

January 2020

Dear Brethren:

Our warmest greetings to you all. Once more, we have experienced the four seasons that faithfully respond to the decree of the Most High. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment . . ." (Deuteronomy 32:4). It is God's pleasure to do all things for the good of man whom He created, which gives us reason to live with confident hearts. After creating the first couple, "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

By a call and with His help, God wants us to attain to a comparable success. But man does not believe that obedience is the true source of happiness and satisfaction. Since the beginning, he has chosen to trust the reasonings of his own mind instead of obeying what God commanded. And man has borne the consequences. God told man:

. . . cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee . . . (Genesis 3:17–18).

Thorns and thistles are not only in the ground. How many things there are in this human life that cause wounds, tears, turmoil, struggles and sweat! "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (verse 19). Indeed, God does mean and always remembers what He says.

How carefully we must examine our own lives not just to cut but to eradicate the thorns and the thistles that we may find. How laborious, for the roots are sometimes very deep. We have our respective responsibilities. How do we carry them out?

"God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." It was not only good, it was very good! It was a perfect and glorious work that was a pleasure to behold. "His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever" (Psalm 111:3). God is consistent. Each generation can rely upon the work that He did and is still doing today. Job said that God longs for the work of His hands. As the Father of all human beings, He desires to give each one—at the time appointed for him—an opportunity for a complete change from this physical and temporary life to an everlasting life. It is a change from flesh to spirit, as expounded by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15.

During His terrestrial life, Jesus Christ said: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). He followed the example of His Father. He showed that one cannot achieve the ultimate objective unless he works as Jesus Christ did. And He emphasized: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). When He was in anguish, He said to His Father: ". . . nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus Christ worked diligently to do all the will of His Father. While working, He always maintained His courage and His faith in the purpose of His Father. He set an example to the called. When they have accomplished their great and noble work through submission and labor, they too will receive the most awesome blessing offered by God.

Brethren, remember your commitment before God when you were baptized: I will be faithful to you forever! Let us watch out for the snares of our own minds that delude us into shirking the Law and the will of our Father. Let us not sell ourselves to the practice of sin. Doing so would be sinking into the mire of a life filled with mistakes and heavy consequences. The experience of the first couple created by God was recorded for our instruction. Sin may seem very pleasant to human nature and very attractive to the carnal mind, but sooner or later it inevitably leads to terrible results. God had given the first couple His rules—a Way of Life that the called know well, because God does not leave His children in ignorance. God made His Word available to us in written form. Until the fulfillment of His purpose for us, God wants us to learn from the history of human generations since creation. But when we allow our natures to be dominant, we would rather follow our own reasonings without trying to know under whose influence we are. How many works of deceit there are—among the people of God—that will perish in the day appointed by God!

Jesus Christ says to those who believe in Him:

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples [good workers] indeed;
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31–32).

The honesty of our commitment to living God's Truth demands that we carry out our responsibilities in a manner that is acceptable in the sight of God. Being members of the Body of Christ is not a mere mental concept. It is a way of living; it is an orientation given to our hearts and minds. Our ways and our thoughts are the ways and the thoughts of Jesus Christ. Let us not forget that true success has to do with the outcome of our lives—not what happens to us temporarily. Nobody forced us to make the commitment that we did when we were baptized. We committed ourselves because we had heard the message that leads to life. Furthermore, we understood that a commitment is the first step required for the inheritance of salvation. But then it behooves us to work hard in our individual lives, lest we should fall into the snare of willful disobedience to the instructions of God.

The Apostle Paul exhorts us:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have been obedient always . . . work all the more strenuously at your salvation with reverence and trembling (Philippians 2:12, *Moffatt* translation).

The abyss of wickedness and indifference that is swallowing up the earth is indicative of the fact that the night is far spent. The chosen of God cannot be inactive spiritually. We must work with all our energy. Let us not neglect our spiritual growth. The work that we are called to perform is glorious. It is not fruitless; it fulfills a specific purpose. "If the just man is scarcely saved, what will become of the impious and sinful?" (1 Peter 4:18, *Moffatt* translation). Even those who do not take their call seriously will not escape the hand of God.

To have faith is to believe what God says without allowing ourselves to be swayed by a single doubt. Then, with the help of the power of God's Spirit, we practice what we believe and we show our conviction by our faithfulness and perseverance. We do not attempt to put our own interpretation on what God commands. We just live according to the will of God. As a result, we are not tormented by the wickedness of our minds, our worries and our fears, because our thinking is in harmony with the mind of Christ. He says to us:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matthew 11:29).

The yoke of Christ is not a yoke of bondage to our physical lives. We are not plagued by the demands and the lusts of the flesh. We do not let ourselves be carried away by the dictates of our natures that are never satisfied. The yoke of Christ frees us from the weight of evil and uncertainty. Through repentance, we have buried our pasts under the shed blood of Christ. We are happy and satisfied with what we have. We thank God for the work that He helps us to do and for the work that He accomplishes Himself in our lives. Consequently, we are told: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works" (Ecclesiastes 9:7).

My dear brethren, we have plenty to do. Are we convinced that the true source of satisfaction and happiness is our obedience to God? Who then is a happy called one of God? He who submits himself to the will of God. He who is a laborer with God, as stated by the Apostle Paul. We apply ourselves to the work that we were given. "Work all the more strenuously at your salvation with reverence and trembling." The work that God makes us able to perform with Him is indeed "honourable and glorious."

In this world, many are absorbed in their ambitions, their cares and their strifes. They have lost the ability to appreciate the true worth of the important things in life. "The harvest truly is plenteous," said Jesus Christ, "but the labourers are few" (Matthew 9:37). Our Father does what is best for each of us, because He wants His children to take part in that great harvest. What satisfaction, what joy to be qualified servants—united in one Spirit and moved with compassion—to show the way to the multitudes who are fainting and scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd (Matthew 9:36). "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (verse 38). In that day, the elect will know that they completed the work that they were required to do during their times of conversion. They will have been very determined to walk in God's Way and do what is good.

How thankful to God we should be for keeping us in the right way. The Prophet Isaiah wrote:

Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance [but thy purposes endure for ever—*French Bible translation*], and we shall be saved (Isaiah 64:5).

That is our hope, if we will to endure to the end and can be faithful. God expects it, for we are the work of His hands.

To you all, our respect with much love.

Your brother in the service of Christ,

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

Jean Aviolat