

Church of God, The Eternal

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The Friends of Jesus Christ

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Dear Friends of Jesus Christ:

Warm and brotherly greetings to you wherever you may be living.

Who are the friends of Jesus Christ? Let us allow Christ Himself to give us His answer: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And what did He command us? He further states, ". . . but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:14–15). Carrying out such a duty—doing all things that God commands us—implies an understanding of that which is absolute, because what Jesus Christ had heard of His Father was an absolute. That absolute is the Truth of God; it is the way of life which Christ lived in His own flesh body perfectly and is willing to live in the lives of those who have been called by God.

God's instructions were given to us just as to the disciples in Christ's time. And it is on the scales of that knowledge that we must weigh our thoughts, our words, our conceptions, our lifestyles—in short, the behavior of the self—for in the eyes of God there are not multiple ways of living His way of life.

The problem which every human being encounters is that his own mind opposes God's way; it rebels against everything that is an absolute. That is why by nature some—although called—subscribe to principles of life which are flexible and therefore allow them to think, speak and believe as they please, all the while convincing themselves that they have God's approval. They do not see the use of examining their own personal lives according to the absolute which we were first privileged to understand.

Under the inspiration of God, the Apostle Paul is exhorting us through the following command: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves . . ." (2 Corinthians 13:5). Then it is a responsibility which everyone must carefully fulfill in his

own life in order to know whether his thoughts, his ideas, his lifestyle, everything about him is in harmony with God's Truth which is an absolute. Everyone must consider his own life according to what the Father gave to Christ and Christ in turn made known to us. Everyone must ponder his life, his behavior, his way of thinking and the goal which he set for himself as he responded to the call which God gave to him. In all honesty, can we echo the words of David, "Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words" (Psalm 119:57)? But faced with certain circumstances we do not always do what we should in the sight of God. When we are angry, troubled or tormented as a result of some things which we did or because of the way others reacted to what we did or said, and when we begin to search our reasonings through a conscientious self-examination, we realize that something is wrong. Then we can turn to God and say to Him, "I entreat thy favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to thy promise. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:58 [*Revised Standard Version*], 59 [*King James Version*]). How often we let our carnal emotions rule us and we have to entreat God to have pity on us! And after reflecting on our way of thinking and our behavior, we hasten to turn around and adjust our lives again to the words of God which are wisdom, understanding and righteousness. Then we can say to God, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

So when we think on our ways in the light of the very life of Jesus Christ, we are often disappointed with the result of such an examination, if we have been honest with ourselves. But we can entreat God's mercy, repent of our shortcomings and hasten to make ourselves obedient to God, because we resolved in our hearts to keep and submit to the knowledge which was given to us.

What is the use of justifying ourselves by embracing a way of life of our own choosing which does not put us under an obligation to examine ourselves and conform to the standards set by God? What is the result? Jesus Christ showed and is still showing us that the fruits prove very quickly the value of God's law being lived in our lives, in contrast to the fruits which stem from the deceptiveness of our natures. What a difference between the extremely good fruits of God's Holy Spirit and those of the carnal way!

Addressing the ones who do what Jesus Christ commands, the prophet Isaiah said, "Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word: "Your brethren who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame" (Isaiah 66:5, *RSV*). We see that those who reject the Truth, which is an absolute, reject the ones who keep it and manifest in their way of thinking fear toward God and His word. Those who do not possess that fear take the liberty of perverting what God says in order to justify their thoughts, their conceptions and their behaviors. But if we fear the word of God—all the exhortations, the teachings and the

corrections which it intends for us—then we do not find it difficult to examine ourselves and submit to the will of God in order to be obedient to Him. God gives us that capability through the help of His Holy Spirit.

We see how important it is to judge our thoughts and weigh our conceptions. That statement of the prophet Isaiah shows us that we must know why we do what we do, why we say what we say, why we believe what we believe, why we practice what we practice, and why we react as we do to certain circumstances. If we are of those who fear the Word of God, who fear what Jesus Christ made known to us, then we will be very honest with ourselves. For it is through such a judgment that everyone will be able to correct his life so that his heart and mind may be purified before God. God gave us His Spirit of honesty, truth, wisdom, integrity and strength in humility to enable us to fulfill that requirement.

