

August 27, 2020

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We are fast approaching the Feast of Tabernacles, and how quickly things have changed over the last six months, causing many people to change their plans in regard to where they are going to keep the Feast. Satan has been very strong in attempting to break God's people through many different circumstances. The attacks so far this pre-Holy Day season have been trying and stressful. As I reflect on my own trials, I realize that it is not that difficult to get discouraged and at times frustrated and even angry with situations, people and life.

It is easy to look at what we are going through now and understand that these are hard trials, but all of this brings home the point that as we go through them, we are growing in strength, faith, patience, knowledge and perseverance, and that we will be tried harder and harder, sometimes close to the breaking point. We may lose family, friends (Matthew 19:29), and earthen "treasures," but these things hold no comparison to what God is doing in and through us on a daily basis.

Why is it that especially before God's Holy Days, Satan makes the hardest attempts to get us to break down? What is it that you personally are facing right now? How personal are you taking the trials you are encountering? How are you getting through your trials? Are you finding yourself banging your head again and again against the same wall? Or are there new things that are being shown to you? When we honestly take the time to self-evaluate and look at the things that are happening (Lamentations, chapter 3), we can begin to see God's hands crafting and molding us for His purpose and for His service, whatever that may be (Psalm 119:73-80).

One of the things that I am taking away from this time now is that it is God who is in control. I myself do not have the proper strength, wisdom or power, no matter what I face. Rather, it is when I humbly come before Him (Colossians 4:2) and bring the things that are happening before Him, that He then answers. This is not something that most people are willing to do. The act of laying everything before God and asking for His help and His understanding requires an attitude of humility. God wants to see if we are willing to stop thinking we know everything. He wants to find out if we are willing to wait on and for Him (James 4:10).

As we prepare for the fall Holy Days, what is it that we will bring with us into this time? What type of mindset are we cultivating each day? Are we focused on God and on growing our relationship with Him? Or are we so preoccupied with "life" that we are giving no thought to our spiritual state and just mindlessly dealing with the tests and trials that besiege us? It is a mindset that we choose. We choose how close we want to be with God. God will allow trials in our lives to continue to bring us to the point where we recognize that we can no longer rely on ourselves. He will continue to help us in changing and eradicating those things in our lives that prevent us from drawing CLOSE TO HIM. And then He will mend and heal us (1 Peter 5:6).

One of the hardest things to do as a human being is to find joy in trials. James 1:2-5 tells us to be "joyful" that we suffer. In order to do this, we have to have the correct mindset and we have to have the faith of the Father and of Christ living and working in us. We will not find it joyful otherwise. Instead of being frustrated and annoyed or angry at our trials, the right attitude would be to start looking at what we are supposed to be learning. What are we going through that God deems worthy of us suffering (Hebrews 5:8)? James also tells us that tests produce "endurance." Endurance is not something that one conjures up! Christ told us in Matthew 24:13 that it is the "one who endures to the end who will be saved."

There may be situations and trials that we will find ourselves in, when it feels that they are almost impossible to surmount, overcome or endure. But when we start to really trust in God, when we start to place all things into His care, we will become more and more aware of the Truth that God is willing and waiting to help. Paul summed this up in Romans 8:28-30 where he said: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

We hope that all of us will take the time to really think and pray about what it is that God is trying to show each of us in our lives. He is preparing us for the times ahead that we are facing. He is preparing us to stick close to Him through all things. He is preparing us to become God beings in His Family, so that we can help others when the time comes. Our potential is before us. And if we must suffer a little now to bring to fruition the greater good, then so be it.

We pray that each of you will have a deeply rewarding Fall Holy Day Season.

With much thought and love,

your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kalon Mitchell", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kalon Mitchell