Bracing Ourselves for the Battle

MEMORY VERSE: "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Malachi 3:18).

"Those who claim to have the great power of God can only be discerned by the great detector, the law of Jehovah. . . . The sheep's clothing seems so real, so genuine, that the wolf can be discerned only as we go to God's great moral standard and there find that they are transgressors of the law of Jehovah."—Faith and Works, p. 45.

Suggested Readings: Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 137–148; 449–467; The Great Controversy, pp. 551–562. (At the bottom of this page)

1. DON'T BE SURPRISED Sun, Dec 20

a. What phenomenon is characteristic of the last days? 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 9.

2 Thessalonians 2:8, 9

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: **9**Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

"I saw that Satan was working through agents in a number of ways. He was at work through ministers who have rejected the truth and are given over to strong delusions to believe a lie that they might be damned. While they were preaching or praying, some would fall prostrate and helpless, not by the power of the Holy Ghost, but by the power of Satan breathed upon these agents, and through them to the people. While preaching, praying, or conversing, some professed Adventists who had rejected present truth used mesmerism to gain adherents, and the people would rejoice in this influence, for they thought it was the Holy Ghost. Some even that used it were so far in the darkness and deception of the devil that they thought it was the power of God, given them to exercise."—Early Writings, pp. 43, 44.

"Satan, surrounded by evil angels, and claiming to be God, will work miracles of all kinds, to deceive, if possible, the very elect. God's people will not find their safety in working miracles, for Satan will counterfeit the miracles that will be wrought. God's tried and tested people will find their power in the sign spoken of in Exodus 31:12–18. They are to take their stand on the living word: 'It is

written.' This is the only foundation upon which they can stand securely."—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 16.

2. THE PATH TO ENDURANCE — Mon, Dec 21

a. What is lacking in those who are soon to perish? 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10.

2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10
Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, **10** And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

"Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive."—The Great Controversy, p. 625.

b. Regardless of their profession, what will God send to those who fail to love the truth, and why? 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12.

2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12
And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: **12** That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

"The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord, Satan will work 'with **all** power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;' and they that 'received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,' will be left to receive 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' 2 Thessalonians 2:9–11. Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete."—Ibid., pp. 389, 390. [Author's italics.]

c. For what purpose has God called us and our families—and what duties and challenges does this involve? 2 Thessalonians 2:13–15; Malachi 3:17, 18.

2 Thessalonians 2:13–15
But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: **14** Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. **15** Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Malachi 3:17, 18

And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. **18** Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

"Whether or not our youth who have received wise instruction and training from godly parents will continue to be sanctified through the truth depends largely upon the influence that, after leaving their homes, they meet among those to whom they look for Christian instruction."—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 226.

"Those who profess to believe in Jesus, should ever press to the light. They should daily pray for the light of the Holy Spirit to shine upon the pages of the sacred book, that they may be enabled to comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. We must have implicit trust in God's word, or we are lost. The words of men, however great they may be, are not able to make us perfect, to thoroughly furnish unto all good works. . . . It is through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, that we become laborers together with God."—Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 188, 189.

3. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL — Tue, Dec 22

a. What makes faithful endurance possible? 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17; 3:1-5.

2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, **17** Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: **2** And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. **3** But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. **4** And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. **5** And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

"Paul outlined the baleful work of that power of evil which was to continue through long centuries of darkness and persecution before the second coming of Christ. The Thessalonian believers had hoped for immediate deliverance; now they were admonished to take up bravely and in the fear of God the work before them. The apostle charged them not to neglect their duties or resign themselves to idle waiting. After their glowing anticipations of immediate deliverance the round of daily life and the opposition that they must meet would appear doubly

forbidding. He therefore exhorted them to steadfastness in the faith."—The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 266, 267.

b. What example did Paul set for gospel workers? 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-9
Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. **7** For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; **8** Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: **9** Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

"Men who are chosen of God to labor in this cause will give proof of their high calling and will consider it their highest duty to grow and improve until they shall become able workmen. Then, as they manifest an earnestness to improve upon the talent which God has entrusted to them, they should be helped judiciously. But the encouragement given them should not savor of flattery, for Satan himself will do enough of that kind of work. Men who think that they have a duty to preach should not be sustained in throwing themselves and their families at once upon the brethren for support. They are not entitled to this until they can show good fruits of their labor. There is now danger of injuring young preachers, and those who have but little experience, by flattery, and by relieving them of burdens in life. When not preaching they should be doing what they can for their own support. This is the best way to test the nature of their call to preach. If they desire to preach only that they may be supported as ministers, and the church pursue a judicious course, they will soon lose the burden and leave preaching for more profitable business. Paul, a most eloquent preacher, miraculously converted of God to do a special work, was not above labor. He says: 'Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it.' 1 Corinthians 4:11, 12."—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, pp. 446, 447.

4. BASICS TO REMEMBER — Wed, Dec 23

a. Name one basic, timeless principle that is an essential tenet of genuine Christianity. Proverbs 20:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

Proverbs 20:4
The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. **11** For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. **12** Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

"Misguided souls have taught that the attainment of true holiness carries the mind above all earthly thoughts and leads men to refrain wholly from labor. Others, taking extreme views of certain texts of Scripture, have taught that it is a sin to work—that Christians should take no thought concerning the temporal welfare of themselves or their families, but should devote their lives wholly to spiritual things. The teaching and example of the apostle Paul are a rebuke to such extreme views.

"Paul was not wholly dependent upon the labor of his hands for support while at Thessalonica. Referring later to his experiences in that city, he wrote to the Philippian believers in acknowledgment of the gifts he had received from them while there, saying, 'Even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.' Philippians 4:16. Notwithstanding the fact that he received this help he was careful to set before the Thessalonians an example of diligence, so that none could rightfully accuse him of covetousness, and also that those who held fanatical views regarding manual labor might be given a practical rebuke."—The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 348, 349.

"The custom of supporting men and women in idleness by private gifts or church money encourages them in sinful habits, and this course should be conscientiously avoided. Every man, woman, and child should be educated to do practical, useful work. . . . All should be educated to use the members of their body to some purpose, and God is ready and willing to increase the adaptability of all who will educate themselves to industrious habits."—The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 912.

b. When tempted to despair, what must we recall? 2 Thessalonians 3:13.

2 Thessalonians 3:13
But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

"Holiness will lead its possessor to be fruitful and abound in all good works. He will never become weary in well-doing, neither will he look for promotion in this world. He will look forward for promotion to the time when the Majesty of heaven shall exalt the sanctified ones to His throne. Then shall He say unto them: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' The Lord then enumerates the works of self-denial and mercy, compassion and righteousness, which they had wrought. Holiness of heart will produce right actions."—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 445.

5. IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD — Thur, Dec 24

a. How are we to treat the wayward? 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15.

2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. **15** Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

"We should be warned not to associate with those who by their course of action lay a stumbling block in the way of others. [2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15 quoted.] If he refuses the admonition of the Lord's servants, and follows his own will and judgment under the inspiration of his leader, Satan, he will bring ruin upon himself, and must bear his own sin.' "—The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 912.

