

THE PRESENT TRUTH

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

The Patience of the Saints

The earnest prayers of this faithful few will not be in vain. When the Lord comes forth as an avenger, He will also come as a protector of all those who have preserved the faith in its purity, and kept themselves unspotted from the world. It is at this time that God has promised to avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them.

The day of God's vengeance is just upon us. The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. Those who link in sympathy with the world are eating and drinking with the drunken, and will surely be destroyed with the workers of iniquity. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry;" but "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Psalm 34:15, 16.

Our own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God, or be cut down by the destroying weapons. Already a few drops of God's wrath have fallen upon the earth; but when the seven last plagues shall be poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, then it will be forever too late to repent, and find shelter. No atoning blood will then wash away the stains of sin.

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book." Daniel 12:1

When this time of trouble comes, every case is decided; there is no longer probation, no longer mercy for the impenitent. The seal of the living God is upon His people.

This small remnant, unable to defend themselves in the deadly conflict with the powers of earth that are marshaled by the dragon host, make God their defense. The decree has been passed by the highest earthly authority that they shall worship the beast and receive his mark under pain of persecution and death. May God help His people now, for what can they then do in such a fearful conflict without His assistance!

Courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to save, do not come in a moment. These heavenly graces are acquired by the experience of years. By a life of holy endeavor and firm adherence to the right, the children of God were sealing their destiny. Beset with temptations without number, they knew they must resist firmly or be conquered. They felt that they had a great work to do, and at any hour they might be called to lay off their armor; and should they come to the close of life with their work undone, it would be an eternal loss. They eagerly accepted the light from Heaven, as did the first disciples from the lips of Jesus. When those early Christians were exiled to mountains and deserts, when left in dungeons to die with hunger, cold, and torture, when martyrdom seemed the only way out of their distress, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ, who was crucified for them. Their worthy example will be a comfort and encouragement to the people of God who will be brought into the time of trouble such as never was.

Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom, should have acted their faith. They should have commanded their households after them, that by a well-ordered family they might present to the world the influence of the truth upon the human heart.

Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul-temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

We are too easily satisfied with our attainments. We feel rich and increased with goods, and know not that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:17. Now is the time to heed the admonition of the True Witness: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Verse 18.

In this life we must meet fiery trials and make costly sacrifices, but the peace of Christ is the reward. There has been so little self-denial, so little suffering for Christ's sake, that the cross is almost entirely forgotten. We must be partakers with Christ of His sufferings, if we would sit down in triumph with Him on His throne. So long as we choose the easy path of self-indulgence, and are frightened at self-denial, our faith will never become firm, and we cannot know the peace of Jesus, nor the joy that comes through conscious victory. The most exalted of the redeemed host that stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, clad in white, know the conflict of overcoming, for they have come up through great tribulation. Those who have yielded to circumstances rather than engage

in this conflict, will not know how to stand in that day when anguish will be upon every soul, when, though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in the land, they could save neither son nor daughter, for everyone must deliver his soul by his own righteousness.

No one need say that his case is hopeless, that he cannot live the life of a Christian. Ample provision is made by the death of Christ for every soul. Jesus is our ever-present help in time of need. Only call upon Him in faith, and He has promised to hear and answer your petitions. Oh, for living, active, faith! We need it; we must have it, or we shall faint and fail in the day of trial. The darkness that will then rest upon our path must not discourage us, or drive us to despair. It is the veil with which God covers His glory when He comes to impart rich blessings. We should know this by our past experience. In that day when God has a controversy with His people, this experience will be a source of comfort and hope.

It is now that we must keep ourselves and our children unspotted from the world. It is now that we must wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is now that we must overcome pride, passion, and spiritual slothfulness. It is now that we must awake, and make determined effort for symmetry of character. "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Hebrews 4:7. We are in a most trying position, waiting, watching for our Lord's appearing. The world is in darkness. "But ye, brethren," says Paul, "are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." 1 Thessalonians 5:4. It is ever God's purpose to bring light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, and rest out of weariness, for the waiting, longing soul.

What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world, are receiving the worldly mold, and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth,--these are receiving the heavenly mold, and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth, and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.

Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God,--candidates for heaven. Search the Scriptures for yourselves, that you may understand the fearful solemnity of the present hour. {Christian Experience and Teachings Pg. 187-191 }

The books of record in Heaven, in which the names and the deeds of men are registered, are to determine the decisions of the Judgment. Says the prophet Daniel, "The Judgment was set, and the books were opened." The Revelator, describing the same scene, adds, "Another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." REV. 20:12.

The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God. Jesus bade his disciples, "Rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven." LUKE 10:20. Paul speaks of his faithful fellow-workers, "whose names are in the book of life." PHIL. 4:3. Daniel, looking down to "a time of trouble, such as never was," declares that God's people shall be delivered, "everyone that shall be found written in the book." DAN. 12:1. And the Revelator says that those only shall enter the city of God whose names "are written in the Lamb's book of life." REV. 21:27.

"A book of remembrance" is written before God, in which are recorded the good deeds of "them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." MAL. 3:16. Their words of faith, their acts of love, are registered in Heaven. Nehemiah refers to this when he says, "Remember me, O my God, . . . and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God." NEH. 13:14. In the book of God's remembrance every deed of righteousness is immortalized. There every temptation resisted, every evil overcome, every word of tender pity expressed, is faithfully chronicled. And every act of sacrifice, every suffering and sorrow endured for Christ's sake, is recorded. Says the psalmist. "Thou tellest my wanderings. Put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?" PS. 56:8.

There is a record also of the sins of men. "For God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." ECCL. 12:14. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment." Said the Saviour, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." MATT. 13:36,37. The secret purposes and motives appears in the unerring register; for God "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." 1 COR. 4:5. "Behold, it is written before me, . . . your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord." ISA. 65:6, 7.

Every man's work passes in review before God, and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of Heaven is entered, with terrible exactness, every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel.

The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the Judgment. Says the wise man: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into Judgment." ECCL. 12:13, 14. The apostle James admonishes his brethren, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." JAMES 2:12. {The Great Controversy Pg. 480-482 }

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