

January 2021

Dear Brethren:

In this month of January, we greet you again. For mankind at large, another year has elapsed—the one to which they gave the number 2020. It was a difficult year for many people—uncalled or called. We witnessed all kinds of behaviors. But the day is coming when God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, because He desires all men to come to the knowledge of the Truth. Then many will understand the reason for their past circumstances, and they will behave differently.

By contrast, it is now—while living in a confused society—that our conduct must be different, because we were called to know God's eternal Way of Life. God gave us a command:

... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:2).

It is a personal choice that we make. We accept that choice of our own free will when we are called. Once we are baptized, it takes root in our lives, because we receive the help that we need. God gives us His Spirit and makes it dwell in us. So we are committed to growing in the control of our lives during the entire space of time that God grants us.

It is what the Apostle Paul accomplished in his own life, as did many others. Close to the end of his life, he could say: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). What good fight had he fought? What course had he finished? And in what had he kept the faith?

Paul knew precisely what he had to do and what he had to overcome in his life, and he did it. He exercised character in subjugating his human nature. He endured many experiences and trials, and he had faith in the promises of God. Through faith, he brought his life to obedience to the immutable Law of God, whatever circumstances he encountered in this world. Paul's mind being dominated by the Spirit of God and the thoughts of Christ, he said: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Paul gained the victory. And God is expecting the same thing from those whom He has called.

The fight and the course, or the race, spoken of by the Apostle Paul is not a leisurely walk. Jesus Christ urged us to count the cost. In order to count the cost, we have to hear and know the Truth and thereby understand what are our responsibilities. Through baptism, we sign a contract with God and His Son Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves to beginning our fight and our race. We all knew that the fight would be a great struggle and that the race would require much effort from us. For, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The Kingdom of God is our finish line.

In that kind of fight, our problem is not physical; it is mental. When the trial weighs heavy on us, Satan takes advantage of the opportunity to put doubts in our minds regarding the promises of God. He tempts us to cheat—that is, to compromise with God's Truth. But we should not listen to his voice if we truly believe the statements of Jesus Christ:

He . . . abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

Satan is a sower of doubts in the minds of the called of God. He has been a murderer from the beginning in enticing man away from the Way of Life. It is what happens in our minds that can prevent us from pleasing God.

God does nothing without purpose. He allows nothing unnecessarily. God always sees in the trials an objective that must be achieved. Trials make us able to evaluate the solidity of our convictions regarding the Truth of God. They enable us to see how deeply our faith is rooted in His promises.

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 1:3–4).

Then who will have fought a good fight, finished his course, kept the faith? For whom will a crown of righteousness be henceforth laid up? For those who will have not cheated, those who will have been honest and trustworthy in the Way of God. They do not practice sin. They see themselves as they are and they repent before God. In their fight, they crush their natures. In their race, they fix their eyes upon Christ in order to receive all the help that they need. And in their trials, they maintain faith and put all things into the hands of God.

Let us keep the right orientation. If we do, then, as we are told by the Apostle Paul, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). We can know the progress that we have made and what is left to do.

Over us is our elder Brother Jesus Christ who lived in a body of flesh like ours. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Jesus Christ knows our frame, and He loves us so much that He gave His life for our redemption and our salvation. With Him, each one of us can be an overcomer. Let us be inspired and motivated by the examples of our predecessors.

. . . these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Hebrews 11:39–40).

Some day, we will be able to shout along with them: "thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

You all are assured of our prayers and of our deepest affection.

Your brother in Christ,

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

Jean Aviolat