"[Paul] enjoined upon the church to separate from their fellowship anyone who should persist in disregarding the instruction given by God's ministers. 'Yet,' he added, 'count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.' "—The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 267, 268.

b. What final hope in this epistle are we to reflect? 2 Thessalonians 3:16–18.

2 Thessalonians 3:16–18

Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all. **17** The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. **18** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. The second **epistle** to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

"We must offer men something better than that which they possess, even the peace of Christ, which passeth all understanding. We must tell them of God's holy law, the transcript of His character, and an expression of that which He wishes them to become. Show them how infinitely superior to the fleeting joys and pleasures of the world is the imperishable glory of heaven. Tell them of the freedom and rest to be found in the Saviour. . . . He alone can satisfy the craving of the heart and give peace to the soul.

"Of all people in the world, reformers should be the most unselfish, the most kind, the most courteous. . . .

"We are to speak the truth in love, trusting in [God] to give it power for the reforming of the life. The Holy Spirit will apply to the soul the word that is spoken in love."—The Ministry of Healing, p. 157.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS — Fri, Dec 25

1. Describe some activity of the enemy of souls in the last days.
2. What happens to those who know the truth, but don't necessarily love it?
3. Explain the secret of Christian endurance.
4. What will always characterize the life of a true reformer?
5. How am I to apply the biblical method of dealing with the erring?

Suggested Readings: Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 137–148; 449–467

Satan uses men and women as agents to solicit to sin and make it attractive. These agents he faithfully educates to so disguise sin that he can more successfully destroy souls and rob Christ of His glory. Satan is the great enemy of God and man. He transforms himself through his agents into angels of light. In the Scriptures he is called a destroyer, an accuser of the brethren, a deceiver, a liar, a tormentor, and a murderer. Satan has many in his employ, but is most successful when he can use professed Christians for his satanic work. And the greater their influence, the more elevated their position, the more knowledge they profess of God and His service, the more successfully can he use them. Whoever entices to sin is his agent.

While attending one of the Eastern camp meetings I was introduced one Friday to a man who occupied a tent with several women and children. That night I was unable to sleep; my soul was deeply burdened. While pleading with God in the night season a vision given years ago at the time when the course of Nathan Fuller was reproved was distinctly revived in my mind. At that time I was shown three men whom I should meet who would be pursuing the same course of iniquity under the profession of godliness. This man was one of the three. As I bore my testimony in the morning meeting, the power and Spirit of God rested upon me; but I did not mention individual cases. Later in the day I felt clear in reference to my duty and bore my testimony, referring to his case as most marked. By this course of action this man was going exactly contrary to the direction of the apostle to "abstain from all appearance of evil." He was breaking the seventh commandment, while professedly keeping the fourth. By his deception he was gathering around him a company of women who followed him from place to place, as a faithful wife would accompany her husband.

As a people, we are looked upon as peculiar. Our position and faith distinguish us from every other denomination. If we are in life and character no better than worldlings, they will point the finger of scorn at us and say: "These are Seventh-day Adventists." "We have here a sample of the people who keep the seventh day for Sunday." The stigma which should be rightfully attached to such a class is thus placed upon all who are conscientiously keeping the seventh day. Oh, how much better it would be if such a class would not make any pretension to obey the truth!

I felt led out to rebuke this man in the name of the Lord and to call upon the women who were with him to separate from him and withdraw their misplaced confidence, for unhappiness and ruin were in the path they had entered upon. The Ledger of Heaven testifies of this man thus: "A deceiver, an adulterer, creeping into houses and leading captive silly women." How many souls he will destroy with his satanic sophistry the judgment alone will reveal. Such men ought to be rebuked and discountenanced at once, that they may not bring a continual reproach upon the cause.

As we near the close of earth's history, perils and dangers thicken around us. A mere profession of godliness will not avail. There must be a living connection with God, that we may have spiritual eyesight to discern the wickedness which is in a most artful and secret manner creeping into our midst through those who make a profession of our faith. The greatest sins are brought in through those who profess to be sanctified and claim that they cannot sin. Yet many of this class are sinning daily and are corrupt in heart and life. Such are self-sufficient and self-righteous, making their own standard of righteousness and utterly failing to meet the Bible standard. Notwithstanding their high claims, they are strangers to the covenant of promise. It is in great mercy that God bears with their perversity and that they are not cut down as cumberers of the ground, but still remain within the possibilities of forgiveness. The forbearance of God is continually presumed upon and His mercy abused. David in his day thought that men had exceeded the boundaries of the long-suffering of God, and that He must interfere to vindicate His honor and restrain unrighteousness.

Mr. ----- is a teacher of doctrines that defile the temple of God. There is scarcely a ray of hope for him; he has deceived himself and deluded others so long that Satan has almost entire control of his mind and body. If his professed robe of righteousness can be torn from him and his vile purposes and thoughts be exposed, so that he will not continue to lead others in the paths of hell, it will be all we may expect.

The warnings of God he first hated and then resisted because they brought his own wicked course to be seen in the light of God's law. It is one of the saddest evidences of the blinding influence of sin that months and years roll on and there is no awaking to repentance. With a firm persistence he has pursued his downward course. He has no bitter feelings of remorse, no dread of heaven's vengeance. If by lies and deception he can cover his sins from observation he is content. All sense of right and wrong is dead within him. A harvest is before him that he will be horrified to reap.

The worst feature in this case is that all his satanic work is done under pretense of being a representative of Jesus Christ. One sinner dressed up as an angel of light can do incalculable harm. Dark and fearful plans are deliberately made to separate man and wife. Said the apostle: "Of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts." These licentious characters even creep into respectable families and by their deceptive wiles and intrigues lead astray the conscientious. Damnable heresies are received as truth, and the most revolting sins committed as acts of righteousness, for conscience becomes confused and stupefied.

This man embraced the unpopular doctrine that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, in order to give to his religious experience a semblance of honesty. Our views have been clearly defined in our publications, but, concealing this fact, he mixed with truth his own defiling heresies and tried to make others believe that God had given him new light upon the Bible. By thus professing to have great light for the people on the Sabbath of the fourth commandment and kindred truths he had to the unsuspecting an appearance of really being led of God. But when once the confidence is gained, he commences his satanic work of wresting the

Scriptures from their true meaning by seeking to show that adultery condemned in the law of God does not mean what it is generally understood to mean. He really tries to make sensible women believe it not offensive to God for wives to be untrue to their marriage vows. He will not even admit that this would be breaking the seventh commandment. Satan rejoices to have sinners enter the church as professed Sabbathkeepers while they allow him to control their minds and affections, using them to deceive and corrupt others.

In this degenerate age many will be found who are so blinded to the sinfulness of sin that they choose a licentious life because it suits the natural and perverse inclination of the heart. Instead of facing the mirror, the law of God, and bringing their hearts and characters up to God's standard, they allow Satan's agents to erect his standard in their hearts. Corrupt men think it easier to misinterpret the Scriptures to sustain them in their iniquity than to yield up their corruption and sin and be pure in heart and life.

