

THE PRESENT TRUTH

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

The Replacement

I call upon you who minister in sacred things to be converted men before you go forth to act any part in the cause of my Master. Now is your time to seek a preparation and readiness for the fearful test which is before us--that holiness without which no man shall see God. Let none say, My way is hid from the Lord; God taketh no knowledge of my ways. Now it may be it is not too late. Now it may be you can repent. But even if pardon is written against your names, you will sustain terrible loss; for the scars you have made upon your souls will remain.

Oh, how can any who have the light of truth, the great light given them of God, defy the wrath and judgments of God by sinning against Him and doing the very things God has told them in His word not to do? How can they be so blinded by Satan as to dishonor God to His face, and defile their souls by sinning knowingly? Says the apostle, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Will these sinners--shall I call them hypocrites?--in Zion inquire, In what manner am I a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men? Answer for yourselves, By my abuse of the light and privileges and mercies God has given me, by unseemly actions which corrupt and defile the soul. Professing to know God, do I put Him out of my thoughts, and substitute an idol? Do I lead other minds to regard sin lightly by my example? Am I a spectacle to the world of moral looseness? Am I a spectacle to angels in indecent actions and moral defilement of the body? The apostle exhorts us: "I beseech you, . . . brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

God's Standard

God has a law, and it is the great standard of righteousness. Everyone who has presumed upon the mercy of God, and practiced iniquity, will be judged according to his works. God has warned you to depart from all iniquity. He has commanded you individually to resist the devil, not to entertain him as an honored guest. The time has come when Jerusalem is being searched as with lighted candles. God is at work investigating character, weighing moral worth, and pronouncing decisions on individual cases. It may not be too late for those who have sinned to be zealous and repent; "for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." This sorrow is a deceptive kind. It has no real virtue in it. There is no sense of the aggravated character of sin; but there is a sorrow and regret that the sin has come to the knowledge of others; and so no confessions are made, except in acknowledgment of the things thus revealed which cannot be denied.

This is the sorrow of the world, which worketh death, and pacifies the conscience, while the sin is still cherished, and would be carried on just the same if there were an opportunity, and they could not be discovered. "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." Here we can see the duty that rests upon the church to deal with those whose course of action is entirely contrary to the light which they have received. Will the people of God take their stand upon the Bible, or will they be worse than infidels, and give arguments to this class to reproach Christ and the truth, because they do not obey the claims of the gospel in faith and obedience by a circumspect life and a holy character?

Those who claim to have the light of truth have not met the conditions on which the fulfillment of the promises is suspended, neither have they been worthy of the grace of Christ. The character and service of the church are required to be according to the talents received. Her faith and obedience should be equal to the amount which a faithful improvement of her light and opportunities would have gained for her in moral and spiritual elevation.

But many--not a few, but many--have been losing their spiritual zeal and consecration, and turning away from the light that has been constantly growing brighter and brighter, and have refused to walk in the truth because its sanctifying power upon the soul was not what they desired. They might have been renewed in holiness and have reached the elevated standard that God's word demands; but condemnation is upon them. Many ministers and many people are in darkness. They have lost sight of the Leader, the Light of the world; and their guilt is proportionate to the grace and truth opened to their understanding, which has been abundant and powerful.

Lift Up the Standard

God calls His people to elevate the standard. The church must show their zeal for God in dealing with those who have, while professing great faith, been putting Christ to open shame. They have imperiled the truth. They have been unfaithful sentinels. They have brought reproach and dishonor upon the cause of God. The time has come for earnest and powerful efforts to rid the church of the slime and filth which is tarnishing her purity. The church of Christ is called to be a holy, powerful people, a name and praise in all the earth. There has been opened a fountain for Judah and Jerusalem, to wash from all uncleanness and sin. There is an astonishing backsliding with God's people, to whom has been entrusted sacred, holy truth. Her faith, her service, her works, must be compared to what they would have been if her course had been continually onward and upward, according to grace and holy truth given her.

In this balance of the sanctuary, the individual members of the Christian church will be weighed; and if her moral character and spiritual state do not correspond to the benefits and blessings conferred upon her, she will be found wanting. If the fruit does not appear, then God is not glorified.

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

A knowledge of the state of the backslider from God seems to be hidden from him. Has the candlestick been removed out of its place? I call upon all who are resting unconcerned in their present state of spiritual deadness, to arouse and arise from the dead, and Christ will give them light. Many rest as content as though the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night were sheltering and guiding them. Many profess to know God, and yet deny Him in their works. They reckon themselves among God's peculiar, chosen people, who have a special, solemn message entrusted to their keeping to sanctify their lives and to give to the world, and yet the power of the truth is scarcely felt or manifested in our midst in zealous work for God. How great is our darkness, and we know it not! The light has not diminished, but we walk not in its rays. {Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers Pg.447-450}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love--service that springs from an appreciation of His character... So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God... And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies. But a change came over this happy state...

Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation... Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone... Now the perfect harmony of heaven was broken... {Patriarch and Prophets Pg.37-43}

God created man for His own glory, that after test and trial the human family might become one with the heavenly family. It was God's purpose to repopulate heaven with the human family. Ellen G. Whites Comments--Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Volume 1 Pg. 1082

The vacancies made in heaven by the fall of Satan and his angels will be filled by the redeemed of the Lord. Review and Herald May 29, 1900.

It is a mystery to me how any can be indifferent and careless in reference to the souls of their fellow-men in these last days. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," says the commandment. Can we do this, and have no special interest in their salvation? There is work to be done for those who know not the truth, just such work as was done for you when you were in darkness. It is too late to sleep, too late to become indolent do-nothings. To everyone the Householder has given a work. Let us go forward, and not backward. We want a new conversion daily. We want the love of Jesus throbbing in our hearts, that we may be instrumental in saving many souls.

No one who loves Jesus can long retain the divine favor, if he feels no burden for sinners around him. If coldness and indifference have crept over your spiritual senses, and your interest for those who are perishing in their sins is decreasing, it is time you were converted. Your best course will be to engage at once in personal efforts to save others. In blessing them, you will yourself be blessed. No matter how heavy the crosses you must bear to do this, the blood and agonies of the Son of God appeal to you to work on, to sow beside all waters. The rich promises of the word of God are for the workers, the good and faithful. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him." "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal."

The Christian has an inexhaustible supply of strength from which to draw, if he will only take God at his word, and with living faith claim the blessings he so much needs. Few have so closely studied the Bible, and contemplated the great work involved in the plan of salvation, that they can comprehend their responsibility to their fellow-men. Those who profess Christ and yet indulge in sloth and indolence know not how many will be lost through their failure to conform to the principles laid down in the word of God. And they know not how many they might have been the means of bringing under the blood-stained banner of Christ, if they had only taken up their cross and followed him wherever he might lead. It is to those, and those only, who are engaged in carrying forward the commission of our Saviour, that the blessed "Well done" will be spoken, and upon whose brows crowns of immortal glory will be placed. {Review and Herald, June 10, 1880}

"Everything in God's world--men and doctrines, and nature itself--is fulfilling God's sure word of prophecy, and accomplishing his grand and closing work in this world's history. We are to be ready, and waiting for the orders of God. Nations will be stirred to their very center. Support will be withdrawn from those who proclaim God's law as the only standard of righteousness, the only sure test of character. And all who will not bow to the decree of the national councils, and obey the national laws to exalt the Sabbath instituted by the man of sin, to the disregard of God's holy day, will feel not only the oppressive power of the Papacy, but the oppression of the Protestant world, who will seek to enforce the worship of the image of the beast." {Review and Herald, March 9, 1911}