

# ***THE PRESENT TRUTH***

*Bishop Stephen D. Lewis*

## **Business and Religion**

Especially is it very important that those who have the management of these great branches of the work be men who make the kingdom of God and His righteousness the first consideration. They are not fit for their positions of trust unless they take counsel of God and bear fruit to His glory. They should pursue a course of life that will honor their Creator, ennoble themselves, and bless their fellow men. All have natural traits which must be cultivated or repressed, as they shall help or hinder in obtaining a growth in grace, a depth of religious experience.

Those engaged in the work of God cannot serve His cause acceptably unless they make the best use possible of the religious privileges they enjoy. We are as trees planted in the garden of the Lord; and He comes to us seeking the fruit He has a right to expect. His eye is upon each of us; He reads our hearts and understands our lives. This is a solemn search, for it has reference to duty and to destiny; and with what interest it is prosecuted. Let each of those to whom are committed sacred trusts inquire: "How do I meet the inspecting eye of God? Is my heart cleansed from its defilement? or have its temple courts become so desecrated, so occupied with buyers and sellers, that Christ finds no room?" The bustle of business, if continuous, will dry up spirituality and leave the soul Christless. Although they may profess the truth, yet if men pass along day by day with no living connection with God, they will be led to do strange things; decisions will be made not in accordance with the will of God. There is no safety for our leading brethren while they shall go forward according to their own impulses. They will not be yoked up with Christ, and so will not move in harmony with Him. They will be unable to see and realize the wants of the cause, and Satan will move upon them to take positions that will embarrass and hinder.

My brethren, are you cultivating devotion? Is love of religious things prominent? Are you living by faith and overcoming the world? Do you attend the public worship of God? and are your voices heard in the prayer and social meeting? Is the family altar established? Do you gather your children together morning and evening, and present their cases to God? Do you instruct them how to become followers of the Lamb? Your families, if irreligious, testify to your neglect and unfaithfulness. If, while you are connected with the sacred cause of God, your children are careless, irreverent, and have no love for religious meetings or sacred truth, it is a sad thing. Such a family exerts an influence against Christ and against the truth; and "he that is not with Me is against Me," says Christ. The neglect of home religion, the neglect to train your children, is most displeasing to God. If one of your children were in the river, battling with the waves and in imminent danger of drowning, what a stir there would be! What efforts would be made, what prayers offered, what enthusiasm manifested, to save the human life! But here are your children out of Christ, their souls unsaved. Perhaps they are even rude and uncourteous, a reproach to the Adventist name. They are perishing without hope and without God in the world, and you are careless and unconcerned.

What example do you give your children? What order do you have at home? Your children should be educated to be kind, thoughtful of others, gentle, easy to be entreated, and, above everything else, to respect religious things and feel the importance of the claims of God. They should be taught to respect the hour of prayer; they should be required to rise in the morning so as to be present at family worship.

Fathers and mothers who make God first in their households, who teach their children that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, glorify God before angels and before men by presenting to the world a well-ordered, well-disciplined family, a family that love and obey God instead of rebelling against Him. Christ is not a stranger in their homes; His name is a household name, revered and glorified. Angels delight in a home where God reigns supreme, and the children are taught to reverence religion, the Bible, and their Creator. Such families can claim the promise: "Them that honor Me I will honor." As from such a home the father goes forth to his daily duties, it is with a spirit softened and subdued by converse with God. He is a Christian, not only in his profession, but in trade, in all his business relations. He does his work with fidelity, knowing that the eye of God is upon him.

In the church his voice is not silent. He has words of gratitude and encouragement to utter; for he is a growing Christian, with a fresh experience every day. He is a helpful, active worker in the church, laboring for the glory of God and the salvation of his fellow men. He would feel condemned and guilty before God were he to neglect to attend public worship, thus failing to improve the privileges that would enable him to do better and more effective service in the cause of truth.

God is not glorified when influential men make themselves mere businessmen, ignoring their eternal interests, that are so much more enduring, so much more noble and elevated, than the temporal. Where should the greatest tact and skill be exercised, if not upon those

things that are imperishable, as enduring as eternity? Brethren, develop your talent in the direction of serving the Lord; manifest as much tact and ability in working for the upbuilding of the cause of Christ as you do in worldly enterprises.

There is, I am sorry to say, a great want of earnestness and interest in spiritual things on the part of the heads of many families. There are some who are seldom found in the house of worship. They make one excuse, then another, and still another, for their absence; but the real reason is that their hearts are not religiously inclined. A spirit of devotion is not cultivated in the family. The children are not brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These men are not what God would have them. They have no living connection with Him; they are purely businessmen. They have not a conciliatory spirit; there is such a lack of meekness, kindness, and courtesy in their deportment that their motives are misconstrued, and the good they really do possess is evil spoken of. If they could realize how offensive their course is in the sight of God, they would make a change.

The work of God should be carried forward by men who have a daily, living experience in the religion of Christ. "Without Me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." None of us are beyond the power of temptation. All who are connected with our institutions, our conferences, and our missionary enterprises may ever have the assurance that they have a powerful foe, whose constant aim is to separate them from Christ, their strength. The more responsible the position they occupy, the more fierce will be Satan's attacks; for he knows that if he can move them to take an objectionable course, others will follow their example. But those who are continually learning in the school of Christ will be able to pursue the even tenor of their way, and Satan's efforts to throw them off their balance will be signally defeated. Temptation is not sin. Jesus was holy and pure; yet He was tempted in all points as we are, but with a strength and power that man will never be called upon to endure. In His successful resistance He has left us a bright example, that we should follow His steps. If we are self-confident or self-righteous we shall be left to fall under the power of temptation; but if we look to Jesus and trust in Him we call to our aid a power that has conquered the foe on the field of battle, and with every temptation He will make a way of escape. When Satan comes in like a flood, we must meet his temptations with the sword of the Spirit, and Jesus will be our helper and will lift up for us a standard against him. The father of lies quakes and trembles when the truth of God, in burning power, is thrown in his face.