There are more men of this stamp than many have imagined, and they will multiply as we draw near the end of time. Unless they are rooted and grounded in the truth of the Bible, and have a living connection with God, many will be infatuated and deceived. Dangers unseen beset our path. Our only safety is in constant watchfulness and prayer. The nearer we live to Jesus, the more will we partake of His pure and holy character; and the more offensive sin appears to us, the more exalted and desirable will appear the purity and brightness of Christ.
In order to cover his corrupt life and make his sins appear harmless, this man will bring up instances recorded in the Bible where good men have fallen under temptation. Paul met with just such men in his day, and the church has been cursed with them in all ages. At Miletus Paul called the elders of the church together and warned them in regard to what they would meet: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears."

He who holds the truth in unrighteousness, who declares his belief in it, and yet wounds it every day by his inconsistent life, is surrendering himself to the service of Satan and leading souls to ruin. This class hold intercourse with fallen angels and are aided by them in gaining the control of minds. When Satan's bewitching power controls a person, God is forgotten, and man who is filled with corrupt purposes is extolled. Secret licentiousness is practiced by these deceived souls as a virtue. This is a species of witchcraft. The question of the apostle to the Galatians may well be asked: "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" There is always a bewitching power in heresies and in licentiousness. The mind is so deluded that it cannot reason intelligently, and an illusion is continually leading it from purity. The spiritual eyesight becomes blurred, and persons of hitherto untainted morals become confused under the delusive sophistry of those agents of Satan who profess to be messengers of light.

It is this delusion which gives these agents power. Should they come out boldly and make their advances openly they would be repulsed without a moment's hesitation; but they work first to gain sympathy and secure confidence in themselves as holy, self-sacrificing men of God. As His special messengers they then begin their artful work of drawing away souls from the path of rectitude by attempting to make void the law of God.

When ministers thus take advantage of the confidence the people place in them and lead souls to ruin, they make themselves as much more guilty than the common sinner as their profession is higher. In the day of God, when the great Ledger of Heaven is opened, it will be found to contain the names of many ministers who have made pretensions to purity of heart and life and professed to be entrusted with the gospel of Christ, but who have taken advantage of their position to allure souls to transgress the law of God.

When men and women fall under the corrupting power of Satan, it is almost impossible to recover them out of the horrible snare so that they will ever again have pure thoughts and clear conceptions of God's requirements. Sin, to their deluded minds, has been sanctified by the minister, and it is never again regarded in the loathsome light that God looks upon it. After the moral standard has been lowered in the minds of men, their judgment becomes perverted, and they look upon sin as righteousness, and righteousness as sin. By associating with these, whose inclinations and habits are not elevated and pure, others become like them. Their tastes and principles are almost unconsciously adopted.

If the society of a man of impure mind and licentious habits is chosen in preference to that of the virtuous and pure, it is a sure indication that the tastes and inclinations harmonize, that a low level of morals is reached. This level is called by these deceived, infatuated souls, a high and holy affinity of spirit—a spiritual harmony. But the apostle terms it "spiritual wickedness in high places," against which we are to institute a vigorous warfare.

When the deceiver commences his work of deception, he frequently finds dissimilarity of tastes and habits; but by great pretensions to godliness he gains the confidence, and when this is done, his wily, deceptive power is exercised in his own way to carry out his devices. By associating with this dangerous element, women become accustomed to breathe the atmosphere of impurity and almost insensibly become permeated with the same spirit. Their identity is lost; they become the shadow of their seducer.

Men professing to have new light, claiming to be reformers, will have great influence over a certain class who are convinced of the heresies that exist in the present age and who are not satisfied with the spiritual condition of the churches. With true, honest hearts, these desire to see a change for the better, a coming up to a higher standard. If the faithful servants of Christ would present the truth, pure and unadulterated, to this class, they would accept it, and purify themselves by obeying it. But Satan, ever vigilant, sets upon the track of these inquiring souls. Someone making high profession as a reformer comes to them, as Satan came to Christ disguised as an angel of light, and draws them still further from the path of right.

The unhappiness and degradation that follow in the train of licentiousness cannot be estimated. The world is defiled under its inhabitants. They have nearly filled up the measure of their iniquity; but that which will bring the heaviest retribution is the practice of iniquity under the cloak of godliness. The Redeemer of the world never spurned true repentance, however great the guilt; but He hurls burning denunciations against Pharisees and hypocrites. There is more hope for the open sinner than for this class.

"And for this cause [not receiving the love of the truth] God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." This man and those deceived by him love not the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness. And what stronger delusion could come upon them than that there is nothing displeasing to God in licentiousness and adultery? The Bible contains many warnings against these sins. Paul writes to Titus of those who "profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily [not openly] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." The ones here referred to are not those who openly claim to have no faith in Christ, but those who profess to believe the truth and by their vileness of character bring a reproach upon it, causing it to be evil spoken of.

"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." "But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."
"These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity," boasting of their light, their knowledge and their love of the truth, "they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error."

In this age of corruption when our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour, I see the necessity of lifting my voice in warning. "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." There are many who possess brilliant talents who wickedly devote them to the service of Satan. What warning can I give to a people who profess to have come out from the world and to have left its works of darkness? to a people whom God has made the repositories of His law, but who, like the pretentious fig tree, flaunt their

apparently flourishing branches in the very face of the Almighty, yet bear no fruit to the glory of God? Many of them cherish impure thoughts, unholy imaginations, unsanctified desires, and base passions. God hates the fruit borne upon such a tree. Angels, pure and holy, look upon the course of such with abhorrence, while Satan exults. Oh, that men and women would consider what is to be gained by transgressing God's law! Under any and every circumstance, transgression is a dishonor to God and a curse to man. We must regard it thus, however fair its guise, and by whomsoever committed.

As Christ's ambassador, I entreat you who profess present truth to promptly resent any approach to impurity and forsake the society of those who breathe an impure suggestion. Loathe these defiling sins with the most intense hatred. Flee from those who would, even in conversation, let the mind run in such a channel; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

As those who practice these defiling sins are steadily increasing in the world and would intrude themselves into our churches, I warn you to give no place to them. Turn from the seducer. Though a professed follower of Christ, he is Satan in the form of man; he has borrowed the livery of heaven that he may the better serve his master. You should not for one moment give place to an impure, covert suggestion; for even this will stain the soul, as impure water defiles the channel through which it passes.

Choose poverty, reproach, separation from friends, or any suffering rather than to defile the soul with sin. Death before dishonor or the transgression of God's law should be the motto of every Christian. As a people professing to be reformers, treasuring the most solemn, purifying truths of God's word, we must elevate the standard far higher than it is at the present time. Sin and sinners in the church must be promptly dealt with, that others may not be contaminated. Truth and purity require that we make more thorough work to cleanse the camp from Achans. Let those in responsible positions not suffer sin in a brother. Show him that he must either put away his sins or be separated from the church.

When the individual members of the church shall act as true followers of the meek and lowly Saviour, there will be less covering up and excusing of sin. All will strive to act as if in God's presence. They will realize that His all-seeing eye is ever upon them and that the most secret thought is known to Him. The character, the motives, the desires and purposes, are as clear as the light of the sun to the eye of the Omnipotent. But few bear this in mind. The larger class by far do not realize what a fearful account must be rendered at the bar of God by all the transgressors of His law.

