

THE PRESENT TRUTH

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

Warmly Engaged to Alleviate Pain

Dear brethren and sisters, the Lord has shown me in vision some things concerning the church in its present lukewarm state, which I will relate to you. The church was presented before me in vision. Said the angel to the church, "Jesus speaks to thee, 'Be zealous and repent.'" This work I saw should be taken hold of in earnest. There is something to repent of. Worldly-mindedness, selfishness and covetousness, have been eating out the spirituality and life of God's people.

The danger of God's people for a few years past, has been the love of this world. Out of this have sprung the sins of selfishness and covetousness. The more they get of this world the more they set their affections on it, and still they reach out for more. Said the angel, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Yet many who profess to believe that we are having the last note of warning to the world, are striving with all their energies to place themselves in a position where it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for them to enter the kingdom. {4bSG 26.2} These earthly treasures are blessings when a right use is made of them. Those who have them, should realize that they are lent them of God, and should cheerfully spend their means to advance his cause. They will not lose their reward here. The angels of God will kindly regard them, and they will also lay up a treasure in Heaven.

I saw that Satan watches the peculiar, selfish, covetous temperaments of some that profess the truth, and will tempt them by throwing prosperity in their path, offering them the riches of earth. He knows if they do not overcome their natural temperaments here, they will stumble and fall by loving mammon, and worshiping their idol. Satan's object is too often accomplished; the strong love of the world overcomes, or swallows up the love of the truth. The kingdoms of the world are offered them, and they eagerly grasp their treasure, and think they are wonderfully prospered. Satan triumphs because his plan has succeeded. They have given up the love of God for the love of the world. I saw that those who are thus prospered can thwart the design of Satan, by overcoming their selfish covetousness, by laying upon the altar of God all their possessions. And when they see an opportunity where their means is needed to advance the cause of truth, and to help the widow, the fatherless and afflicted, cheerfully let them go, and lay up treasure in Heaven.

Heed the counsel of the true Witness. Buy gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and eye-salve that thou mayest see. Make some effort. These precious treasures will not drop upon us without some exertions on our part. We must buy; "be zealous and repent" of our lukewarm state. We must be awake to see our wrongs, and to search up our sins, and to zealously repent of them.

I saw that the brethren who have possessions have a work to do, to tear away from their wealth and love of the world. Many of them love this world, but are not willing to see it. They must be zealous and repent of their selfish covetousness, that the love of the truth may swallow up everything else. I saw that many of those that have riches will fail to buy the gold, white raiment, and eye-salve. Their zeal does not possess intensity and earnestness proportionate to the value of the object they are in pursuit of.

Then I saw these men while striving for the possessions of earth. What zeal they manifested! What earnestness! What energy to obtain an earthly treasure that must soon pass away! What cool calculations they make. They will plan and toil early and late, and sacrifice their ease and comfort for an earthly treasure. A corresponding zeal on their part for the gold, white raiment, and eye-salve, will bring them in possession of these desirable treasures, and life, everlasting life, in the kingdom of God. I saw that if any need eye-salve, it is those who have these earthly possessions. Many of them are blind to their own state. Blind to the firm grasp they have of this world. Oh, that they may see. {4bSG 28.3} "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

I saw that many had so much rubbish piled up at the door of their heart that they could not get the door open. Some have difficulties between themselves and their brethren to remove. Others have evil tempers, selfish covetousness, to remove, before they can open the door. Others have rolled the world before the door of their heart, which bars the door. All this rubbish must be taken away from the door, and then can they open the door, and welcome the Saviour in.

Oh, how precious was this promise, as it was shown to me in vision. "I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." Oh, the love, the wondrous love of God. After all our lukewarmness and sins, he says, "Return unto me, and I will return unto thee, and will heal all thy backslidings." This was repeated by the angel a number of times. "Return unto me, and I will return unto thee, and heal all thy backslidings."

