

THE PRESENT TRUTH

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

THE MINISTER OF VENGEANCE

It is natural for us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think; but although it is painful for us to know ourselves as we really are, yet we should pray that God will reveal us to ourselves, even as He sees us. But we should not cease to pray when we have simply asked for a revelation of ourselves; we should pray that Jesus may be revealed to us as a sin-pardoning Saviour. When we see Jesus as He is, earnest desires should awaken in our hearts to be rid of self, that we may be filled with all the fullness of Christ. When this is our experience, we shall do good to one another, and use all the means within our reach to attain unto godliness. We must cleanse our souls from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.

The love of a holy God is an amazing principle, which can stir the universe in our behalf during the hours of our probation and trial. But after the season of our probation, if we are found transgressors of God's law, the God of love will be found a minister of vengeance. God makes no compromise with sin. The disobedient will be punished. The wrath of God fell upon His beloved Son as Christ hung upon the cross of Calvary in the transgressor's place. The love of God now reaches out to embrace the lowest, vilest sinner that will come to Christ with contrition. It reaches out to transform the sinner into an obedient, faithful child of God; but not a soul can be saved if he continues in sin.

Sin is the transgression of the law, and the arm that is now mighty to save will be strong to punish when the transgressor passes the bounds that limit divine forbearance. He who refuses to seek for life, who will not search the Scriptures to see what is truth, lest he should be condemned in his practices, will be left to blindness of mind and to the deceptions of Satan. To the same degree that the penitent and obedient are shielded by God's love, the impenitent and disobedient will be left to the result of their own ignorance and hardness of heart, because they receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved.

There are many who profess Christ, but who never become mature Christians. They admit that man is fallen, that his faculties are weakened, that he is unfitted for moral achievement, but they say that Christ has borne all the burden, all the suffering, all the self-denial, and they are willing to let Him bear it. They say that there is nothing for them to do but to believe; but Christ said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Jesus kept the commandments of God. The Pharisees declared that He broke the fourth commandment because He made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day; but Jesus turned to the accusing Pharisees, and asked, "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus" (Luke 6:9-11).

This miracle, instead of convincing the Pharisees that Jesus was the Son of God, filled them with rage, because many who witnessed the miracle glorified God. Jesus declared that His work of mercy was lawful on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees declared that it was not lawful. Which shall we believe? Christ said, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). Then it is certainly safe for us to follow the way of Christ, and keep the commandments. God has given us faculties which should be constantly exercised in cooperating with Jesus, in working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. {1 Selected Messages Pg. 314}

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 2 Cor. 13:5. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1 Cor. 3:10-13. {Early Writings Pg. 27}

Satan well knows that all whom he can lead to neglect prayer and the searching of the Scriptures, will be overcome by his attacks. Therefore he invents every possible device to engross the mind. {The Great Controversy Pg. 519}

Those who will put on the whole armor of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them. {5T. Pg. 112}