

THE PRESENT TRUTH

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

God's Search for Spirit Worshipers

Upon Uzzah rested the greater guilt of presumption. Transgression of God's law had lessened his sense of its sacredness, and with unconfessed sins upon him he had, in face of the divine prohibition, presumed to touch the symbol of God's presence. God can accept no partial obedience, no lax way of treating His commandments. By the judgment upon Uzzah He designed to impress upon all Israel the importance of giving strict heed to His requirements. Thus the death of that one man, by leading the people to repentance, might prevent the necessity of inflicting judgments upon thousands. {Conflict and Courage Pg. 176}

Like Uzzah, they are attempting to steady the ark which belongs to God, and is under His special supervision. Said my Guide to those in these councils, "Who of the men among you have felt the burden of the cause from the first, and have accepted responsibilities under trying circumstances? Who has carried the burden of the work during the years of its existence? Who has practiced self-denial and self-sacrifice? The Lord made a place for His stanch servants, whose voices have been heard in warning. He carried forward His work before any of you put your hands to it, and He can and will find a place for the truth you would suppress..."Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." {Manuscript 29, 1890}

Cain and Abel erected their altars alike, and each brought an offering. Cain thought it unnecessary to be particular about fulfilling all the requirements of God; he therefore brought an offering without the shedding of blood. He brought of the fruits of the ground, and presented his offering before the Lord; but there was no token from Heaven to show that it was accepted. Abel entreated his brother to come into the presence of God only in the divinely prescribed way. But his remonstrances made Cain all the more determined to carry out his own purpose. As the eldest, he felt above being advised by his brother, and despised his counsel.

Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock, the very best, as God had commanded him. In the slain lamb he sees by faith the Son of God, appointed to death because of the transgression of his Father's law. God has respect to Abel's offering. Fire flashes from heaven, and consumes the sacrifice of the penitent sinner.

Cain now has an opportunity to see and acknowledge his mistake. He may change his course of action, and testify his obedience by presenting an offering precisely in accordance with the divine specification; and He who is no respecter of persons will have respect to the offering of faith and obedience.

The Lord was not ignorant of the feelings of resentment cherished by Cain; but he would have Cain reflect upon his course, and, becoming convinced of his sin, repent, and set his feet in the path of obedience. There was no cause for his wrathful feelings toward either his brother or his God; it was his own disregard of the plainly expressed will of God that had led to the rejection of his offering. Through his angel messenger, God said to this rebellious, stubborn man: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." "If thou doest well"--not having your own way, but obeying God's commandments, coming to him with the blood of the slain victim, thus showing faith in the promised Redeemer, who, in the fullness of time, would make an atonement for guilty man, that he might not perish, but have eternal life. "And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Abel's offering had been accepted; but this was because Abel had done in every particular as God required him to do. This would not rob Cain of his birthright. Abel would love him as his brother, and as the younger, be subject to him.

Thus the matter was plainly laid open before Cain; but his combativeness was aroused because his course was questioned, and he was not permitted to follow his own independent ideas. He was angry with God and angry with his brother. He was angry with God because he would not accept the plans of sinful man in place of the divine requirements, and he was angry with his brother for disagreeing with him. Satan presents a temptation. The thought that he suggests is a terrible one; will Cain receive it?--Yes; he is opening the door of his heart to the whisperings of Satan. Envious and jealous of the preference shown to his younger brother, he will not hesitate to take his life. Cain invites Abel to walk with him in the fields, and he there gives utterance to his unbelief and his murmuring against God. He claims that he was doing well in presenting his offering; and the more he talks against God, and impeaches his justice and mercy in rejecting his own offering and accepting that of his brother Abel, the more bitter are his feelings of anger and resentment. Abel defends the goodness and impartiality of God, and places before Cain the simple reason why God did not accept his offering.

The fact that Abel ventured to disagree with him and even went so far as to point out his errors, astonished Cain. It was a new experience; for Abel had hitherto submitted to the judgment of his elder brother; and Cain was enraged to the highest degree that Abel did not sympathize with him in his disaffection. Abel would yield when conscience was not concerned; but when the course of the God of Heaven was brought in question, and Cain spoke derisively of the sacrifice of faith, Abel was courageous to defend the truth. Cain's reason told him that Abel was right when he spoke of the necessity of presenting the blood of a slain victim if he would have his sacrifice accepted; but Satan presented the matter in a different light. He urged Cain on to a furious madness, till he slew his brother, and the sin of murder was laid upon his soul.

Some time had elapsed since the death of Abel. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" How true it is that one sin leads to another; and how forcibly is this truth illustrated in the case of Cain!

