

December 31, 2017

Dear Members and Friends,

When I was a kid, days seemed to last forever. From one Feast of Tabernacles to the next seemed like an eternity. But now, as I am a little bit older, days seem to rush away as if I were to wake up, a few hours fleet past, and then the day is over. Sometimes it feels frustrating that the days appear to go by so quickly.

It seems just a short time ago when we kept the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. I find it hard to believe that it was actually a few months ago. But time slows down for no one. Ephesians 5:16-18 tells us that we need to be "redeeming the time" that we have. In these winter days, along with the events of Christmas and New Year's, we see the world around us wallowed in false happiness. They have no clue how to become truly happy because they are stuck in the hamster wheel of this life. And so they continue to pretend that everything is ok, while here in the US, Congress has passed another short-term deal to stave off shutdown of the Federal government; the national debt continues to climb; and the rest of the world is dealing with untold sorrow, corruption and wars. This is nothing new. These types of things have been going on for years.

Do we have a tendency to do the same thing of pretending that everything is ok in our lives—sticking our heads in the ground like the proverbial ostrich, instead of taking a deep look into our lives and making the changes that we see that need to be made? As we watch the world drawing closer and closer to an inevitable end, are we strengthened in our knowledge of the Truth and God's Ways—or are we succumbing to the darkness that is around us?

Luke 11:33-36 says: "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but on a stand, that those who enter may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound [healthy], your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness. Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light" (Revised Standard Version).

We CANNOT have any darkness in us. IF we see anything dark or unhealthy in us, then we need to overcome it. We have to push it out with the help of God and keep any darkness at bay. It can be a very hard thing to do. God knows this and is there to help us when we truly want to commit to change.

We are admonished in Scripture to be the light of the world. This means, we have to stand in the world's darkness and keep our lights burning. John 1:1-5 shows us that Christ is the Light, that we receive life and light through Him, and that our lights shine because of Him living in us. Those who are truly following God and Christ will NOT have their light darkened, but rather, as in the parable of the ten virgins, those who are wise will trim their lamps, be filled with God's Holy Spirit and become brighter and brighter lights in this darkening age. John 8:12 reiterates that walking after Christ is how we can accomplish this task. 1 John 1:5-9 gives us the understanding that if we confess our sins and turn from them, then we can become cleansed from all unrighteousness. But this will not happen until we become tired of the ill effects of sin and the pain and suffering that it causes, and truly turn away from "the sin which so easily ensnares us" (Hebrews 12:1). If we doubt that we are truly part of God's called and chosen people, then we need to understand that this is a false concept which Satan wants us to believe. 1 Peter 2:9 says: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,

a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Do we proclaim the praises of God as He works in our lives? Verse 5 also mentions that we are to be offering up “spiritual sacrifices” that God finds acceptable. Again, in verses 11-12 we see Peter’s plea for all of us to abstain from any sin and to do good works instead. This is a subject that is mentioned time and time again in the Word of God. In Matthew 5:16, Christ says: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Our good works are not for our own selfish gain; but rather, they should be used to glorify God.

I started this letter by talking about time. Time is fleeting. Psalm 90:10 tells us: “The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” We should understand that our lives are indeed short. I look back on the last 32 years of my life, and in the end, they have been relatively short. As we see the time of the end approaching, we realize that our time now is becoming even shorter. Romans 13:11-12 reminds us that our time of salvation is closer now than when we were first called into the Truth.

What have we changed this past year? What will change in the next few months as we prepare for the Spring Holy Days, especially the Passover evening? Are we so stuck in our ways that we cannot truly overcome sin? To what depths do we need to go before we can convince ourselves that sin is not worth the pain and agony? 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 says that the coming lawless one will use much deception, and he will be able to get to those who don’t truly love God’s Ways; he will even persuade them to fall away. Let us heed this warning, and let us be encouraged by Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 3:12-17:

“Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you [or: “make you wise”] for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired [literally: “breathed out”] by God [New International Version: “God-breathed”] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (Revised Standard Version).

This is the Way we have to be living and training ourselves. We cannot do this alone. We cannot expect to accomplish anything if we are not actively using the time we have to really and truly work on ourselves. We must keep pushing on towards the goal for the “prize of the upward call of God” (Philippians 3:14).

With brotherly love,



Kalon Mitchell