

[R1949 : page 54]

## TRIALS OF FAITH – WHY PERMITTED.

MANY are perplexed as to why false doctrines are permitted to annoy and confuse God's people. On receiving the truth and rejoicing in it they seem to think they have at last come to the end of all controversy, and have entered the Beulah land of rest and peace, thenceforth never again to be disturbed. But this is quite a mistake: our great adversary, Satan, is not disposed to let the children of light walk on undisturbed into the heavenly kingdom. Against that kingdom and its establishment, and against all its prospective probationary heirs, he is an inveterate enemy, and his power is not yet bound. The children of light, the heirs of the kingdom, are, therefore, the special targets against which his fiery darts are aimed. As soon as they escape from the kingdom of darkness and begin to walk in the light, they may therefore expect to find snares spread for their feet and stumbling blocks placed in their way. The work is done with subtlety, too, that, if possible, the escaped bird may be deceived and caught unawares. And, as a matter of fact, thousands are so caught, and only a few escape the "strong delusions" of this "evil day" of Satanic wrath and power.

It is a fair and reasonable question therefore, Why does the Lord permit the strong delusions and trials of faith of this evil day, when they actually do overthrow the faith of many and severely test all? To this inquiry the Apostle Paul (2 Thes. 2:10-12) makes answer, saying, [R1949 : page 55] "For *this cause, God*, shall send them [Whom? – Those "who received not the love of the truth that they might be saved"] strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be condemned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Thus plainly we are told that God not only permits, but that he also desires, that the faith of his professed people should be severely tried. And if the thousands fall by these fiery darts of the enemy, it is because they are unworthy of the truth, not having received it in the love of it.

Many indeed receive the truth very much as a child receives a new toy. It is a curiosity, something new, to be enjoyed for a season and then laid aside to be superseded by something else that temporarily pleases the fancy. Or, it is valued as a cudgel wherewith to gain the honors of victory in argument with disputing opponents. Or, again, it affords relief to some from a long imposed bondage of fear of eternal torment, and for this alone it is chiefly valued. They never did enjoy such a prospect, and often feared they were not quite good enough to escape torment and get inside the door of heaven.

All who thus lightly esteem the truth, merely to minister to their selfishness, are unworthy of it; and it is the will of God that all such should lose it. Hence the divinely permitted and desired testing of faith – the strong delusions, which, "if it were possible, would deceive the very elect," – those who have received the truth in the love of it, and not in any mean, selfish spirit. The truth was never intended for the listless, nor for the wicked. The former are unworthy of it and the latter are better without it until taught to use and not abuse the liberty it brings. "Light [truth] is sown for the righteous, and joy [the joys of the truth] for the upright in heart." It is just as well that others, especially the wicked, should remain under the bondage of errors which to some extent control them until the strong **[R1950 : page 55]** power of Christ's kingdom is due to take the control of the world. For this reason God has permitted the superstitions of the past to fetter men's minds, and only in the present close proximity to the kingdom is he allowing some of the shackles of error to be loosened; and in the great time of trouble this will be seen to be the unchaining of the tiger of human passions, which would be disastrous in the extreme, were it not for the strong rule of the iron rod which will shortly command order, and say to the warring elements, "Peace, be still!" To the listless and selfish who are not grossly wicked, the truth is only made to minister to pride and selfishness, and hence it is the will of God that all such should lose it, as they do in pursuance of their natural dispositions with reference to it. But the true children of God love the truth because they have an affinity for it. They love righteousness, they love their fellow men, and desire

to bless and help them. They have large benevolence and brotherly kindness. They are meek, too, and not anxious to make a show of self and to glory over their fellows in argument; nor are they mere curiosity-hunters. When they have found the truth they recognize its value; they prize it and meditate upon it; they view it as a grand and systematic embodiment of the highest ideal of righteousness, love and benevolence. They rejoice not only in its gracious provisions for the elect joint-heirs with Christ, but also for all mankind, as well as in the merciful dealings of God with the finally incorrigibly wicked whom he will mercifully destroy, but not torment. They say, It is just like God: it is the manifestation of his glorious goodness, the reflection of his loving, benevolent, wise and just character. And therefore they love the truth and the God who gave it: they treasure it up in their hearts and con it over again and again; and as they look into it, and admire all its symmetry and beauty, they strive more and more to conform their own characters to the same lines of beauty and seek to commend it by word and conduct to others, that they also may be blessed by it.

