

January 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It seems hardly possible that a whole year has gone by since I wrote to you last January. Yet there is no denying it. Therefore, I greet you all again.

Another year behind us during which many things have happened both in our lives and in the world. When we observe what is taking place around us, we see so many people who are deeply anxious, worrying about their children and their relatives because of numerous circumstances that affect all age groups. People must face such problems without the knowledge of the times and of God's Way of Life. Most of them do the best they can.

The majority of us are in the dead season of winter—taking into account the various parts of the world where you live. Darkness is prevailing over daylight. But let us remember that spring always follows winter as the return of Christ will follow the increasing darkness into which our present world is sinking.

As for us, we were called to become converted, to be stimulated by the power of God's Holy Spirit and to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. He tells us that knowing God is keeping His Word (John 8:55). So where do we stand?

As we observed the Holy Days in the course of the past year, God gave us once more the privilege of seeing and understanding things that the great majority of mankind does not grasp. But what do we do with that knowledge? Has our confidence in God increased? When confronted with various difficulties, do we show the courage to put our faith and our trust in Him? Or is that knowledge merely a reminder that we relegate to a shelf while waiting for the next rehearsal of the plan and purpose designed by God for all mankind?

We have received an abundance of instruction—teachings from the Word of God. For what purpose? For us to grow in the discipline of our lives and to make progress in self-mastery till we come again before God on His Feast Days. If we put that instruction into practice, we will be successful rather than spiritually stagnant because we cater to our own natures.

Every year, we can be greatly enriched with our experiences at God's annual Feasts, provided we examine ourselves. On the one hand, we show God the victory that we have gained over some of our problems; on the other hand, we ask Him to help us to overcome what is left to do because we want to strive toward the stature of the fulness of Christ. That

is our daily work until the end of our lives. That is the reason we were called to know God's Way of Life and why we are being tried.

So, my brethren, we have three months ahead of us before the return of spring and another observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That time we have left is not too long to prepare ourselves in order to appear before God with the state of mind and the improvement that He expects of us.

There are a number of spiritual principles and *Monthly Letters* made available to us. They help us to see and understand where we stand in overcoming our human natures—what we have mastered and what we still have to whip. You have that material on the website or in printed form. It is nothing new—merely a reminder, as many of you say. But if you put them into practice, they will help you endure unto the end.

Here are some of those old *Monthly Letters*:

June 1980: The manifestations of man's enemies are listed in twenty-five points. Being aware of them allows us to avoid many snares in life. Then, twenty-five points show the fruits of the converted. And finally, seven points tell us how to build the character of Christ.

March and August 1987, January 1988 and April 1989 teach us the contrast between our natural inclinations and our spiritual obligations. Thirty-six points define the areas in which human nature tyrannizes us and what is required of us spiritually. Such self-discipline must be a daily process throughout our lives.

April 1977 answers several questions to refresh our memories. Again we are reminded of the principles (reduced to twelve points) by which God wants us to live. Each of us must judge his own life with an honest heart and apply those principles for the rest of his humble walk with his God.

In three months we will begin a new year with the celebration of the Passover. May I refer you to two spiritual principles: "Partaking of the Passover Acceptably" (March 2004, *Announcement Letter*); and "Post-Passover Resolve" (April 1993, *Announcement Letter*).

The latter goes hand-in-hand with the May 1984, *Monthly Letter*. The responsibility involved in Passover examination makes us aware of the duties that we must fulfill once we are imbued with the meaning of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

So many things to read and on which to meditate in order to live up to the exhortation expressed by the Apostle Paul: "And 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).

Then, let us be the children of God. Let us engrave that received knowledge upon our hearts and minds, and let us ask God continually for the strength of His Holy Spirit so that we will walk according to His instructions in the path of faith. My dear brothers and sisters, let us remember that the most difficult part of the race is the last stretch before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, or the end of our physical lives. We can rejoice in victory only when we cross the finish line, that is, when we are born into the Family of God. Therefore, ". . . grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

You are in my prayers, and I thank you for yours. Let us not forget the statement of the Apostle Paul: ". . . It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Each one called decides of his own free will whether or not he wants to work out his own salvation. God forces no one; He allows us to be free moral agents until the end of this physical life. His Way of Life is far too precious to be enforced upon those called who love to justify their sins. God's way to eternal life belongs to those who love His laws, His commandments and His Way.

With all my affection and respect for each of you,
Your brother in Christ,

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

Jean Aviolat