Can you who have professed to receive such great light be content with a low level? Oh, how earnestly and constantly should we seek for the divine presence and a realization of the solemn truths that the end of all things is at hand and that the Judge of all the earth stands at the door! How can you disregard His just and holy requirements? How can you transgress in the very face of Jehovah? How can you cherish unholy thoughts and base passions in full view of the pure angels and of the Redeemer, who gave Himself for you that He might redeem you from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works? As you

contemplate the matter in the light which shines from the cross of Christ, will not sin appear too mean, too perilous, to be indulged when standing upon the very borders of the eternal world?

I speak to our people. If you draw close to Jesus and seek to adorn your profession by a well-ordered life and godly conversation, your feet will be kept from straying into forbidden paths. If you will only watch, continually watch unto prayer, if you will do everything as if you were in the immediate presence of God, you will be saved from yielding to temptation, and may hope to be kept pure, spotless, and undefiled till the last. If you hold the beginning of your confidence firm unto the end, your ways will be established in God; and what grace has begun, glory will crown in the kingdom of our God. The fruits of the Spirit are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." If Christ be within us, we shall crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." In the near future we shall see these words fulfilled as the Protestant churches unite with the world and with the papal power against commandment keepers. The same spirit which actuated papists in ages past will lead Protestants to pursue a similar course toward those who will maintain their loyalty to God.

Church and state are now making preparations for the future conflict. Protestants are working in disguise to bring Sunday to the front, as did the Romanists. Throughout the land the papacy is piling up her lofty and massive structures, in the secret recesses of which her former persecutions are to be repeated. And the way is preparing for the manifestation, on a grand scale, of those lying wonders by which, if it were possible, Satan would deceive even the elect.

The decree which is to go forth against the people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews in the time of Esther. The Persian edict sprang from the malice of Haman toward Mordecai. Not that Mordecai had done him harm, but he had refused to show him reverence which belongs only to God. The king's decision against the Jews was secured under false pretenses through misrepresentation of that peculiar people. Satan instigated the scheme in order to rid the earth of those who preserved the knowledge of the true God. But his plots were defeated by a counterpower that reigns among the children of men. Angels that excel in strength were commissioned to protect the people of God, and the plots of their adversaries returned upon their own heads. The Protestant world today see in the little company keeping the Sabbath a Mordecai in the gate. His character and conduct, expressing reverence for the law of God, are a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling upon His Sabbath; the unwelcome intruder must by some means be put out of the way.

The same masterful mind that plotted against the faithful in ages past is still seeking to rid the earth of those who fear God and obey His law. Satan will excite indignation against the humble minority who conscientiously refuse to accept

popular customs and traditions. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. Wealth, genius, education, will combine to cover them with contempt. Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals they will stir up the passions of the people. Not having a "Thus saith the Scriptures" to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. To secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for a Sunday law. Those who fear God cannot accept an institution that violates a precept of the Decalogue. On this battlefield comes the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error. And we are not left in doubt as to the issue. Now, as in the days of Mordecai, the Lord will vindicate His truth and His people.

By the decree enforcing the institution of the papacy in violation of the law of God, our nation will disconnect herself fully from righteousness. When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near.

As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy be a sign to us that the limit of God's forbearance is reached, that the measure of our nation's iniquity is full, and that the angel of mercy is about to take her flight, never to return. The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the time of Jacob's trouble. The cries of the faithful, persecuted ones ascend to heaven. And as the blood of Abel cried from the ground, there are voices also crying to God from martyrs' graves, from the sepulchers of the sea, from mountain caverns, from convent vaults: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

The Lord is doing His work. All heaven is astir. The Judge of all the earth is soon to arise and vindicate His insulted authority. The mark of deliverance will be set upon the men who keep God's commandments, who revere His law, and who refuse the mark of the beast or of his image.

God has revealed what is to take place in the last days, that His people may be prepared to stand against the tempest of opposition and wrath. Those who have been warned of the events before them are not to sit in calm expectation of the coming storm, comforting themselves that the Lord will shelter His faithful ones in the day of trouble. We are to be as men waiting for their Lord, not in idle expectancy, but in earnest work, with unwavering faith. It is no time now to allow our minds to be engrossed with things of minor importance. While men are sleeping, Satan is actively arranging matters so that the Lord's people may not have mercy or justice. The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness.

The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon. It is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger. We should endeavor to disarm prejudice by placing ourselves in a proper light before the people. We should bring before them the real question at issue, thus interposing the most effectual protest against measures to restrict liberty of conscience. We should search the Scriptures and be able to give the reason for our faith. Says the prophet: "The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

Those who have access to God through Christ have important work before them. Now is the time to lay hold of the arm of our strength. The prayer of David should be the prayer of pastors and laymen: "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law." Let the servants of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, crying: "Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach." God has always wrought for His people in their greatest extremity, when there seemed the least hope that ruin could be averted. The designs of wicked men, the enemies of the church, are subject to His power and overruling providence. He can move upon the hearts of statesmen; the wrath of the turbulent and disaffected, the haters of God, His truth, and His people can be turned aside, even as the rivers of water are turned, if He orders it thus. Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence. He who marshals the stars in order in the heavens, whose word controls the waves of the great deep, the same infinite Creator will work in behalf of His people if they call upon Him in faith. He will restrain the forces of darkness until the warning is given to the world and all who will heed it are prepared for the conflict.

"The wrath of man shall praise Thee," says the psalmist; "the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." God means that testing truth shall be brought to the front and become a subject of examination and discussion, even if it is through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated. Every controversy, every reproach, every slander, will be God's means of provoking inquiry and awakening minds that otherwise would slumber.

Thus it has been in the past history of God's people. For refusing to worship the great golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up, the three Hebrews were cast into the fiery furnace. But God preserved His servants in the midst of the flames, and the attempt to enforce idolatry resulted in bringing the knowledge of the true God before the assembled princes and great men of the vast kingdom of Babylon.

So when the decree went forth forbidding prayer to any God save the king. As Daniel, according to his custom, made his supplications three times a day to the God of heaven, the attention of the princes and rulers was called to his case. He had an opportunity to speak for himself, to show who is the true God, and to present the reason why He alone should receive worship, and the duty of rendering Him praise and homage. And the deliverance of Daniel from the den of lions was another evidence that the Being whom he worshiped was the true and living God.

So the imprisonment of Paul brought the gospel before kings, princes, and rulers who otherwise would not have had this light. The efforts made to retard the progress of truth will serve to extend it. The excellence of truth is more clearly seen from every successive point from which it may be viewed. Error requires disguise and concealment. It clothes itself in angel robes, and every manifestation of its real character lessens its chance of success.

