

THE PRESENT TRUTH

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

Two Forces at Work—As Always

At these gatherings we must ever remember that two forces are at work. A battle unseen by human eyes is being waged. The army of the Lord is on the ground seeking to have souls. Satan and his synagogue are also at work, trying in every possible way to deceive and destroy. The Lord bids us, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Day by day the battle goes on. If our eyes could be open to see the good and evil agencies at work, there would be no trifling, no vanity, no jesting, or joking. If all would put on the whole armour of God and fight manfully the battles of the Lord, victories would be gained which would cause the kingdom of darkness to tremble.

None should go to the camp-meeting depending on the ministers or the Bible workers to make the meeting a blessing to them. God does not want his people to hang their weight on the ministers. He does not want them to be weakened by depending on human beings for help. They are not to lean, like helpless children, upon some one else as a prop. As a steward of the grace of God, every church member should feel an individual responsibility to have life and root in himself. All should feel that in a measure the success depends upon them. Do not say, I am not responsible; I shall have nothing to do in this meeting. If you feel thus, you are giving Satan opportunity to work through you. He will crowd your mind with his thoughts, giving you something to do in his lines. Instead of gathering with Christ, you will scatter abroad.

The success of the meeting depends on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. For the outpouring of the Spirit, every lover of the cause of truth should pray. And as far as lies in our power, we are to remove every hindrance to his working. The Spirit can never be poured out upon us while variance and bitterness toward one another are cherished by the members of the church. Envy, jealousy, evil-surmising, and evil-speaking are of Satan, and they effectually bar the way against the Holy Spirit's working. Nothing else in this world is so dear to God as His church. Nothing is guarded by Him with such jealous care; nothing so offends God as an act that injures the influence of those who are doing his service. He will call to account all who aid Satan in his work of criticising and discouraging.

Those who are destitute of sympathy, tenderness, and love cannot do Christ's work. Before the prophecy, The weak shall be "as David," and the house of David, "as the angel of the Lord," can be fulfilled, the children of God must put away every thought of suspicion against their brethren. Heart must beat in unison with heart. Christian benevolence and brotherly love must be far more abundantly shown. The words are ringing in my ears, "Draw together, draw together." The solemn, sacred truth for this time is to unify the people of God. The desire for pre-eminence must die. One subject of emulation must swallow up all others,--who will most nearly resemble Christ in character, who will most entirely hide self in Jesus?

"Herein is my Father glorified," Christ says, "that ye bear much fruit." If there was ever a place where the believers should bear much fruit it is at our camp-meetings. At these meetings, the acts, the words, the spirit of the believers are marked, and their influence is as far reaching as eternity. Transformation of character is to be the testimony to the world of the indwelling love of Christ. The Lord expects his people to show that the redeeming power of grace can work upon the faulty character, and cause it to develop in symmetry and abundant fruitfulness. But in order for us to fulfill God's purpose, there is a preparatory work to be done. The Lord bids us empty our hearts of the selfishness which is the root of alienation. He longs to pour upon us his Holy Spirit in rich measure, and he bids us clear the way by self-renunciation. When self is surrendered to God, our eyes will be opened to see the stumbling stones which our unchristlikeness has placed in the way of others. All these God bids us remove. He says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed." James 5:16. Then we may have the assurance that David had when, after confession of his sin, he prayed, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Ps. 51:12, 13.

When the grace of God reigns within, the soul will be surrounded with an atmosphere of faith and courage and Christlike love,--an atmosphere invigorating to the spiritual life of all who inhale it. Then we can go to the camp-meeting, not merely to receive, but to impart. Every one who is a partaker of Christ's pardoning love, everyone who has been enlightened by the Spirit of God and converted to the truth, will feel that for these precious blessings he owes a debt to every soul with whom he comes in contact. Those who are humble in heart, the Lord will use to reach souls whom the ordained ministers cannot approach. They will be moved to speak words which reveal the saving grace of Christ. And in blessing others, they will themselves be blessed. God gives us opportunity to impart grace, that he may refill us with increased grace. Hope and faith will strengthen as the agent for God works with the talents and facilities that God has provided. He will have a divine agency to work with him. {Pamphlet 130 Pg.11-14}

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