

January 6, 2021

Dear Members and Friends,

From the end of the cold war in 1991, the Western nations have lived in relative peace. There have been some wars involving the west, but usually not on western soil. Yes, the World Trade Centre was destroyed in 2001, but generally in the West, there has been a semblance of peace. The continuing wars were generally in the Middle East and Africa.

But at the present time the whole world has become very insecure. In many countries there are lockdowns, with vastly increased unemployment, business collapses, border closures and the fear of catching a dangerous virus that has spread throughout the world. It is a very uncertain time and when we consider the prophesied events yet to occur, it becomes even more alarming.

It is also prophesied that some will depart from the faith, especially because of iniquity and false teachings. But it is very encouraging when we see how God cares about us, His called-out people, and what He has promised and desires for us ultimately.

In Job 14:14-15, we find that God has a desire for the work of His hands. We know from the first chapter of Genesis that mankind was created on the sixth day as a part of the work of God (Genesis 1:26). He finished this stage of His work on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). Since we are a part of God's work, it is evident that He has a desire for us. 1 Timothy 2:3-4 repeats this theme in that God "desires all men to be saved". This is not just those He has called out now, but everyone who has ever lived. He desires this so greatly that He was willing for His own Son to be a sacrifice to atone for the sins of all who believe so they could have everlasting life (John 3:16).

But it is not just His desire and making a way possible to be saved, for we read in Luke 12:32, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." So, God considers it is His good pleasure for us to be a part of His kingdom. He is certainly not reluctant to fulfill that goal. In fact, God wants us to be in His kingdom, not just as members of it, but to be conformed to the image of His Son, for the purpose that His Son will have many brethren (Romans 8:28-29).

And God's love for us is so great that as we read in Romans 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here we see that nothing physical or even spiritual can separate us from God's love, that's how strong it is.

We are reminded again in 2 Peter 1:4 that the promises of God are exceedingly great and precious. And those promises are that we may partake of the divine nature of God. It is such an exceedingly great promise that we will have our human nature changed to have divine or godly nature. All of our frailties and weaknesses will be a thing of the past.

And to further emphasise this, we read in Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord your God is in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." There is so much encouragement in this verse. He is very happy to rejoice over us. The next phrase is stated differently but effectively in the New International Version. "In His love He will no longer rebuke you." He will never make mention of past sins which, in itself, is a wonderful blessing. But in addition to this, He will rejoice over us with singing. His

joyful emotion over us will be so great that He will actually sing in our presence.

We have these wonderful promises and desires of God for us in the future. And we know that He has made other promises for our protection and provision in the times ahead as they become more difficult. There is much in God's Word for our encouragement and for us to look forward to.

So, all these promises and desires of God should help us never to even contemplate departing from the faith. Instead we will be looking forward to being a part of the God family, sharing in the Divine nature and partaking of eternal life with God, His Son and the rest of the God family.

With much love and concern,

Your brother in Christ's service.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'P. Niehoff', written in black ink.

Paul Niehoff (Australia)