

December 24, 2022

Dear Friends and Co-Workers,

As I think about this past year while we get ready to move into 2023, I wonder what we are moving towards. During this year, many of us have had significant trials and tests. We have faced them, overcome them, or are currently walking through that "valley of the shadow of death"

Our member letters are meant to be filled with encouragement. They are also written from a very personal point of view. As I am writing this letter, I am thinking about all the things that I have gone through this year and just how it has affected my growth, and then I also see that I need to become more diligent in certain regards or shore up other aspects. I think, we each can relate to the same way of thinking. But this requires us to do some deep introspection.

Recently, we have been hearing many messages based on the power of God. I personally have found great strength in these messages. As true Christians, we are the "weak of the world". Our job is so enormous and intense that we must realize that without God leading and directing us, our efforts would be useless. We are so weak that at times it can feel like we are being swallowed up by the things we are facing—be it health problems, family issues, or money concerns, just to name a few.

The apostle Paul seems to capture this feeling perfectly in many of his letters to the churches. The commission and the opportunities to do the Work were important then—and they are important now. The persecutions and all the trials were meant to help the brethren to grow and to be able to become stronger—especially in faith and reliance on God.

In Philippians 2:13 (from the *Amplified Bible*), Paul iterates: "For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure."

We should think about that deeply. The power of God is working in and with each of us. We are responsible for cultivating the use of this power in our lives. We are to be doing everything we can to grow accordingly. When we are not that diligent in this, then that may be the time when God creates opportunities and situations in our lives (like He did in the case of Job) where we have to walk that walk of faith!

The 8th chapter of the letter to the Romans lays out in detail for us how we can accomplish using the power of God. When we read this chapter, we should be encouraged to try all the harder. This quote from verse 28 is something I remind myself of over and over: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

No matter what we face in this life, if we look at trials properly, we will begin to understand that they are for us! They are opportunities for us to look at our challenges that we face with a different perspective

It really depends on the attitude we choose to take! We can choose the mindset of a victim—believing that we are the poor innocent ones who have to deal with the undeserved problems that we face. We can blame circumstances, other people, Satan or any number of things. But this is not what God tells us! He tells us that everything that we face is meant to help us to grow, overcome or to change our mindsets! He is attempting to teach us to lean on Him more and more!

In this world, there is no end of advice for self-mastery and how to change. Many times, the advice given is fruitless. The Truth is: It is we who must be *willing* to change. Change is painful! But we are to choose the pain we go through—the pain of regret or the pain of a trial that helps us to grow. There are many quotes on self-mastery, but one of my favorites is a Henry Ford quote: “Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t—you’re right.”

Romans 12:1-2 tells us about the real change which we must seek: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (your duty to conduct yourself as a Christian). And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Whether we think that this life is meant for us (which it truly is) or whether we think that it’s just a pain to get through dictates for us how we behave. We must not discount the power and the strength that we can gain from God in being able to persevere! God tells the church members in the Book of Revelation that they must hold on to their crown! We who are of the Philadelphian remnant must hold on to the Truth. We cannot make the mistake of believing that this will not be tremendously difficult! We will be pressured on all sides—the wearing down of the saints is happening now!

We must stay strong in our faith, brethren! We must stay close to God! We must do everything in our power to consistently seek after God in all things and at all times! God stands mighty and fights for those of us whom He considers to be His saints!

With much love and Christian care,



Kalon Mitchell