Satan makes every effort to lead people away from God; and he is successful in his purpose when the religious life is drowned in business cares, when he can so absorb their minds in business that they will not take time to read their Bibles, to pray in secret, and to keep the offering of praise and thanksgiving burning on the altar of sacrifice morning and evening. How few realize the wiles of the archdeceiver! how many are ignorant of his devices! When our brethren voluntarily absent themselves from religious meetings, when God is not thought of and revered, when He is not chosen as their counselor and their strong tower of defense, how soon secular thoughts and wicked unbelief come in, and vain confidence and philosophy take the place of humble, trusting faith. Often temptations are cherished as the voice of the True Shepherd because men have separated themselves from Jesus. They cannot be safe a moment unless right principles are cherished in the heart and carried into every business transaction.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Such a promise is of more value than gold or silver. If with a humble heart you seek divine guidance in every trouble and perplexity, His word is pledged that a gracious answer will be given you. And His word can never fail. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His word will never pass away. Trust in the Lord, and you will never be confounded or ashamed. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."

Whatever position in life we may occupy, whatever our business, we must be humble enough to feel our need of help; we must lean implicitly on the teachings of God's word, acknowledge His providence in all things, and be faithful in pouring out our souls in prayer. Lean to your own understanding, dear brethren, as you make your way through the world, and you will reap sorrow and disappointment. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and He will guide your steps in wisdom, and your interests will be safe for this world and for the next. You need light and knowledge. You will take counsel either of God or your own heart; you will walk in the sparks of your own kindling, or will gather to yourself divine light from the Sun of Righteousness.

Do not act from motives of policy. The great danger of our businessmen and those in responsible positions is that they will be turned from Christ to secure some help aside from Him. Peter would not have been left to show such weakness and folly had he not sought by the use of policy to avoid reproach and scorn, persecution and abuse. His highest hopes centered in Christ; but when he saw Him in humiliation, unbelief came in and was entertained. He fell under the power of temptation, and, instead of showing his fidelity in a crisis, he wickedly denied his Lord.

For the sake of making money, many divorce themselves from God and ignore their eternal interests. They pursue the same course as the scheming, worldly man, but God is not in this; it is an offense to Him. He would have them prompt to devise and execute plans; but all business matters should be transacted in harmony with the great moral law of God. The principles of love to God and our

neighbor must be carried out in all the acts of the daily life, the least as well as the greatest. There must be a spirit to do more than pay tithes on mint, anise, and cummin; the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and the love of God, must not be neglected; for the personal character of each one connected with the work leaves its impress upon it.

There are men and women who have left all for Christ's sake. Their own temporal interests, their own enjoyment of society and of family and friends, are made of less importance than the interests of the kingdom of God. They have not made houses and lands, and relatives and friends however dear, first in their affections, and God's cause second. And those who do this, who devote their lives to the advancement of the truth, to bringing many sons and daughters to God, have the promise that they shall have a hundredfold in this life and in the world to come life everlasting. Those who work from a noble standpoint and with unselfish motives will be consecrated to God, body, soul, and spirit. They will not exalt self; they will not feel competent to take responsibilities; but they will not refuse to bear burdens, for they will have a desire to do all that they are capable of doing. These will not study their own convenience; the question with them will be: What is duty? The more responsible the position, the more essential that the influence be right. Every man whom God has chosen to do a special work becomes a target for Satan. Temptations press thick and fast upon him; for our vigilant foe knows that his course of action has a molding influence upon others.

We are amid the perils of the last days, and Satan has come down in great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time. He works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; but heaven is open to everyone who makes God his trust. The only safety for any of us is in clinging to Jesus and letting nothing separate the soul from the mighty Helper.

Those who have merely a form of godliness, and yet are connected with the cause in business relations, are to be feared. They will surely betray their trust. They will be overcome by the devices of the tempter and will imperil the cause of God. There will be temptations to allow self to control; an overbearing, critical spirit will arise, and in many cases compassion and consideration for those who need to be dealt with in thoughtful tenderness will be wanting.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." What seed are we scattering? What will be our harvest for time and for eternity? To every man the Master has assigned his work in accordance with his ability. Are we sowing the seed of truth and righteousness, or that of unbelief, disaffection, evil surmising, and love of the world? The one who scatters evil seed may discern the nature of his work, and repent and be forgiven. But the pardon of the Master does not change the character of the seed sown, and make of briars and thistles precious wheat. He himself may be saved so as by fire; but when the time of harvest comes, there will be only poisonous weeds where there should be fields of waving grain. That which was sown in wicked heedlessness will do its work of death. This thought pains my heart and fills me with sadness. If all who profess to believe the truth would sow the precious seeds of kindness, love, faith, and courage, they would make melody to God in their hearts as they travel the upward way, rejoicing in the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and in the great gathering day they would receive an eternal reward. {Testimonies Volume 5, Pg. 422-429}