The people whom God has made the depositaries of His law are not to permit their light to be hidden. The truth must be proclaimed in the dark places of the earth. Obstacles must be met and surmounted. A great work is to be done, and this work has been entrusted to those who know the truth. They should make mighty intercession with God for help now. The love of Christ must be diffused in their own hearts. The Spirit of Christ must be poured out upon them, and they must be making ready to stand in the judgment. While they are consecrating themselves to God, a convincing power will attend their efforts to present the truth to others, and its light will find access to many hearts. We must sleep no longer on Satan's enchanted ground, but call into requisition all our resources and avail ourselves of every facility with which Providence has furnished us. The last warning is to be proclaimed "before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings;" and the promise is given, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The Lord called out His people Israel and separated them from the world that He might commit to them a sacred trust. He made them the depositaries of His law, and He designed, through them, to preserve among men the knowledge of Himself. Through them the light of heaven was to shine out to the dark places of the earth, and a voice was to be heard appealing to all peoples to turn from their idolatry to serve the living and true God. Had the Hebrews been true to their trust, they would have been a power in the world. God would have been their defense, and He would have exalted them above all other nations. His light and truth would have been revealed through them, and they would have stood forth under His wise and holy rule as an example of the superiority of His government over every form of idolatry.

But they did not keep their covenant with God. They followed after the idolatrous practices of other nations, and instead of making their Creator's name a praise in the earth their course held it up to the contempt of the heathen. Yet the purpose of God must be accomplished. The knowledge of His will must be spread abroad in the earth. God brought the hand of the oppressor upon His people and scattered them as captives among the nations. In affliction many of them repented of their transgressions and sought the Lord. Scattered throughout the countries of the heathen, they spread abroad the knowledge of the true God. The principles of the divine law came in conflict with the customs and practices of the nations. Idolaters endeavored to crush out the true faith. The Lord in His providence brought His servants, Daniel, Nehemiah, Ezra, face to face with kings and rulers, that these idolaters might have an opportunity to receive the light. Thus the work which God had given His people to do in prosperity, in their own borders, but which had been neglected through their unfaithfulness, was done by them in captivity, under great trial and embarrassment.

God has called His church in this day, as He called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth, the messages of the first, second, and third angels, He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred nearness to Himself. He has made them the depositaries of His law and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be communicated to the world. The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept the light of God's messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth. Christ declares to His followers: "Ye are the light of the world." To every soul that accepts Jesus the cross of Calvary speaks: "Behold the worth of the soul: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'" Nothing is to be permitted to hinder this work. It is the all-important work for time; it is to be far-reaching as eternity. The love that Jesus manifested for the souls of men in the sacrifice which He made for their redemption, will actuate all His followers.

But very few of those who have received the light are doing the work entrusted to their hands. There are a few men of unswerving fidelity who do not study ease, convenience, or life itself, who push their way wherever they can find an opening to press the light of truth and vindicate the holy law of God. But the sins that control the world have come into the churches, and into the hearts of those who claim to be God's peculiar people. Many who have received the light exert an influence to quiet the fears of worldlings and formal professors. There are lovers of the world even among those who profess to be waiting for the Lord. There is ambition for riches and honor. Christ describes this class when He declares that the day of God is to come as a snare upon all that dwell upon the earth. This world is their home. They make it their business to secure earthly treasures. They erect costly dwellings and furnish them with every good thing; they find pleasure in dress and the indulgence of appetite. The things of the world are their idols. These interpose between the soul and Christ, and the solemn and awful realities that are crowding upon us are but dimly seen and faintly realized. The same disobedience and failure which were seen in the Jewish church have characterized in a greater degree the people who have had this great light from heaven in the last messages of warning. Shall we, like them, squander our opportunities and privileges until God shall permit oppression and persecution to come upon us? Will the work which might be performed in peace and comparative prosperity be left undone until it must be performed in days of darkness, under the pressure of trial and persecution?

There is a terrible amount of guilt for which the church is responsible. Why are not those who have the light putting forth earnest efforts to give that light to others? They see that the end is near. They see multitudes daily transgressing God's law; and they know that these souls cannot be saved in transgression. Yet they have more interest in their trades, their farms, their houses, their merchandise, their dress, their tables, than in the souls of men and women whom they must meet face to face in the judgment. The people who claim to obey the truth are asleep. They could not be at ease as they are if they were awake. The love of the truth is dying out of their hearts. Their example is not such as to convince the world that they have truth in advance of every other people upon

the earth. At the very time when they should be strong in God, having a daily, living experience, they are feeble, hesitating, relying upon the preachers for support, when they should be ministering to others with mind and soul and voice and pen and time and money.

Brethren and sisters, many of you excuse yourselves from labor on the plea of inability to work for others. But did God make you so incapable? Was not this inability produced by your own inactivity and perpetuated by your own deliberate choice? Did not God give you at least one talent to improve, not for your own convenience and gratification, but for Him? Have you realized your obligation, as His hired servant, to bring a revenue to Him by the wise and skillful use of this entrusted capital? Have you not neglected opportunities to improve your powers to this end? It is too true that few have felt any real sense of their responsibility to God. Love, judgment, memory, foresight, tact, energy, and every other faculty have been devoted to self. You have displayed greater wisdom in the service of evil than in the cause of God. You have perverted, disabled, nay, even besotted your powers, by your intense activity in worldly pursuits to the neglect of God's work.

Still you soothe your conscience by saying that you cannot undo the past, and gain the vigor, the strength, and the skill which you might have had if you had employed your powers as God required. But remember that He holds you responsible for the work negligently done or left undone through your unfaithfulness. The more you exercise your powers for the Master, the more apt and skillful you will become. The more closely you connect yourself with the Source of light and power, the greater light will be shed upon you, and the greater power will be yours to use for God. And for all that you might have had, but failed to obtain through your devotion to the world, you are responsible. When you became a follower of Christ you pledged yourself to serve Him and Him alone, and He promised to be with you and bless you, to refresh you with His light, to grant you His peace, and to make you joyful in His work. Have you failed to experience these blessings? be sure it is the result of your own course.

In order to escape the draft during the war, there were men who induced disease, others maimed themselves that they might be rendered unfit for service. Here is an illustration of the course which many have been pursuing in relation to the cause of God. They have crippled their powers, both physical and mental, so that they are unable to do the work which is so greatly needed.

Suppose that a sum of money were placed in your hands to invest for a certain purpose; would you throw it away and declare that you were not now responsible for its use? would you feel that you had saved yourself a great care? Yet this is what you have been doing with the gifts of God. To excuse yourself from working for others on the plea of inability, while you are all absorbed in worldly pursuits, is mockery of God. Multitudes are going down to ruin; the people who have received light and truth are but as a handful to withstand all the host of evil; and yet this little company are devoting their energies to anything and everything but to learning how they may rescue souls from death. Is it any marvel that the church is weak and inefficient, that God can do but little for His professed people? They place themselves where it is impossible for Him to work with them and for them.

Dare you continue thus to disregard His claims? Will you still trifle with heaven's most sacred trusts? Will you say with Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Remember that your responsibility is measured, not by your present resources and capacities, but by the powers originally bestowed and the possibilities for improvement. The question which each one should ask himself is not whether he is now inexperienced and unfit to labor in God's cause, but how and why he is in this condition, and how it can be remedied. God will not supernaturally endow us with the qualifications which we lack; but while we exert the ability we have, He will work with us to increase and strengthen every faculty; our dormant energies will be aroused, and powers which have long been palsied will receive new life.

