

January 2011

Dear Brethren:

Most friendly greetings to you all. The purpose of the following lines is mainly to put you in remembrance that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance and our love for you all does not decrease. As we are told by the Apostle Paul, ". . . you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7–8, *New International Version*). We must live patiently and bear the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. In so doing, we show a sincere love and zeal for the Truth of God. It takes faith and courage to persevere in that way of life unto the end, so that we will be recognized by God as blameless children on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we must face circumstances in which we are forced to take risks if we want to be faithful to God. It is not about running risks when driving on the road or doing a dangerous job. What God expects of us is the faith to take risks in order to fulfill His commands and His will.

How often Moses was sent by God before Pharaoh who was a belligerent king. Therefore, it required a strong resolve, a firm determination—faith—on the part of Moses to carry out in the presence of Pharaoh what God had commanded him to do.

Another example is the three friends of Daniel. Standing before the statue which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up for himself, they refused to bow down at the risk of being thrown into a blazing furnace. There are many things in which God commands us not to take part and which can be likened to the worshiping of a statue. But when we have to face such a test, what is our response? Do we behave like those three young men who stood up to King Nebuchadnezzar and said, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king" (Daniel 3:17)? Here was a statement made by faith; however, that was not enough to show God their faithfulness. They had to be resolute, unwavering, and they had to prove that they were willing to suffer the risk which they were taking. "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:18). So they would have rather died in the blazing furnace than submit to an authority which was enforcing something contrary to the instructions of God.

Daniel had to face a decree established by King Darius. At his own risk he did not comply with it but continued to pray and praise God, just as he had done before. Then the king's servants, who were prompted by jealousy and hypocrisy, pressed him into commanding that Daniel be cast into the den of lions.

We all know the story of Job. Despite the most distressing and painful circumstances which Job had to experience, God said of him, "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" (Job 1:22, *Revised Standard Version*).

There were many prophets who took the risk of losing their lives and who lost them because they refused to deviate from the commands given by God. They fulfilled His instructions at the expense of their lives, whereas other servants received God's intervention after they had proven their faithfulness.

It is important to remember those examples. For those things were recorded for us who were called to know the will of God. They make us realize that we are simply not going to wake up one morning and see the Kingdom of God without having been tried through some circumstances. We are talking about situations in which we are compelled to take risks if we want to give God proof of our courage, our determination, our faith, our loyalty. Those examples show that all the way to our destination—the Kingdom of God—we must exercise faith and obey the commands and instructions which reflect the will of God. And let us always remember, "There hath no temptation [or trial] taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). It is through such circumstances that God knows those who are His and who trust Him. While we are preparing for the Kingdom of God, we are experiencing all kinds of situations to which we must react as God requires of us. Then we must wait for His protection or His deliverance which He promises to those who place themselves in His hands.

Why does God want us to learn to put our complete confidence in Him? The prophet Isaiah gives us an answer, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us" (Isaiah 33:22). However God may choose to deliver us, it is He who saves us. Therefore, each of us needs to acquire that confidence, the faith to remain firm, unwavering when we must take risks in order to do the will of God and endure to the end.

Let us stop and analyze our own individual lives in order to know whether or not we are striving toward the manifestation of that character which God wants to see in those whom He called. Since God is granting us time so that we may become blameless children for the day of Jesus Christ, why not seize every opportunity which God allows in our lives and take the necessary steps to reach that goal? Let us not forget that the Day of the Lord will come unexpectedly like a thief in the night. So, the day is coming when we must face reality. If, after we have received the knowledge and understanding of the will

and way of God, we would rather deceive ourselves in our self-examinations because we want to live as we please, then we will simply die in our sins. So said Jesus Christ. Under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter had to write, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish [receive the final condemnation], but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Each of us is accountable to God.

If we want the life which God promised, we have no other choice but to learn to submit our lives, our minds, to His will as we were taught. Whatever the risks, God knows to what extent we can be steadfast. And since He does not forsake His own, He intervenes one way or another to deliver us. Jesus Christ Himself experienced sufferings to a degree which we could not bear. But through those difficult and painful days, He knew that His Father—who is also our Father—could give Him the strength to endure and fulfill the will of God to the end. Christ said, ". . . nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). And the Apostle John wrote, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). To say that we abide in Christ is not hard to do, but to walk as He did is not possible without taking risks which are contrary to our natures. That is why we must so often repent of our failures—of having not been able to live up to the will of God.


But what exactly is the problem? It is what Christ's disciples should have overcome when their Master had to meet the ultimate trial. He asked them, "Why are you sleeping?" The disciples' sleep is a type of the spiritual sleep of God's people in our time. ". . . Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46)—the temptation to do things as it seems right to us, the temptation to doubt the interventions of God. How many temptations can invade our minds. How many justifications can salve our consciences and lead us into a deep spiritual slumber. Jesus Christ gained the victory because He chose to put all things into the hands of God the Father through prayer and because He wanted to do the will of the Father at any cost. Then the Father intervened by sending an angel to strengthen Him. To walk as Christ Himself did is to choose to stay alert spiritually; it is to choose to fulfill the will of God in our lives; and it is to pray fervently so that we will not fall into temptation.

Of course, no one will be able to take credit for his success, for we will all feel rather small in the presence of Jesus Christ. But if we are determined to live the true values which God wants to see in His elect, then the victory in our lives will have been gained through the capability of Christ within us, because we will have allowed Him to live His life in us. Eternal life is a gift of God, but that gift is dependent upon our total commitment to the call which God gave to us. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Thus, my dear brothers and sisters, in every circumstance of life, let us not neglect to shore up our confidence and show Christ that we are among those who are making every possible effort to walk as He did. Let us pray for one another without growing slack. Let us be merciful to one another. Let us repent of our failures. And then we can wait for the return of our King in the assurance that mercy will triumph over judgment.

To all of you, my most sincere and respectful affection.

Your brother in Christ,

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

Jean Aviolat

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Jon W. Brisby'.

Jon W. Brisby