This is what it is to receive the truth into good and honest hearts. For such the truth was intended; and it is not possible for them to be deceived by the sophistries of error. They know a good thing when they have it, and therefore hold it fast. They cling to it just as steel filings cling to a magnet, because they have an affinity for it. If you run a magnet through a box of sawdust and steel filings it will come out covered with the steel filings. A little sawdust may rest lightly on it, too, just as some people associate themselves with the truth and with those who hold it very dear; but the sawdust is easily blown off, while the steel filings hold fast. Just so multitudes of those who associate themselves with the Lord's people are easily carried away with a little wind of new false doctrine. And though they do not all disappear with the first breeze, a few more breezes will carry them all away. But the true ones God will not permit to be tempted above what they are able to bear; for he has given his angels a charge concerning them, and in their hands they shall bear them up lest at any time they should dash their feet against a stone.

The angel or messenger thus commissioned may be some well-instructed brother who has studied to show himself a workman approved unto God, rightly dividing the Word of truth, and ever ready to feed the flock of God, or some faithful sister, ever watchful with motherly interest over the lambs of the flock. Albeit, the Lord will always provide for his own elect, and they shall not stumble nor fall.

The one thing for all the called to look to first is that they have received, and that they still hold, the truth in the love of it. Freely imbibe its blessed spirit and live in its hallowed atmosphere; "for, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "Through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth" you are chosen to the great salvation now shortly to be revealed (2 Thes. 2:13.) But the belief of the truth will avail nothing if it be not permitted to produce its legitimate fruit in a good and honest heart – *viz.*, sanctification of the spirit, a complete setting apart to the divine will and service. Let us lay this lesson well to heart, and so run as to obtain the prize of our high calling. "Buy the truth" at any cost of self-sacrifice, "and sell it not" for any paltry present advantage. **[R1950 : page 56]**

### **THE GREAT PYRAMID.**

O mighty structure of a time  
When nations dead were in their prime;  
Whose lines and measurements immense  
Were fashioned by Omnipotence,  
And laid, without a word to check,  
By king and priest Melchizedek!  
What precious symbols long unknown  
Were built beneath thy corner stone!  
How faultless, graceful, every line,  
In those stupendous walls of thine!  
A sign and wonder, heaven-planned,  
For saints, if wise, to understand;  
An altar and a pillar tall,  
To warn, instruct and comfort all,

Who faithful all their talents give  
And, dying daily, die to live.

A witness mute, yet eloquent,  
A marvel and a monument,  
Upreared by hands inspired to prove  
That God Eternal reigns in Love;  
For in thy labyrinths we trace  
His dealings with the human race –  
The path to glory hard to tread,  
The death of those to goodness dead,

The rough hewn narrowness of ways  
That lead to life and endless days;  
The step on step to life complete,  
The Head, the Body and the Feet,  
Of a great following joined in one  
Eclipsing many a dazzling sun;  
The depths unfath'mable profound,  
Without an echo or a sound,  
A symbol of the death of One,  
Our Savior and Jehovah's Son;  
With signs and tokens scattered round  
To prove He burst each icy bond  
Of death the conqueror, conquered then,  
For sinful and believing men;  
The planes and parallels to guide  
His Church elect and faithful Bride.

Its sure foundation solid rock,  
Like faith impregnable. No shock –  
Of 'whelming flood, or raging storm –  
Can shake an atom, or deform  
That towering witness strong, divine,  
To us a miracle – and sign  
Of promised blessings sure to come,

A guide omnipotent to home.

– R. S. FOSTER.

-----