So long as we are in the world, we must have to do with the things of the world. There will ever be a necessity for the transaction of temporal, secular business; but this should never become all-absorbing. The apostle Paul has given a safe rule: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." The humble, common duties of life are all to be performed with fidelity; "heartily," says the apostle, "as to the Lord." Whatever our department of labor, be it housework or field work or intellectual pursuits, we may perform it to the glory of God so long as we make Christ first and last and best in everything. But aside from these worldly employments there is given to every follower of Christ a special work for the upbuilding of His kingdom—a work which requires personal effort for the salvation of men. It is not a work to be performed once a week merely, at the place of worship, but at all times and all places.

Everyone who connects himself with the church makes in that act a solemn vow to work for the interest of the church and to hold that interest above every worldly consideration. It is his work to preserve a living connection with God, to engage with heart and soul in the great scheme of redemption, and to show, in his life and character, the excellency of God's commandments in contrast with the customs and precepts of the world. Every soul that has made a profession of Christ has pledged himself to be all that it is possible for him to be as a spiritual worker, to be active, zealous, and efficient in his Master's service. Christ expects every man to do his duty; let this be the watchword throughout the ranks of His followers.

We are not to wait to be solicited to give light, to be importuned for counsel or instruction. Everyone who receives the rays of the Sun of Righteousness is to reflect its brightness to all about him. His religion should have a positive and decided influence. His prayers and entreaties should be so imbued with the Holy Spirit that they will melt and subdue the soul. Said Jesus: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It would be better for a worldling never to have seen a professor of religion than to come under the influence of one who is ignorant of the power of godliness. If Christ were our pattern, His life our rule, what zeal would be manifested, what efforts put forth, what liberality exercised, what self-denial practiced! How untiringly should we labor, what fervent petitions for power and wisdom would ascend to God! If all the professed children of God would feel that it is the chief business of life to do the work which He has bidden them to do, if

they would labor unselfishly in His cause, what a change would be seen in hearts and homes, in churches, yea, in the world itself!

Vigilance and fidelity have been required of Christ's followers in every age; but now that we are standing upon the very verge of the eternal world, holding the truths we do, having so great light, so important a work, we must double our diligence. Everyone is to do to the very utmost of his ability. My brother, you endanger your own salvation if you hold back now. God will call you to account if you fail in the work He has assigned you. Have you a knowledge of the truth? give it to others.

What can I say to arouse our churches? What can I say to those who have acted a prominent part in the proclamation of the last message? "The Lord is coming," should be the testimony borne, not only by the lips, but by the life and character; but many to whom God has given light and knowledge, talents of influence and means, are men who do not love the truth and do not practice it. They have drunk so deeply from the intoxicating cup of selfishness and worldliness that they have become drunken with the cares of this life. Brethren, if you continue to be as idle, as worldly, as selfish as you have been, God will surely pass you by, and take those who are less self-caring, less ambitious for worldly honor, and who will not hesitate to go, as did their Master, without the camp, bearing the reproach. The work will be given to those who will take it, those who prize it, who weave its principles into their everyday experience. God will choose humble men who are seeking to glorify His name and advance His cause rather than to honor and advance themselves. He will raise up men who have not so much worldly wisdom, but who are connected with Him, and who will seek strength and counsel from above.

Some of our leading men are inclined to indulge the spirit manifested by the apostle John when he said: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." Organization and discipline are essential, but there is now very great danger of a departure from the simplicity of the gospel of Christ. What we need is less dependence upon mere form and ceremony, and far more of the power of true godliness. If their life and character are exemplary, let all work who will, in any capacity. Although they may not conform exactly to your methods, not a word should be spoken to condemn or discourage them. When the Pharisees desired Jesus to silence the children who sang His praise, the Saviour said: "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Prophecy must be fulfilled. So in these days, the work must be done. There are many departments of labor; let everyone act a part as best he can. The man with one talent is not to bury that in the earth. God has given to every man his work according to his ability. Those to whom larger trusts and capabilities have been committed should not endeavor to silence others who are less able or experienced. Men with one talent may reach a class that those with two or five talents cannot approach. Great and small alike are chosen vessels to bear the water of life to thirsting souls. Let not those who preach the word lay their hands upon the humblest worker and say: "You must labor in this channel or not work at all." Hands off, brethren. Let everyone work in his own sphere, with his own armor on, doing whatever he can do in his humble

way. Strengthen his hands in the work. This is no time for pharisaism to control. Let God work through whom He will. The message must go.

All are to show their fidelity to God by the wise use of His entrusted capital, not in means alone, but in any endowment that will tend to the upbuilding of His kingdom. Satan will employ every possible device to prevent the truth from reaching those who are buried in error; but the voice of warning and entreaty must come to them. And while only a few are engaged in this work, thousands ought to be as much interested as they. God never designed that the lay members of the church should be excused from labor in His cause. “Go, labor in My vineyard,” is the Master’s command to each of His followers. As long as there are unconverted souls in the world, there should be the most active, earnest, zealous, determined effort for their salvation. Those who have received the light should seek to enlighten those who have it not. If the church members do not individually take hold of this work, then they show that they have no living connection with God. Their names are registered as slothful servants. Can you not discern the reason why there is no more spirituality in our churches? It is because you are not colaborers with Christ.

God has given to every man his work. Let us each wait on God, and He will teach us how to work and what work we are best adapted to perform. Yet none are to start out in an independent spirit to promulgate new theories. The workers should be in harmony with the truth and with their brethren. There should be counsel and co-operation. But they are not to feel that at every step they must wait to ask some higher officer if they may do this or that. Look not to man for guidance, but to the God of Israel.

The work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity she will have to do in a terrible crisis under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances. The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith. And at that time the superficial, conservative class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith and take their stand with its avowed enemies, toward whom their sympathies have long been tending. These apostates will then manifest the most bitter enmity, doing all in their power to oppress and malign their former brethren and to excite indignation against them. This day is just before us. The members of the church will individually be tested and proved. They will be placed in circumstances where they will be forced to bear witness for the truth. Many will be called to speak before councils and in courts of justice, perhaps separately and alone. The experience which would have helped them in this emergency they have neglected to obtain, and their souls are burdened with remorse for wasted opportunities and neglected privileges.

My brother, my sister, ponder these things, I beseech you. You have each a work to do. Your unfaithfulness and neglect are registered against you in the Ledger of Heaven. You have diminished your powers and lessened your capabilities. You lack the experience and efficiency which you might have had. But before it is forever too late, I urge you to arouse. Delay no longer. The day is almost spent. The westering sun is about sinking forever from your sight. Yet while the blood of

Christ is pleading, you may find pardon. Summon every energy of the soul, employ the few remaining hours in earnest labor for God and for your fellow men. My heart is stirred to the very depths. Words are inadequate to express my feelings as I plead for perishing souls. Must I plead in vain? As Christ's ambassador I would arouse you to labor as you never labored before. Your duty cannot be shifted upon another. No one but yourself can do your work. If you withhold your light, someone must be left in darkness through your neglect.

