

"ALL DECEIVABLENESS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS"

"The energy of the Adversary, with all powers and signs and wonders of falsehood, and with every deception of iniquity to those who are perishing, because they admitted not the love of the Truth, in order that they might be saved. On this account God will send an energy of delusion to their believing the falsehood." – 2 Thess. 2:9-11 – (Diaglott).

DO WE forget that the Apostle's solemn words apply particularly in this harvest time, and specially to the closing years of the harvest? We are now in the time above all others when we may expect strong delusions, not only upon nominal Christendom, but upon those who have been specially favored with the light of Truth now shining. Should we not expect that the next five years of the harvest would clearly demonstrate the truthfulness of this prophecy by St. Paul?

Some of the strong delusions are apparent enough – Spiritism, Theosophy, Christian Science, Church Federation, the Adversary's means of distracting the hearts and heads of some who otherwise would be Bible students. So far as we understand the prophecies of the Bible, these delusions will have wonderful power upon the world of mankind and especially in Christendom, which will gain power during the next few years. As the Apostle expresses it, these delusions will have their power largely because God's people have not been sufficiently awake to the privileges of Bible study – they have revered creeds rather than the Word of the Lord. They have worshipped and served and sought to be in accord with Churchianity rather than with the Truth. Hence, they are unfortified; they are without the Christian armor which St. Paul urged, saying, "Put on (therefore) the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand...in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand." – Eph. 6:11-13.

But our special thought properly centers upon ourselves and those who, with us, have been favored of the Lord with the illumination of this harvest time. Will all of those who have heard the harvest message and rejoiced in it be safe in this "evil day," or will there be some strong delusions for them also – for their testing, their sifting?

Other Scriptures assure us that the great hour of trial coming upon the whole world must begin with the Church – "with the house of God" – with those professing to be saints. St. Peter implies this when he says, "If it begin first at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" (I Pet. 4:17.) St. Paul gives the same thought, saying of the Church, "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (I Cor. 3:13.) The intimation is that the severity of the testing will come *first* to the saints. In whatever proportion our doctrines include fallacies, errors, in that same proportion will be the severity of our testing. Those whose faith structure contains little of wood, hay and stubble will suffer least; while those who have more of these combustibles will suffer the more.

Be it noticed that all the creeds handed down to us contain many errors and that the test of our loyalty to the Truth was our willingness to renounce these and to replace them with the gold, silver and precious stones of the Divine Word. For one reason or another this matter of confessing error and relinquishing it is a severe trial to many. It tests loyalty to God and his Word. It tests humility of heart. It tests willingness to confess our errors. It tests love for the brethren. However trifling the mistake it requires an overcoming courage to declare it, to renounce it. This has been the procedure for the past three hundred years, as God's people have emerged more and more from the smoke of the "dark ages." Because of these difficulties and tests the

progress out of darkness into the full, clear light has been slow. At every step of the journey Light and Truth have been slandered, opposed, vilified, persecuted, and the advocates of Truth have been pilloried and roasted either figuratively or literally.

Our Adversary, intent upon maintaining his hold upon the minds of God's people, has fought every inch of Truth for the past four centuries. He has made it hot for those whom the Lord has by his grace been leading step by step into the clear light of the knowledge of the glory of God and of his wonderful Plan of Salvation. Shall we wonder if our Adversary still pursues the same course and with still greater vigor than ever – with still more "*energy*" than ever? By no means! We accept his present opposition as the fulfillment of Scripture and we expect no cessation, but rather a further aggressiveness on his part to the end of the harvest.

It is not necessary for us to assume that only the devilish are used by Satan. Satan uses as his agents in opposing the light, in persecuting those who go on in the path of the just, which shines more and more, the very best people he can get hold of. The pathway of the Church shows from the first that the Adversary has succeeded in using good as well as bad men in the accomplishment of his purposes – and undoubtedly the better the man the more acceptable would he be as Satan's servant and the more influential. Note the case of Saul of Tarsus, instigator and assistant **[R4583 : page 103]** in the murder of St. Stephen; note the fact that St. Paul tells us that he acted in all good conscience, and verily thought he did service to God and not to Satan, who blinded his eyes. Note the case of John Calvin, who, with many noble traits of Christian character, was so led astray by the Adversary, so blinded, that he used his high office in Geneva to burn a fellow-Christian at the stake. Doubtless he also thought that he did God service. Note also that scribes,

priests and Pharisees were responsible for the death of our Lord and thought that they did God service. Of them St. Peter says that they did it ignorantly, for had they known they would not have crucified the Prince of Life. And so, doubtless, it is today, and will be until near the close; some, loyal of heart, may be amongst our enemies – slanderers, murderers. Like St. Stephen, let us pray for them.

