, spiritually and physically. But then changes took place in order to satisfy human nature. As a blooming tree is stripped of its ornament by a passing wind, so the church was divested of its glory and prestige. It encountered all kinds of difficulties. There was no more fear of God before the eyes of many. They arrogated to themselves divers rights. They made a mess of their lives spiritually because they abandoned the commandments of the Eternal—those commandments that are pure,

enlightening our minds so that we can understand what is happening in our lives, the mistakes that we make and the lessons that we must learn.

God is asking His people a question: "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the [Eternal] is with us'? But behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie" (Jeremiah 8:8, *Revised Standard Version*). We were told to destroy material containing former teachings that were confirmed by the Word of God. And we were given new material in place of them. It resulted in rampant doubt, frustration, discouragement and individualism. "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the [Eternal]; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jeremiah 8:9).

Let us learn from the past. To live without taking account of what God says is to spurn His exhortations and flout His warnings. In that case, where is wisdom? Where is it in our lives? Would we dare hold God responsible for our problems? Of course not! Jesus Christ taught about wisdom. He chose the construction of two houses as an illustration. One is built upon the rock (the Truth of God), the other is built upon the sand (lies and disobedience). One builder is prudent and wise because he pays attention to God's statements and puts them into practice. The other is foolish, because he merely reads the instructions of God or listens to them; he does not meditate upon them and make them the guide of his thinking and his life. You are all aware of that example and you can read it again in Matthew 7:24–27.

God does not grow weary of helping us. Through His words and our experiences, He makes us understand what is the most important thing in life: to live willingly and sincerely what God revealed to us. Great is the reward. "To him who orders his way aright I will show the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23, *RSV*). In the *Moffatt* translation, we read this: ". . . whoever holds by my rules in his life, I will let him enjoy my help"—whoever comes to grips with his own nature and his own character. He holds by God's rules in his life. He knows that what he does is right. "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm 50:15).

Psalm 107 emphasizes that principle. We can find ourselves in all kinds of troubles. There are many distresses on this earth. God may allow or create various circumstances that He lets us experience. When we read the entire Psalm 107, we see that the remedy is one and the same for all: "Then they cried unto the [Eternal] in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses" (verses 6, 13, 19 and 28). They cried unto the Eternal! We do so because we come to grips with our own natures and our own characters. We recognize "that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). We do not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, and we let the Spirit of God work in our lives.

Jesus Christ said: "I am come that they [His sheep] might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). That abundance comes from letting Christ live in us. God sees all our secret actions. Let us admit that most of the time we make ourselves miserable by our foolishness and our guilty conduct. Let us confess it to God! Then we can praise the Eternal for His goodness, for His mercy endures forever (Psalm 107:15, 1).

So many people in the world go through most terrifying circumstances without knowing why. God called us and gave us the privilege of being taught so that we can direct our steps in His way. He warns us beforehand against the things that we must not do. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). God's Word is a lamp that lights the way for us so that we can walk in the right direction and avoid falling into the snares of Satan and evil. And, as we are told by James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). To be wise is to be prudent. It is to give heed to God's words and put them into practice. What a beautiful responsibility God gave to us along with the help of His Holy Spirit. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Then let us do our level best to live up to God's requirements, and let us praise Him for His mercy that endures forever.

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

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

Jean Aviolat