Eternity stretches before us. The curtain is about to be lifted. We who occupy this solemn, responsible position, what are we doing, what are we thinking about, that we cling to our selfish love of ease, while souls are perishing around us? Have our hearts become utterly callous? Cannot we feel or understand that we have a work to do for the salvation of others? Brethren, are you of the class who having eyes see not, and having ears hear not? Is it in vain that God has given you a knowledge of His will? Is it in vain that He has sent you warning after warning? Do you believe the declarations of eternal truth concerning what is about to come upon the earth, do you believe that God's judgments are hanging over the people, and can you still sit at ease, indolent, careless, pleasure loving?

It is no time now for God's people to be fixing their affections or laying up their treasure in the world. The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains. And now, instead of seeking expensive dwellings here, we should be preparing to move to a better country, even a heavenly. Instead of spending our means in self-gratification, we should be studying to economize. Every talent lent of God should be used to His glory in giving the warning to the world. God has a work for His colaborers to do in the cities. Our missions must be sustained; new missions must be opened. To carry forward this work successfully will require no small outlay. Houses of worship are needed, where the people may be invited to hear the truths for this time. For this very purpose, God has entrusted a capital to His stewards. Let not your property be tied up in worldly enterprises, so that this work shall be hindered. Get your means where you can handle it for the benefit of the cause of God. Send your treasures before you into heaven.

The members of the church should individually hold themselves and all their possessions upon the altar of God. Now, as never before, the Saviour's admonition is applicable: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Those who are fastening their means in large houses, in lands, in worldly enterprises, are saying by their actions: "God cannot have it; I want it for myself." They have bound up their one talent in a napkin and hid it in the earth. There is cause for such to be alarmed. Brethren, God has not entrusted means to you to lie idle nor to be covetously retained or hid away, but to be used to advance His cause, to save the souls of the perishing. It is not the time now to

bind up the Lord's money in your expensive buildings and your large enterprises, while His cause is crippled and left to beg its way, the treasury half-supplied. The Lord is not in this way of working. Remember, the day is fast approaching when it will be said: "Give an account of thy stewardship." Can you not discern the signs of the times?

Every day that passes brings us nearer the last great important day. We are one year nearer the judgment, nearer eternity, than we were at the beginning of 1884. Are we also drawing nearer to God? Are we watching unto prayer? Another year of our time to labor has rolled into eternity. Every day we have been associating with men and women who are judgment bound. Each day may have been the dividing line to some soul; someone may have made the decision which shall determine his future destiny. What has been our influence over these fellow travelers? What efforts have we put forth to bring them to Christ?

It is a solemn thing to die, but a far more solemn thing to live. Every thought and word and deed of our lives will meet us again. What we make of ourselves in probationary time, that we must remain to all eternity. Death brings dissolution to the body, but makes no change in the character. The coming of Christ does not change our characters; it only fixes them forever beyond all change.

Again I appeal to the members of the church to be Christians, to be Christlike. Jesus was a worker, not for Himself, but for others. He labored to bless and save the lost. If you are Christians you will imitate His example. He has laid the foundation, and we are builders together with Him. But what material are we bringing to lay on this foundation? "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." If you are devoting all your strength and talent to the things of this world, your lifework is represented by wood, hay, and stubble, to be consumed by the fires of the last day. But unselfish labor for Christ and the future life will be as gold, silver, and precious stones; it is imperishable.
My brethren and sisters, awake, I beseech you, from the sleep of death. It is too late to devote the strength of brain, bone, and muscle to self-serving. Let not the last day find you destitute of heavenly treasure. Seek to push the triumphs of the cross, seek to enlighten souls, labor for the salvation of your fellow beings, and your work will abide the trying test of fire.

"If any man's work abide, … he shall receive a reward." Glorious will be the reward bestowed when the faithful workers are gathered about the throne of God and the Lamb. When John in his mortal state beheld the glory of God, he fell as one dead; he was not able to endure the sight. But when mortal shall have put on immortality, the ransomed ones are like Jesus, for they see Him as He is. They stand before the throne, signifying that they are accepted. All their sins are blotted out, all their transgressions borne away. Now they can look upon the undimmed glory from the throne of God. They have been partakers with Christ of His sufferings, they have been workers together with Him in the plan of redemption, and they are partakers with Him in the joy of beholding souls saved through their instrumentality to praise God through all eternity.

The Great Controversy, pp. 551-562.

The ministration of holy angels, as presented in the Scriptures, is a truth most comforting and precious to every follower of Christ. But the Bible teaching upon this point has been obscured and perverted by the errors of popular theology. The doctrine of natural immortality, first borrowed from the pagan philosophy, and in the darkness of the great apostasy incorporated into the Christian faith, has supplanted the truth, so plainly taught in Scripture, that "the dead know not anything." Multitudes have come to believe that it is spirits of the dead who are the "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." And this notwithstanding the testimony of Scripture to the existence of heavenly angels, and their connection with the history of man, before the death of a human being.

The doctrine of man's consciousness in death, especially the belief that spirits of the dead return to minister to the living, has prepared the way for modern spiritualism. If the dead are admitted to the presence of God and holy angels, and privileged with knowledge far exceeding what they before possessed, why should they not return to the earth to enlighten and instruct the living? If, as taught by popular theologians, spirits of the dead are hovering about their friends on earth, why should they not be permitted to communicate with them, to warn them against evil, or to comfort them in sorrow? How can those who believe in man's consciousness in death reject what comes to them as divine light communicated by glorified spirits? Here is a channel regarded as sacred, through which Satan works for the accomplishment of his purposes. The fallen angels who do his bidding appear as messengers from the spirit world. While professing to bring the living into communication with the dead, the prince of evil exercises his bewitching influence upon their minds.

He has power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone, are reproduced with marvelous distinctness. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are enjoying the bliss of heaven, and without suspicion of danger, they give ear "to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."

When they have been led to believe that the dead actually return to communicate with them, Satan causes those to appear who went into the grave unprepared. They claim to be happy in heaven and even to occupy exalted positions there, and thus the error is widely taught that no difference is made between the righteous and the wicked. The pretended visitants from the world of spirits sometimes utter cautions and warnings which prove to be correct. Then, as confidence is gained, they present doctrines that directly undermine faith in the Scriptures. With an appearance of deep interest in the well-being of their friends on earth, they insinuate the most dangerous errors. The fact that they state some truths, and are able at times to foretell future events, gives to their statements an appearance of reliability; and their false teachings are accepted by the multitudes as readily, and believed as implicitly, as if they were the most sacred truths of the Bible. The law of God is set aside, the Spirit of grace despised, the blood of the covenant counted an unholy thing. The spirits deny the deity of Christ and place even the Creator on a level with themselves. Thus under a new disguise the great

rebel still carries on his warfare against God, begun in heaven and for nearly six thousand years continued upon the earth.