What creates a lot of problems in the life of a called human being is the fact that he puts too much trust in his own nature, his own mind and his own thoughts. And that is a proof that he is neglecting to evaluate his emotional reactions. If we ask God to open our minds when we read His Word, if we listen to the Sabbath messages and read spiritual principles but then show no fear of what God says, no spiritual progress is brought about in our lives. Therefore, if we want to grow in the development of God's character—a development which is essential for the inheritance of salvation—let us be honest with ourselves and let us watch our thoughts and what is occurring in our hearts, for God says, "Tremble at my word."

The Apostle Paul tells us, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:31–32). He states, "If we would judge ourselves!" Not others. Judge what? What we think, what we say, what we do, what we believe, what we practice—the state of mind with which we live. Does all that reflect the life of Jesus Christ being lived in us? An honest answer to all those questions points out to us whether we fear God's Word—His way of life—and live it by faith. We must understand the reason why sometimes we respond negatively to what God says to us and to the instructions which He gives to us through His servants. What is the weak point or points in our lives which prevent us from manifesting the strength of character which we need in order to fulfill the purpose of our call as God expects us to?

In Proverbs 30:32 we read: "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth." Doing foolishly is willfully not doing what Christ commands us to do. And we see what drives us to foolish acts: it is pride! "If you have been a fool by being proud . . ." (*Living Bible*). If we think that we are always right, if we think that the difficulties which we encounter are always due to the behaviors

of others, if we think that we can interpret the statements of God as we please, it is indeed a manifestation of pride. For we do not need at all to justify our own rights or our thoughts or our conceptions; we must simply recognize what God gave to us, live it and remain faithful to it. ". . . if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth" (Proverbs 30:32). This shows us how important it is to analyze our thoughts according to what God says to us in His word. That is the conduct of one who fears the word of God, believes it and has resolved to examine himself in order to become—with the help of God's Spirit—a perfect work for the day of Jesus Christ.

My dear friends in Christ, let us not grow weary in giving the right orientation to our lives by focusing our thoughts on obedience to God and exhibiting the kind of confidence which Jesus Christ manifested in His own life and wants to engrave on ours. God gives us this assurance: "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry . . ." (Isaiah 46:13). It behooves every one of us to evaluate and understand all the significance of this life which God grants to us and the reason for which He calls us. We are living through a period of time during which God is testing us. He wants to see how we react in the face of certain circumstances—whether we will be able to show faithfulness and use His instructions or whether, on the contrary, we will let the pride of our own thoughts and our own reasonings drive us to acts of foolishness. Therefore, let us take the time to weigh our thoughts, our reasonings and our reactions on the scales of the Truth of God. One of the commands in God's Word is: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." When Jesus Christ lived this physical life, all His thoughts were directed toward doing what God the Father required of Him as a manifestation of perfect obedience. It was the will of His Father—who is also our Father—which was governing His thinking. He allowed the Spirit of God to guide Him. If likewise we let the same Spirit guide us, then we will live through these end times with the same orientation, waiting to be clothed with the same glory in order to be with Him in the Kingdom of God.

If the called of God do not agree with one another in regard to the Truth of God, it is because to some extent they are not in perfect harmony with the mind of Christ. And let us not forget that the only person over whom we can exercise control is the self. Each individually can bring his thoughts into harmony with the thoughts of Jesus Christ. Differing views about God's way of life are the proof that we are not all in submission to the same Spirit; it shows that we are not all living in perfect accord with the same Spirit. For the Word of God—toward which we must show a respectful fear—tells us clearly, ". . . be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2). "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all . . ." (Ephesians 4:4–6).

Thinking that we are defending the Truth of God by creating disputes is doing the will of the flesh. Let us defend the Truth by bearing the fruits which result from our obedience to God—the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. It is bringing our thinking into harmony with the mind of Christ—an absolute standard which was given to us—that we will all walk in the way which will lead us to the Kingdom of God where we will not only be friends but much more—the very brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. As we are exhorted by the Apostle Paul: "Casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

To you all my most sincere love and affection,

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

Jean Aviolat