Some, I saw, would gladly return. Others will not let this message to the Laodicean church have its weight upon them. They will glide along, much after the same manner they have, and will be spued out of the mouth of the Lord. Those only who zealously repent will have favor with God.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." We can overcome. Yes, fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we may overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with him. I saw that it was our privilege to have faith, and salvation. The power of God has not decreased. His power, I saw, would be just as freely bestowed now as formerly. It is the church of God that have lost their faith to claim, their energy to wrestle, as did Jacob, and cry, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Enduring faith has been dying away. It must be revived in the hearts of God's people. There must be a claiming of the blessing of God. Faith, living faith, always bears upward to God and glory. Unbelief, downward to darkness and death.

I saw that there have been some peculiar temperaments, who have had their notions by which to measure their brethren. And if they did not exactly agree with them, there was trouble in the camp at once. Some have strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. These set notions have been humored and indulged altogether too long. There has been a picking at straws. And when there were no real difficulties in the church, trials have been manufactured. The minds of the church, and servants of God, are called from God, truth, and Heaven, to dwell upon darkness. Satan delights to have such things go on. It feasts him. But these are none of the trials which are to purify the church, and that will increase in the end the strength of God's people.

I saw that some are withering spiritually. They have lived some time watching to keep their brethren straight; watching for every fault, to make trouble with them. And while doing this, their minds are not on God, nor on Heaven, nor on the truth; but just where Satan wants them--on someone else. Their souls are neglected, they seldom see or feel their own faults, for they have had enough to do to watch the faults of others, without so much as looking to their own souls, to search their own hearts. A person's dress, a bonnet, an apron, takes their attention. They must talk to this one, or that one, and it is sufficient to dwell upon for weeks. I saw that all the religion a few poor souls have, is to watch the garments and acts of others, and find fault with them. Unless they reform, there will be no place in Heaven for them, for they would find fault with the Lord himself.

Said the angel, "It is an individual work to be right with God." The work is between God and our own souls. But when some have so much care of others' faults, they take no care of themselves. Most of these notional, fault-finding ones, would cure themselves of these habits, if they would go directly to the individual they think is wrong. It would be so crossing, that they would give up their notions rather than go. But it is easy to let the tongue run freely about this one, or that one, when the accused is not present. Some think it wrong to try to observe order in the worship of God. I have seen that confusion is displeasing to God, and that there should be order in singing, and order in praying. We should not come to the house of God to make that a place to pray for our families, unless deep feelings shall lead us, while the Spirit of God is convicting them. Generally, the proper place for us to pray for our families is at the family altar. When the subjects of our prayers are at a distance, the closet is the proper place to plead with God for them. When in the house of God, our prayers should be for a present blessing. And we should expect God to hear and answer our prayers. Such meetings will be lively and interesting.

I saw that in singing, all should sing with the Spirit, and understanding also. God is not pleased with jargon and discord. Right is always more pleasing to God than wrong. And the nearer the people of God can get to correct, harmonious singing, the more he is glorified, and the church benefited, and unbelievers favorably affected.

I was shown the order, the perfect order, of Heaven. I have been enraptured, as I have listened to the perfect music there. And after I have come out of vision, the singing here has sounded very harsh and discordant. I have seen companies of angels, who stood in a hollow square, every one having a harp of gold. At the end of the harp was an instrument to turn, to set the harp, or change the tunes. Their fingers did not sweep over the strings carelessly, but the fingers must touch different strings to produce different sounds. There is one angel who always leads, first touches the harp, strikes the note, then all join in the rich, perfect music of heaven. It cannot be described. It was melody, heavenly, divine, while from every countenance beamed the image of Jesus, which shone with glory unspeakable. {Spiritual Gifts Volume 4b, Pg. 27-31}

Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life. {Steps to Christ Pg. 23} As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. {Steps to Christ Pg. 35} We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun. {Steps to Christ Pg. 99}