

January 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Through this yearly letter you are assured of our love and our prayers. Despite the trials, we have lived through another year under the grace and the goodness of God, for He has shown us abundant kindness in the many things which He has given to us.

To you all who "know how . . . to behave . . . in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), I have nothing new to teach in this letter. As the Apostle John stated, "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning" (1 John 2:7).

We live in a world which is a brutal demonstration of contempt, hatred and strife in the midst of all kinds of distresses. And yet, God put us on this earth in order to teach us a way of life which is quite different. We are told by Jesus Christ, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). "Love one another as I have loved you," says Christ. So our love for one another is measured against the love which Jesus Christ had for us when He gave His life for the forgiveness of our sins, and against the love which He continues to manifest by His willingness to live His life within us. "Christ in you . . . [is] the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). The ones who are developing such warm fellowship with God the Father, with His Son Jesus Christ and with one another include only those who have come to recognize their natures and who have set about subjugating them forcefully in order to put on the divine nature. They are the ones who are working vigorously to become converted.

"[As] I have loved you . . . love one another." In the evaluation of our achievement, Jesus Christ will not be deceiving Himself. Then He adds, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). So we were called to be a united people. Such oneness will be a valuable lesson for the world, because someday our love, tolerance, patience and affectionate feelings toward one another will be noticed. The people of the world will become aware of our example because they are heading farther and farther in the opposite direction. Their behavior reflects anger, divisions and self-centeredness. Lying, hypocrisy and all kinds of artificial elements are part of their lifestyles. That is the reason why at some point in the future the depth of our love for one another will

stand out and be known. We are manifesting something which is true and sincere, a genuine love and respect for one another, because its source is Christ living in us. It is incumbent upon us to have the firm resolve, the will, to be disciples of the love of Jesus Christ rather than yielding to the wicked tendencies of our human natures. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). And one of His commandments is, "[A]s I have loved you . . . love one another."

What is the result? "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). It is then one of those instructions that Jesus Christ gave which is the source of our joy. "[T]hat my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." When we are doing what Jesus Christ requires of us, we are walking in the way of happiness, satisfaction, confidence, contentment and thankfulness. Each one is provided with all the help he needs to be able to walk in such a beautiful way. Jesus Christ says to us, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). When we let Jesus Christ fulfill in us the very life that He lived Himself, we have within us the source of the joyful and endless life which we will receive at His return.

To do what Jesus Christ commands us requires a spiritual character that is far beyond our capabilities. The manifestation of such love does not come naturally to us. And yet, Jesus Christ, the perfecter of our salvation, exhorts us to have that degree of love for one another. The standard is the love of Jesus Christ, for He says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). It is the crucifixion of our natural impulses—the impulses of the arrogance and contempt of our carnal minds. To lay down one's life is to divest oneself of the vanity of the natural mind and to give the benefit to anyone else. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). The basis of our love is obedience to the law of God. Therefore, the unity which God wants to see in our social relationships with one another can be achieved only if we are determined to do what Jesus Christ commands us. For He says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." That oneness of mind can be attained in no other way.

How must everyone called conduct himself in order to be a friend of Christ?

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not [does not practice sin]: whosoever sinneth [practices sin] hath not seen him, neither known him (1 John 3:3–6).

It is an individual responsibility. The standard is the law of God, for sin is the transgression of the law. If Jesus Christ is living in us through the Spirit of God, He does not justify sin, because He came to destroy sin. And as an active agent in our lives, He continues to destroy sin. "[H]e that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7). Jesus Christ living in us wants every one of us to gain the mastery over his own nature as He Himself did when He lived in His own flesh body.

Let all men know your forbearance [or your gentleness]. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philippians 4:5–8, *Revised Standard Version*).

Let us remember that when God called us, He taught us a way of life. So, what we are given, what we learn in Jesus Christ and practice, is for the purpose of making our direction and our union perfect. Then the God of peace can be with us.

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4–5).

Someone who is begotten of the Spirit of God and who offers up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, loves to hear things that are true, honorable, right, pure, kind, admirable, virtuous and praiseworthy. He finds no satisfaction in animosity or in malicious talk about other people. "[A]s I have loved you . . . love one another." The "as" tells us that we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ. It is then only that no circumstance will separate us from the love of God and from our love for one another.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:1–2).

To set our affection on things above is to be determined to keep our affection for God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ and the priceless way of life which we were given and taught. And the result is warm human relationships in a united and constant endeavor

within the Body of Jesus Christ. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples . . ." (John 13:35).

It is not something that is achieved overnight. It requires an unwavering will on the part of everyone. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6–7). It truly depends upon the effort that each puts forth in his own life through resolve and determination.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness (Colossians 3:12–14).

Put on! It is the duty of each one of us; it is an individual work. "[P]ut on [love], which is the bond of perfectness." What is the source of such love? God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It is a love that is contrary to the nature with which we were born. That is why it is incumbent upon us to put on that love. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . ." (Colossians 3:16). We strive to rid our hearts and minds of the wicked things inherent to our carnal natures. Having the life of Christ within us, let us combine our efforts in order to achieve that goal fully. Being one Body, we will then extol, by our behavior, the greatness of our God—His perfection and His character.

How often do we recognize that we should not conduct ourselves in some way or other and yet weaken and fail to do what we should? Though the Spirit of God guides us into all truth—it shows us the way to the Kingdom of God, the decisions and the changes that we must make in our lives—how often are we disappointed and frustrated in some situation or other because we let our human natures prevail? Therefore, we must admit our failures and bury them under the shed blood of Christ so that we can be forgiven once again. Then, with a little more effort on our parts, we must not be weary in well doing.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Peter 1:13–16).

We all know that Jesus Christ is coming back. But, as we wait for that day, let us allow Him to live in our lives fully and abundantly. Let us develop our faith and our confidence in the grace that is to be brought to us when Jesus Christ returns. Though the times in which we live are becoming more and more critical, do not give up, but courageously manifest a will and an assurance in your belief in the purpose of God. "[S]et your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13, *English Standard Version*). Ask for it every day in your prayers. God will be with you, He will hear and answer, and your reward will be abundant.

With my greetings filled with hope and affection for you all,

Your brother in Christ,

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

Jean Aviolat

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon W. Brisby', written in a cursive style.

Jon W. Brisby

