

THE PRESENT TRUTH

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The Fruits of Holiness

Holiness of heart and purity of life were the great subjects of the teachings of Christ. In his sermon on the mount, after specifying what must be done in order to be blessed, and what must not be done, he says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Perfection, holiness,--nothing short of this would give them success in carrying out the principles he had given them. Without this holiness, the human heart is selfish, sinful, and vicious. Holiness will lead its possessor to be fruitful, and abound in all good works. He will never become weary in well-doing, neither look for promotion in this world; but he will look forward to be promoted by the Majesty of heaven when he shall exalt his sanctified and holy ones to his throne. Then shall He say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," enumerating the works of self-denial and mercy, compassion and righteousness, they have wrought. Holiness of heart will produce right actions. It is the absence of spirituality, of holiness, which has led to unrighteous acts,--envy, hatred, jealousy, evil surmisings, and every hateful and abominable sin.

The words of Christ have been plain. "Strive [agonize] to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Professed Christians are not all Christians at heart. There are sinners in Zion now, even as there were anciently. Isaiah speaks of them in referring to the day of God: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil. He shall dwell on high; his defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure."

The people of God are not ready for the fearful, trying scenes before us, not ready to stand pure from evil and lust amid the perils and corruptions of this degenerate age. They have not on the armor of righteousness, and are unprepared to war against the prevailing sin and iniquity around them. Many are not obeying the commandments of God; yet they profess so to do. If they would be faithful to obey all the statutes of God, they would have a power that would carry conviction to the hearts of the unbelieving.

Men and women professing godliness, yet not sanctified by the truth they profess, will not change materially their course of action, which they know is hateful before God, because they are not subjected to the trial of being reprovved individually for their sins. They see in the reproofs given to others, their own cases faithfully pointed out before them. They are cherishing the same evils. By continuing their course of sin, they are violating their consciences, hardening their hearts, and stiffening their necks, just the same as if the reproofs had been given directly to them. In passing on, and refusing to put away their sins and correct their wrongs by humble confession, repentance, and humiliation, they choose their own way, and are given up to the same, and are finally led captive by Satan at his will. They may become quite bold because they are able to conceal their sins from others, and because the judgments of God are not seen in a visible manner upon them. They may be apparently prosperous in this world. They may deceive poor, short-sighted mortals, and be regarded as patterns of piety while in their sins. But God cannot be deceived. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." The life of the sinner may be prolonged upon the earth, yet not in the earth made new. He shall be of that number whom David mentions: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place; and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth."

Mercy and truth are promised to the humble and penitent, and judgments are prepared for the sinful and rebellious. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." A wicked and adulterous people will not escape the wrath of God and the punishment they have justly earned. Man has fallen: and his is a work of a life-time, be it longer or shorter, to

recover from his fall, and regain, through Christ, the image of the Divine, which was lost by sin and continued transgression. God requires a thorough transformation of soul, body, and spirit, in order to regain the estate lost through Adam; and he mercifully sends rays of light to show man his true condition. If he will not walk in the light, he manifests a pleasure in darkness. He will not come to the light lest his deeds shall be reprov'd.

The Seventh-day Adventists who profess to be looking for and loving the appearing of Christ, should not follow the course of worldlings. They are no criterion for commandment-keepers. Commandment-keeping Adventists are occupying a peculiar, exalted position. John viewed them in holy vision, and described them. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." The Lord made a special covenant with his ancient Israel if they would prove faithful: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." And he thus addresses his commandment-keeping people in these last days: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

Seventh-day Adventists, above all people in the world, should be patterns of piety, holy in heart and in conversation. The warnings, corrections, and reproofs are not given to the erring among them because their lives are more blameworthy than professed Christians of the nominal churches, or because their acts and examples are worse than those of people who will not yield obedience to the claims of God's law; but because they have great light, and have by their profession taken their position as God's special, chosen people, having the law of God written in their hearts. They signify their loyalty to the God of heaven by yielding obedience to the laws of his government. They are God's representatives upon the earth. Any sin or transgression in them separates them from God, and in a special manner dishonors his name, by giving the enemies of God's holy law occasion to reproach his cause and his people, whom he has called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," that they should show forth the praises of Him that hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.

The people who are at war with the law of the great Jehovah, who consider it a special virtue to talk, and write, and act the most bitter and hateful things to show their contempt for that law, may make a high and exalted profession of love to God, and apparently have much religious zeal, as did the Jewish chief priests and elders; yet in the day of God, "Found wanting" will be said by the Majesty of heaven. By the law is the knowledge of sin. The mirror which would discover to them the defects in their character, infuriates them, because it points out their sins. But the people who profess to keep the law of God, he corrects, he reprov's. He points out their sins, and lays open their iniquities, because he wishes to separate all sin and wickedness from them, that they may perfect holiness in his fear, and be prepared either to die in the Lord, or to be translated to heaven. God will rebuke, reprove, and correct them, that they may be refined, sanctified, elevated, and finally exalted to his own throne.

Ample provisions have been made for all who sincerely, earnestly, and thoughtfully set about perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Power and strength, grace and glory, have been provided through Christ, to be brought by ministering angels to the heirs of salvation. None are so low, and corrupt, and vile, but that they can find in Jesus, who died for them, strength, purity, and righteousness, if they will put away their sins, stop their course of iniquity, and turn with full purpose of heart to the living God. He is waiting to strip them of their garments, stained and polluted by sin, and to put upon them the white, bright robes of righteousness; and he bids them live and not die. In him they may flourish. Their branches will not wither nor be fruitless. If they abide in him, they can draw sap and nourishment from him, be imbued with his Spirit, and walk even as he has walked, overcome as he has overcome, and be exalted to his own right hand. {Review and Herald, September 7, 1886}