

"UNTIL THE LORD COME."

"Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." – 1 Cor. 4:5.

The teaching of the Apostle here is parallel to that of our Lord in his parable of the wheat and the tares. (Matt. 13:24-30,36-43.) When the zealous servant in the parable inquired, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them [the tares] up?" the Lord answered, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together *until the harvest*: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers,* Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

All through the Gospel age the wheat and tares have grown together, and only the Lord, who could read the hearts, could distinguish between them with unerring precision. But both the Lord and the Apostle, in the above Scriptures, indicate a difference in the time of harvest, and show that it will then be possible for the faithful saints to judge also. With this thought in view, they are told to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come."

And now the day of the Lord has come: we are now living in the days of the *parousia* (presence) of the Son of Man – "the Lord of the harvest," "having on his head a golden crown [divine authority] and in his hand [in his power] a sharp sickle" – the sickle of present truth, the clear unfolding of the "Word of God [which] is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

(Heb. 4:12; Matt. 9:38; Rev. 14:14.) And he is sending forth such "laborers," "angels" or "messengers" into this harvest as he sent forth into the harvest of the Jewish age, viz., his consecrated and faithful disciples, bearing the harvest message – the now fully revealed plan of God and its appointed times and seasons.

The truth thus sent forth is doing its appointed work. Like a magnet, it gathers to itself all who have an affinity for it. Thrust it in wherever you will, it will invariably accomplish its work of finding the loyal and faithful. And we can readily judge, from this affinity for the magnet, who are at heart true and loyal and faithful to the Lord. "My sheep hear my voice," said the Master, "and I know them, and they follow me;...for they *know* my voice [they are able to recognize his voice of truth]: and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:27,4,5.) Again he says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: *the word that I have spoken*, the same shall judge him *in the last day*." – John 12:48. [R1362 : page 36]

Thus, in this last day, the harvest of the age, this day of the Lord's invisible presence in the world, the truth concerning the divine plan, which he has been revealing since 1874, and which is now being widely testified for the sealing of the elect, is doing its separating work; and the saints, who understand the present situation and watch with interest the progress of the harvest work, can see clearly where the lines of judgment are drawn between the faithful and the unfaithful. And often with astonishment they mark the divisions which the truth makes when some prominent church-member, whom they had always judged to be faithful and true, manifests no affinity for the truth, but turns from it and hugs the error more tightly than ever; or, when some other one, touched by the power of the truth, awakes to earnest self-sacrifice in its service.

"Judge nothing before the time." How could we have judged before this time as to whose hearts were loyal and true? But now, in this day of the Lord's presence, when the magnet of divine truth makes manifest those who have and those who have not an affinity for it – those who refuse to recognize the voice of the "Good Shepherd" and will not follow his leading, and who flee not from the voice of strangers, but hearken to and follow them – it becomes our duty, as well as our privilege, to judge who is on the Lord's side and who is against him; for, says the Master, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." – Matt. 12:30.

"Judge nothing *before* the time, until the Lord come;" but then let your spiritual senses be exercised in observing and marking the heretofore hidden things which the truth, in its effects, is bringing to light. See how it is bringing to light the hitherto covered deformities of the various creeds. Where is the intelligent Calvinist to-day who would not like to bury his creed sea deep, and forever hush this wrangle that has been exposing its deformity for a few years past? And where is the intelligent Armenian that is not trembling lest his turn may come next? Everything is being dragged to the light, whether men are willing or not; for every hidden thing must be revealed. And not only the hidden things of creeds and systems of error and iniquity, but also the hidden things of individual character; "for there is *nothing* covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." (Luke 12:2,3.) Ah! it is the day of reckoning with the Church, and "the Lord hath a controversy with his people." And this controversy, this reckoning, is not merely with the Church-nominal in its great sectarian branches; but in a special sense it is with those who have escaped from the bondage of error and sectarianism, and who, because faithful to their consciences and the truths brought to

their attention, have been served by the Master with present truth as "meat in due season" (Luke 12:37), and who have been permitted to enter into some of the "deep things" of God's plan.

The world has not yet come into this judgment: its reckoning is yet future; but ours is now upon us. We, to whom the testimony of divine truth has been borne, before whose mental vision the whole plan of God with all its specifications has been spread out and carefully explained, now stand on trial, yea, under the final tests of that trial which is either to prove or disprove our worthiness to enter into the promised reward of the faithful. Many, as predicted (Psa. 91:7), are proving unworthy, and some still stand. And among those whom we fellowship and bid God-speed as faithful brethren in Christ, it is our duty to judge as to whether they are still faithful when the magnet of truth makes their judgment so manifest in this day of the Lord; for it is written (2 John 10:11) "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Here is a responsibility with reference to our endorsement of another which we cannot ignore and still be faithful; and except we judge of one's course by his fidelity or infidelity to the truth, we shall be endorsing error **[R1362 : page 37]** quite as often as truth. It is our privilege to know the truth and to hold it firmly and to be faithful to it to the end; and if we so abide and walk in the light we will quickly know when one has turned away from the light into darkness, and will be able to render wholesome counsel and warning to such, and to help those who still retain enough of the spirit of meekness to accept the proffered assistance. But, if such a one still pursue the path of darkness and call it light, thus deceiving himself and others, we cannot further endorse him and be guiltless. To do so is to add our influence in some measure, at least, to the error and in opposition to the truth, and thus to become partaker of his evil deeds.