He seemed surprised at the question, "Where is Abel thy brother?" He had gone so far in sin, had so far yielded himself to the influence of Satan, that he had lost a sense of the presence of God, and of his greatness and knowledge. So he lied to the Lord to cover up his guilt. Cain knew very well where his brother was; and God knew where he was, for there was a witness to the bloody deed.

The spirit of Satan had entered into Cain. Satan was an accuser, and Cain began his evil course by accusing God of partiality and injustice. Satan was a deceiver, and Cain deceived Abel by inviting him into the field when murder was in his heart, that he might do the dark deed in secret. Satan "was a murderer from the beginning;" and he instigated Cain to do the same cruel work. "He is a liar, and the father of it;" and here, too, Cain showed himself an apt and proficient pupil.

Again the Lord said to Cain. "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." God had given Cain an opportunity to confess his sin before sentence should be pronounced against him. He had had time to reflect. He knew the enormity of the deed he had done, and of the falsehood he had told to conceal it. But he was rebellious still. The hand that had been stretched out against his brother was stretched out against God; and had the power been his, he would have silenced the accusing voice of God, as he had that of his brother.

Cain has proved himself incorrigible, and sentence is no longer deferred. The divine voice that has been heard in entreaty and expostulation pronounces the terrible words: "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." In remorse and anguish, but not in repentance, Cain exclaims, as many who have rejected the word of the Lord have done, and will do again, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." {Sign of the Times Dec.16,1886 Part 1}

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired [to have] you, that he may sift [you] as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. {Luke 22:31-32}

God has given us, as His servants, our work. He has given us a message to bear to His people. For thirty years we have been receiving the words of God and speaking them to His people. We have trembled at the responsibility, which we have accepted with much prayer and meditation. We have stood as God's ambassadors, in Christ's stead beseeching souls to be reconciled to God. We have warned of danger as God has presented before us the perils of His people. Our work has been given us of God. What, then, will be the condition of those who refuse to hear the words which God has sent them, because they cross their track or reprove their wrongs? If you are thoroughly convinced that God has not spoken by us, why not act in accordance with your faith and have no more to do with a people who are under so great a deception as this people are? If you have been moving according to the dictates of the Spirit of God you are right and we are wrong. God is either teaching His church, reproving their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work for the past thirty years bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil. In arraying yourself against the servants of God you are doing a work either for God or for the devil. "By their fruits ye shall know them." What stamp does your work bear? It will pay to look critically at the result of your course.

It is not a new thing for a man to be deluded by the arch-deceiver and array himself against God. Consider your course critically before you venture to go any further in the path you are traveling. The Jews were self-deceived. They rejected the teachings of Christ because He exposed the secrets of their hearts and reprov'd their sins. They would not come to the light, fearing that their deeds would be reprov'd. They chose darkness rather than light. "This is the condemnation," said Christ, "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The Jews pursued their course of rejecting Christ until, in their self-deceived, deluded state, they thought that in crucifying Him they were doing God service. This was the result of their refusing light. You are in danger of similar deception. It will be profitable for your soul, Brother G, to consider where the path which you are now traveling will end. God can do without you, but you cannot afford to do without God. He does not compel any man to believe. He sets light before men, and Satan presents his darkness. While the deceiver is constantly crying, "Light is here; truth is here," Jesus is saying: "I am the truth; I have the words of eternal life. If any man follow Me, he shall not walk in darkness." God gives to us all evidence sufficient to balance our faith on the side of truth. If we surrender to God we shall choose the light and reject the darkness. If we desire to maintain the independence of the natural heart, and refuse the correction of God, we shall, as did the Jews, stubbornly carry out our purposes and our ideas in the face of the plainest evidence, and shall be in danger of as great deception as came upon them; and in our blind infatuation we may go to as great lengths as they did, and yet flatter ourselves that we are doing work for God.

Brother G, you will not long stand where you now are. The path you have started upon is diverging from the true path and separating you from the people whom God is testing in order to purify them for the final victory. You will either come into union with this body, and labor earnestly to answer the prayer of Christ, or you will become more and more unbelieving. You will question point after point of the established faith of the body, become more self-willed in your opinion, and grow darker and darker in regard to the work of God for this time, until you set light for darkness and darkness for light.

Satan has great power to entangle souls by confusing the minds of those who do not cherish the light and the privileges which Providence sends them. Minds which are submitted to Satan's control are led continually from the light of truth into error and darkness. If you give Satan the least advantage, he will claim more and will watch the outposts to make the most of any circumstance to advantage his cause and ruin your soul. {Testimonies Vol.4 Pg.229-231}

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