

January 2022

Dear Brethren:

We greet you and think of you most fondly. We enjoyed the beautiful card that all of you signed during the Feast of Tabernacles, and we thank you very much for it.

We cannot change our past. The time of our call was our starting point and the Kingdom of God is to be our finish line. The space in between is punctuated with many experiences from which we can learn. God lets us undergo increasingly severe trials because He wants to know what we are made of. God wants children whose faith and obedience to His Way of Life weather all circumstances.

When we fail in any area of our lives, it is no use carrying on our shoulders the increasing weight of our past failures. We must lay that burden down before God while confessing our failures and repenting. God has the power to forgive and forget them. However, He evaluates the sincerity of our repentance by the effort that we put forth in order to overcome and carry out the duties of our call.

Jesus Christ said: "Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day" (Matthew 6:34, *Revised Standard Version*). The Apostle Paul left us an example to follow:

. . . forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13–14).

Yesterday is behind. Whatever mistakes we made, whatever worries we had, whatever suffering we bore, there is nothing we can do about it. We cannot possibly live yesterday again. From today on, however, we can press toward the mark. That means purifying our lives, making sure that the seed falls on good soil. We receive God's instructions, we understand them, we apply them to our lives, and as a result, we bear good fruit. It is the purpose of our call. We live one day at a time; we are diligent in our responsibilities, and we let Christ live His life in us. Also, we are fully aware that we will need the mercy of our Judge when He pronounces the final judgment.

We purify our lives in practicing the Truth of God. He alone reads our hearts and minds and knows the degree of honesty and sincerity in our obedience to His instructions.

. . . because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

When we go through difficult times, let us not become discouraged. Let us not allow the power of our natural minds to get the upper hand and deceive us through all kinds of reasonings that justify a deviation from God's Way and a return to some rudiments of the world. God called us. He gave us His Way of Life. He begat us with His Spirit. He has made sure that each of His called children has been sufficiently taught by His ministry and therefore knows what to do in order to remain faithful. God wants to see the love of the Truth grow in us. In Hebrews chapter 11, we read the examples of people whose states of minds and behaviors were much stronger than mere words. The Truth of God and their lives were welded together.

A few years ago, a church member made a comment that I considered to be a compliment. He said to me: "You are always hammering the same nail!" Indeed I am in my own life. And provided that nail is the Truth of God, I will continue to hammer it into my heart and my mind so that it cannot be pulled out by Satan or whomever else, whatever pliers are used. We are aware that our adversary the Devil and his cohorts would like to see us fail. They know in which areas of our lives they can try to discourage us, make us fall and miss out on the Kingdom of God. But God's command is: ". . . hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11).

Jesus Christ does not forsake us. He says to us:

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

First, it is essential to know, accept and have faith in the things that He speaks to us. But then, how do we have peace in Him when we undergo trials? Jesus Christ gives us the answer: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you . . ." (John 14:27). To whom? To those who are chosen by God and given the power to be successful. We hold that power from the day of our call until the end of our physical lives. During that entire space of time, we must examine ourselves in order to discern the source of the thoughts that cross our minds. Are they the things that Jesus Christ speaks to us, or do our thoughts stem from the influence of the one who would like to make us fail? What do we do with the peace that Jesus Christ gives? We can count on it. He adds: ". . . not as the world giveth, give I unto you." What the world gives is only temporary, whereas what Christ gives is eternal. That is why He exhorts us: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Do we firmly believe that Jesus Christ fulfills His promises?

Let us heed the exhortation of the Apostle Paul:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) (Hebrews 10:22–23).

Let us hold fast without wavering! One who is called by God is required to persevere at living by faith. When this human experience is over, glory, righteousness, and all that is honorable and praiseworthy will be manifested for all eternity.

Until then, Jesus Christ promises us peace even in an agitated world. To live in peace is to have a calm spirit, to wait patiently for God's intervention, to apply ourselves to our obedience to God, and not to let our trust in Him be shattered by the adverse conditions prevailing around us. We must be confident that God will fulfill His purpose. The more we allow Jesus Christ to rule in our lives, the greater peace we will have. He makes us able to experience circumstances without becoming unsettled with agitation or filled with anger. He grants us the power to give the right orientation to our minds.

But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him (Psalm 37:39–40).

In spite of the circumstances of the world in which we have to live, we can be in the inward state that will last forever when Jesus Christ has returned to this earth. That peace coming from Christ is a foretaste of God's Kingdom—a Kingdom that is characterized by peace.

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation (Isaiah 32:17–18).

Indeed, not as the world gives, does Jesus Christ give His peace to us, because:

The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace (Isaiah 59:8).

Let us therefore put our trust in the peace that comes from God. Although it is a mental state that is not easy to receive, Jesus Christ assures us that we can have it if we really believe in the peace that He leaves with us. When we do not have that peace, we are depriving ourselves of something that Christ wants to give to us. He gives His peace so that we can walk in the way of peace—in the complete Way of Life that He practiced in His physical body and that He revealed to us. If we really practice it despite all kinds of tribulations and trials, Jesus Christ leads us into the way of peace, because that was one of the purposes of His First Coming:

To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:79).

The extent to which we endeavor to obey God is the extent to which we experience peace. The Apostle John said in his letter to the beloved Gaius whom he loved in the Truth:

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 2).

We, called of God, are to prosper. That will depend on what comes first in our lives—on which riches and which glory we desire. Do we really want the peace that Jesus Christ gives? If so, we must appreciate our calling, and will to prosper in all the spiritual riches that God gave us the privilege of understanding. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:14–15).

"Have peace in me," says Jesus Christ. How do we receive it? As we zealously live the gospel of peace. Furthermore, He informs us of the fact that while we have peace in Him, we will have tribulations in the world. We will not go through our allotted times without being confronted with some difficulties. However, Jesus Christ adds: "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

So, each of us is responsible for his frustrations, his bursts of agitation, his feelings of discouragement, and his bad state of mind. The peace that Christ leaves with us leads to a calm and trusting mind that puts all things into the hands of God—the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Let us not forget the price that was paid for our redemption. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:5).

My brothers and sisters, in spite of the trials to which we are subjected from time to time, let us be filled with hope and let us press on toward the goal with the attitude of the Apostle Paul, who urges us: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" (Romans 12:12, *Revised Standard Version*).

Your brother in Christ,

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

Jean Aviolat