

THE PRESENT TRUTH

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An Impressive Scene

Not long ago a very impressive scene passed before me. I saw an immense ball of fire falling among some beautiful mansions, causing their instant destruction. I heard some one say, "We knew that the judgments of God were coming upon the earth, but we did not know that they would come so soon." Others said, "You knew? Why then did you not tell us. We did not know." On every side I heard such words spoken.

In great distress I awoke. I went to sleep again, and seemed to be in a large gathering. One of authority was addressing the company, before whom was spread out a map of the world. He said that this map pictured God's vineyard, which must be cultivated. As light from heaven shone upon any one, that one was to reflect the light to others. Lights were to be kindled in many places, and from these lights still other lights were to be kindled. The words were repeated,--

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill can not be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

I saw jets of light shining from cities and villages, and from the high places and the low places of the earth. God's Word was obeyed, and, as a result, there were memorials for him in every city and village. His truth was proclaimed throughout the world.

Then this map was removed, and another put in its place. On it, light was shining forth from a few places only. The rest of the world was in darkness, with only a glimmer of light here and there. Our Instructor said, "This darkness is the result of men's following their own course. They have cherished hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil. They have made questioning and faultfinding and accusing the chief business of their lives. Their hearts are not right with God. They have hidden their light under a bushel."

If every soldier of Christ had done his duty, if every watchman on the walls of Zion had given the trumpet a certain sound, the world might, ere this, have heard the message of warning. But the work is years behind. While men have slept, Satan has stolen a march upon us.

Soon grievous troubles will arise among the nations.--trouble that will not cease until Jesus comes. As never before, we need to press together, serving him who has prepared his throne in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all. God has not forsaken his people, and our strength lies in not forsaking him.

The judgments of God are in the land. The wars and rumors of wars, the destruction by fire and flood, say clearly that the time of trouble, which is to increase until the end, is very near at hand. We have no time to lose. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecies of the eleventh of Daniel have almost reached their final fulfilment.

From all the countries of the world the Macedonian cry is sounding, "Come over and help us." God has opened fields before us, and if human agencies would but co-operate with divine agencies, many souls would be won to the truth. But the Lord's professed people have been sleeping over their allotted work, and in many places it remains comparatively untouched. God has sent message after message to arouse our people to do something, and to do it now. But to the call, "Whom shall I send?" there have been few to respond, "Here am I; send me."

When the reproach of indolence and slothfulness shall have been wiped away from the church, the Spirit of the Lord will be graciously manifested. Divine power will be revealed. The church will see the providential working of the Lord of hosts. The light of truth will shine forth in clear, strong rays, and, as in the time of the apostles, many souls will turn from error to truth. The earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord.

Heavenly angels have long been waiting for human agents--the members of the church--to co-operate with them in the great work to be done. They are waiting for you. So vast is the field, so comprehensive the design, that every sanctified heart will be pressed into service as an instrument of divine power.

At the same time there will be a power working from beneath. While God's agents of mercy work through consecrated human beings, Satan sets his agencies in operation, laying under tribute all who will submit to his control. There will be lords many and gods many. The cry will be heard, "Lo, here is Christ," and, "Lo, there is Christ." The deep plotting of Satan will reveal itself everywhere, for the purpose of diverting the attention of men and women from present duty. There will be signs and wonders. But the eye of faith will discern in all these manifestations, harbingers of the grand and awful future, and of the triumphs that will surely come to the people of God.

Work, O work! keeping eternity in view. Bear in mind that every power must be sanctified. A great work is to be done. Let the prayer go forth from unfeigned lips, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

Those who realize, even in a limited degree, what redemption means to them and to their fellow men will walk by faith, and will comprehend in some measure the vast needs of humanity. Their hearts are moved to compassion as they see the widespread destitution in our world,—the destitution of the multitudes who are suffering for food and clothing, and the moral destitution of thousands who are under the shadow of a terrible doom, in comparison to which physical suffering fades into nothingness.

Let church-members bear in mind that the fact that their names are registered on the church books will not save them. They must show themselves approved of God, workmen that need not to be ashamed. Day by day they are to build their characters in accordance with Christ's directions. They are to abide in him, constantly exercising faith in him. Thus they will grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ,—wholesome, cheerful, grateful Christians, led by God, step by step, into clearer and still clearer light.

Those who do not gain this experience will be among the ones whose voices will one day be raised in the bitter lamentation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved. Why did I not flee to the stronghold for refuge? Why have I trifled with my soul's salvation, and done despite to the Spirit of grace?"

Among those to whom fearful disappointment will come at the day of final reckoning will be those who have been outwardly religious, who have apparently lived Christian lives, but who have woven self into all that they do. They have prided themselves on their morality, their influence, their ability to stand in a higher position than others, their knowledge of the truth. They think that these will win for them the commendation of Christ. "Lord," they say, "we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." "Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

But the Saviour says, "I never knew you: depart from me." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

There is no discussion; the time for that is past. The irrevocable sentence has been pronounced. They are shut out from heaven by their own unfitness for its companionship.

Those who have bowed to the idols of the world will gain no comfort from them in that great day when everyone will be rewarded or punished according to his works. But Omnipotence will deal justly. Those who have made Christ their refuge will find that he lives, and that he is conqueror. He will be their defense.

"The great day of the Lord is near; it is near, and hasteth greatly." Every hour, every minute, is precious. We have no time to spend in faultfinding and contention. All around us there are souls perishing in sin. Every day there is something to do for the Master. Every day we are to point souls to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Be always ready; "in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Go to your rest at night with every sin confessed. Thus we did in 1844, when we expected to meet our Lord. And now this great event is nearer than when we first believed. Be always ready, in the evening, in the morning, and at noon, that when the cry is heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!" you may, even though awakened out of sleep, go forth to meet him with your lamps trimmed and burning.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Look up, look up, and let your faith continually increase. Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city of God into the great beyond, the wide, unbounded future that awaits the overcomer. Heed the encouragement in the words, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Let us be found "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." The Lord has made every provision that we shall have strong hope. If we are true to our covenant with God, the blessing is certain,—as certain as God's promise can make it. And so great is the blessing that it will be a full and sufficient reward for all the self-denial and self-sacrifice that for Christ's sake we have shown here below. {Review and Herald, November 24, 1904}