But we cannot hope thus of all – especially now when the light of Truth is shining so much more brightly and when the Lord is especially testing the loyalty or disloyalty of those professing his name, with a view to their separation and to the determining of their eternal destinies. No doubt some who will be of the "Great Company" will be more or less deceived of the Adversary by the strong delusions of this hour. Such in their blindness and deception may set forth darkness for light and light for darkness. They may do it with great positiveness, but scarcely, we think, with bitterness – anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife – works of the flesh and of the devil.

Is it inquired, why? since this Saul of Tarsus was so bitter? We reply that that great persecutor of the Church had not yet received the begetting of the holy Spirit. He could not, therefore, sin against it and "grieve the holy Spirit of promise." On the contrary, those who will constitute the "Great Company" will all be of the consecrated and spirit-begotten class. All so begotten of the holy Spirit must have the Spirit of Christ. If it be lost the result **[R4584 : page 103]** would not only mean loss of the illumination and going into outer darkness, but also a total loss – the extinguishing of the Spirit of begetting – the Second Death. Let us not forget that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of love – meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love.

Some one has said, "It is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous," because of the facility of human imagination. Similarly it might be said that right and wrong, Truth and untruth, may be so viewed as to change the sentiment almost instantly. Hypnotists act upon this power and so do attorneys. As the case may be, the client will be pictured by the one attorney as the representative of every grace and virtue, and by the opposing counsel the same traits, acts and words may be distorted and a beautiful character be represented as hideous, mean of motive, puerile and false of conduct. Thus the Apostle wrote, "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure." – Titus 1:15.

Your great Adversary's endeavor, therefore, is to poison our minds, to introduce thereinto impurity, anger, malice, envy, hatred and other works of the flesh and of the Adversary. To the extent that he succeeds in poisoning our hearts he alienates us from the Lord and from all those who are in accord with him; and this is his object. He succeeds best through human instrumentalities. We all know that if one dog becomes affected by hydrophobia every other animal is more or less in danger of becoming mad through even slight association – and infection. Thus Satan's "strong delusion" spreads from one to another until many be defiled by the root of bitterness. And to the mind, the heart, once embittered and out of alignment with the Divine view of things, everything takes on different colors and the end of the matter is far-reaching; as the Apostle intimates, "Lest thereby many be defiled."

The embittered or impure heart sees things from its own standpoint. The evil tongue once started may "set on fire the course of nature," as St. James declares; and that evil tongue is itself ignited from Gehenna – the Second Death. (James 3:6.) That is to say, the evil, malicious, baneful, slanderous, back-biter is already himself bitten by the Adversary, and, unless

cured, his would surely be a case of Second Death. And the same rule would apply to all bitten by him. The Scriptures, therefore, continually urge God's people to observe the Golden Rule – to do, to say, to think of others as they would be thought of, spoken of and dealt with. They continually urge upon us the putting away of bitterness, evil-speaking, busy-bodying, that we may the more fully and the more completely put on Christ and be more fully under the control of his holy Spirit of love, meekness, patience, long-suffering and kindness.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17), is the Lord's message. The Lord is not now speaking to those who need to be forced and pounded into proper shape, in accord with the Divine character. He will deal with that class during the Millennium under the New Covenant, when his Mediatorial Kingdom will bring them into subjection forcibly. Now the Lord is speaking to another class of an entirely different disposition: He seeketh such to worship him as worship him in Spirit and in Truth – such as love him and love his righteous requirements of the Golden Rule, and beyond this, the high standard of the New Commandment – to love one another to the sacrificing point, as he loved the Church and gave himself for the Church.

The Lord is now seeking merely the class called – the "little flock" who possess the Lord's Spirit or disposition, and love the brethren to the self-sacrificing point. It is incumbent, therefore, that all who would be recognized of the Father as possessing the character-likeness of the Lord Jesus should resist and put away, mortify, deaden, every unholy, unloving, unjust sentiment, as they would avoid the virus of hydrophobia or of a contagious disease. In a word, while we still urge as always growth in knowledge, we also admonish as always that growth in grace must be proportionate, if we would be pleasing to the Lord and accepted as joint-heirs with Jesus in his Kingdom. Whoever

unkindly, untruthfully, slanderously, wickedly, underhandedly, insinuatingly with others may speak or act towards us, we must not dare to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but "be kind and gentle towards all."

In fact, we must not even entertain an unkind thought respecting those who oppose us, but, as Michael would not speak evil of Satan, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee!" so must it be with us. And here notice the slanders of Satan. His own mind, full of ambition, accredited the Almighty with the same and told Mother Eve that God had forbidden her eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because he desired to keep his human children in ignorance and under mental slavery. He even declared that the Almighty had falsified when he declared that the wage or penalty of disobedience in the matter would be death. As Satan could and did speak evil of the highest dignities, so his followers, misguided by his Spirit, speak slanderously of us. But as Michael dare not bring against Satan an accusation of railing, so let us beware that we do not retaliate upon those who speak evil of us and say all manner of evil against us falsely, because of our faithfulness to the Lord and his Word. A little while and the faithful will all be rewarded.

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