The necessity for this careful discrimination and jealous guarding of the truth in these last days is very manifest, both from the warnings of the Scriptures and from observation of their fulfilment. "In the last days," says the Apostle, "perilous times shall come." (2 Tim. 3:1.) Why? Because the prince of darkness will make every possible effort to retain his power and dominion; and ignorance, error and superstition are his strongholds. He first used all his power to keep men in ignorance and to foster superstition. But now God's due time has come for knowledge to be increased (Dan. 12:4), and the Millennial dawn is breaking; and not only the Church but the world is now waking up and beginning to think. So the policy of Satan now is to devise plausible counterfeits of the truth whereby to entrap and mislead those who have been making progress in the knowledge of the divine plan. As, in the beginning of our Lord's ministry at his first advent, Satan's efforts were concentrated upon the one object of causing him to stumble, thereby to nip the divine plan in the bud, and during the Gospel age the consecrated members of the body of Christ have been specially opposed and beset by him, so now his efforts are concentrated specially upon the last members of that body, "the feet of him," who are running the race for the prize of the high calling. It is for this cause that so many new and plausible forms of error have been brought forward within this harvest period. Satan is using every effort to thwart God's plan and to stumble the feet. And God even more than permits this: **[R1363 : page 37]** he encourages it by *sending* these strong delusions of Satan among his professed followers – at the same time assuring all who at heart are faithful to his Word and to their covenant of self-sacrifice that they need fear no evil, for he will be with them and uphold them though a thousand fall at their side.

Ever since the plan of God has been made manifest to the saints, the delusions of error have been rapidly multiplying. This was foretold by the Apostle who, referring to our Lord's second coming, said, "And then shall that wicked [the Man of Sin] be

revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the bright-shining of his presence, whose *parousia* [Christ's presence] is with [or accompanied by] the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they might all be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thes. 2:8-12.) One after another the deluded ones who have fallen into the various snares set for their feet have become active advocates of the several causes they have espoused since they departed from the truth, and are advanced by the adversary as teachers, angels or messengers of new light. They never seem to realize that they have gone into darkness, but imagine they have made great strides of progress in the light. This is because they have been overcome by the strong delusions of this evil day. They verily mistake the darkness for the light, the error for **[R1363 : page 38]** the truth. But, though they be cast thus into the outer darkness of the world and of the nominal professor, thank God, we can now see that by and by the shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness in the Millennial morning shall open all the error-blinded eyes to the full and glorious Truth, though too late to assist any to win the great prize of joint-heirship in the Kingdom.

*The words, "Even him," here supplied by the translators, and not in the original text, as indicated by the italics, tend to obscure the sense of this passage.

+The Greek word "*kata*," rendered "after" in the common version, should here be rendered "with," as the same word is rendered in Mark 1:27; 1 Cor. 2:1; Eph. 6:6.

++Greek *adikia* should here be rendered *untruth* or *error* because contrasted with *truth*.

However, none are ever permitted to be thus overcome who have not in some way been unfaithful to the truth and hence unworthy of it. Upon all such God has said he would send the strong delusion, so that they shall believe a lie. The truth being designed for those only who are worthy of it – the elect – all others are bound to lose it. But it is impossible to deceive the "very elect." God will keep them by his mighty power because of their faithfulness and loyalty to him.

The Lord distinguishes between the nominally elect and the finally elect, and so should we. Not all who have accepted of the Redeemer's favor of justification from guilt, and have heard and accepted the high calling to joint-heirship with Christ in his kingdom and glory, will attain that great prize. All such have entered the race as now the nominally elect, and all such are eligible to membership in the glorified Church as the finally elect; but in order to gain that prize they must fulfil the conditions specified when they entered the race – when they in Christ's name and merit made a covenant with God, to sacrifice themselves in his service. In no other way can they make their calling and *election* sure.

It is this nominally elect class that is being tried now; and God is now making manifest the secret counsels of the hearts of his people. He puts us all on guard, too, saying, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" and telling us to take heed that no man take our crown.

How great is the responsibility of our present position before God, the great Judge of all hearts. He has shown us special favor in revealing to us the wonders of his plan and in setting before us the grand prize of our high calling. Thus far we were counted worthy of those favors and eligible to the prize of joint-heirship

with Christ. How worthy have we proved ourselves since receiving this knowledge? Have we received it with meekness and humility and with a gratitude which manifested itself in active service of the truth – in proclaiming it to others and in defending it and standing by it nobly in the midst of all the reproaches hurled against it? Have we refused to compromise the truth to any extent to avoid its otherwise inevitable reproach?

If we are not thus jealous for the truth we are not worthy of it, and some of the deceptions of this "evil day" will surely number us among its victims; for it is in this time of the Lord's presence that Satan is to work so mightily, with great power to deceive and with signs of success and with lying wonders of error. His various schemes will have great success, in comparison with which the success of the truth will seem small; for with these, as with Gideon's band, it will be a time of sifting, and "who shall be able to stand?" But let those who stand girt about with divine truth fear nothing: the Lord is permitting these delusions that they may serve his own wise and benevolent purposes in the separating of the worthy from the unworthy, and for the manifestation of those who are at heart loyal to him.