Many endeavor to account for spiritual manifestations by attributing them wholly to fraud and sleight of hand on the part of the medium. But while it is true that the results of trickery have often been palmed off as genuine manifestations, there have been, also, marked exhibitions of supernatural power. The mysterious rapping with which modern spiritualism began was not the result of human trickery or cunning, but was the direct work of evil angels, who thus introduced one of the most successful of soul-destroying delusions. Many will be ensnared through the belief that spiritualism is a merely human imposture; when brought face to face with manifestations which they cannot but regard as supernatural, they will be deceived, and will be led to accept them as the great power of God.

These persons overlook the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the wonders wrought by Satan and his agents. It was by satanic aid that Pharaoh's magicians were enabled to counterfeit the work of God. Paul testifies that before the second advent of Christ there will be similar manifestations of satanic power. The coming of the Lord is to be preceded by "the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10. And the apostle John, describing the miracle-working power that will be manifested in the last days, declares: "He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do." Revelation 13:13, 14. No mere impostures are here foretold. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan's agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do.

The prince of darkness, who has so long bent the powers of his mastermind to the work of deception, skillfully adapts his temptations to men of all classes and conditions. To persons of culture and refinement he presents spiritualism in its more refined and intellectual aspects, and thus succeeds in drawing many into his snare. The wisdom which spiritualism imparts is that described by the apostle James, which "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." James 3:15. This, however, the great deceiver conceals when concealment will best suit his purpose. He who could appear clothed with the brightness of the heavenly seraphs before Christ in the wilderness of temptation, comes to men in the most attractive manner as an angel of light. He appeals to the reason by the presentation of elevating themes; he delights the fancy with enrapturing scenes; and he enlists the affections by his eloquent portrayals of love and charity. He excites the imagination to lofty flights, leading men to take so great pride in their own wisdom that in their hearts they despise the Eternal One. That mighty being who could take the world's Redeemer to an exceedingly high mountain and bring before Him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, will present his temptations to men in a manner to pervert the senses of all who are not shielded by divine power.

Satan beguiles men now as he beguiled Eve in Eden by flattery, by kindling a desire to obtain forbidden knowledge, by exciting ambition for self-exaltation. It was cherishing these evils that caused his fall, and through them he aims to

compass the ruin of men. “Ye shall be as gods,” he declares, “knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:5. Spiritualism teaches “that man is the creature of progression; that it is his destiny from his birth to progress, even to eternity, toward the Godhead.” And again: “Each mind will judge itself and not another.” “The judgment will be right, because it is the judgment of self.... The throne is within you.” Said a spiritualistic teacher, as the “spiritual consciousness” awoke within him: “My fellow men, all were unfallen demigods.” And another declares: “Any just and perfect being is Christ.”

Thus, in place of the righteousness and perfection of the infinite God, the true object of adoration; in place of the perfect righteousness of His law, the true standard of human attainment, Satan has substituted the sinful, erring nature of man himself as the only object of adoration, the only rule of judgment, or standard of character. This is progress, not upward, but downward.

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.

To the self-indulgent, the pleasure-loving, the sensual, spiritualism presents itself under a less subtle disguise than to the more refined and intellectual; in its grosser forms they find that which is in harmony with their inclinations. Satan studies every indication of the frailty of human nature, he marks the sins which each individual is inclined to commit, and then he takes care that opportunities shall not be wanting to gratify the tendency to evil. He tempts men to excess in that which is in itself lawful, causing them, through intemperance, to weaken physical, mental, and moral power. He has destroyed and is destroying thousands through the indulgence of the passions, thus brutalizing the entire nature of man. And to complete his work, he declares, through the spirits that “true knowledge places man above all law;” that “whatever is, is right;” that “God doth not condemn;” and that “all sins which are committed are innocent.” When the people are thus led to believe that desire is the highest law, that liberty is license, and that man is accountable only to himself, who can wonder that corruption and depravity teem on every hand? Multitudes eagerly accept teachings that leave them at liberty to obey the promptings of the carnal heart. The reins of self-control are laid upon the neck of lust, the powers of mind and soul are made subject to the animal propensities, and Satan exultingly sweeps into his net thousands who profess to be followers of Christ.

But none need be deceived by the lying claims of spiritualism. God has given the world sufficient light to enable them to discover the snare. As already shown, the theory which forms the very foundation of spiritualism is at war with the plainest statements of Scripture. The Bible declares that the dead know not anything, that their thoughts have perished; they have no part in anything that is done under the sun; they know nothing of the joys or sorrows of those who were dearest to them on earth.

Furthermore, God has expressly forbidden all pretended communication with departed spirits. In the days of the Hebrews there was a class of people who claimed, as do the spiritualists of today, to hold communication with the dead. But the "familiar spirits," as these visitants from other worlds were called, are declared by the Bible to be "the spirits of devils." (Compare Numbers 25:1-3; Psalm 106:28; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 16:14.) The work of dealing with familiar spirits was pronounced an abomination to the Lord, and was solemnly forbidden under penalty of death. Leviticus 19:31; 20:27. The very name of witchcraft is now held in contempt. The claim that men can hold intercourse with evil spirits is regarded as a fable of the Dark Ages. But spiritualism, which numbers its converts by hundreds of thousands, yea, by millions, which has made its way into scientific circles, which has invaded churches, and has found favor in legislative bodies, and even in the courts of kings—this mammoth deception is but a revival, in a new disguise, of the witchcraft condemned and prohibited of old.

If there were no other evidence of the real character of spiritualism, it should be enough for the Christian that the spirits make no difference between righteousness and sin, between the noblest and purest of the apostles of Christ and the most corrupt of the servants of Satan. By representing the basest of men as in heaven, and highly exalted there, Satan says to the world: "No matter how wicked you are; no matter whether you believe or disbelieve God and the Bible. Live as you please; heaven is your home." The spiritualist teachers virtually declare: "Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Malachi 2:17. Saith the word of God: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness." Isaiah 5:20.

The apostles, as personated by these lying spirits, are made to contradict what they wrote at the dictation of the Holy Spirit when on earth. They deny the divine origin of the Bible, and thus tear away the foundation of the Christian's hope and put out the light that reveals the way to heaven. Satan is making the world believe that the Bible is a mere fiction, or at least a book suited to the infancy of the race, but now to be lightly regarded, or cast aside as obsolete. And to take the place of the word of God he holds out spiritual manifestations. Here is a channel wholly under his control; by this means he can make the world believe what he will. The Book that is to judge him and his followers he puts in the shade, just where he wants it; the Saviour of the world he makes to be no more than a common man. And as the Roman guard that watched the tomb of Jesus spread the lying report which the priests and elders put into their mouths to disprove His resurrection, so do the believers in spiritual manifestations try to make it appear that there is nothing miraculous in the circumstances of our Saviour's life. After thus seeking to put Jesus in the background, they call attention to their own miracles, declaring that these far exceed the works of Christ.

It is true that spiritualism is now changing its form and, veiling some of its more objectionable features, is assuming a Christian guise. But its utterances from the platform and the press have been before the public for many years, and in these its real character stands revealed. These teachings cannot be denied or hidden.

Even in its present form, so far from being more worthy of toleration than formerly, it is really a more dangerous, because a more subtle, deception. While it formerly denounced Christ and the Bible, it now professes to accept both. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight. The people are taught to regard the Decalogue as a dead letter. Pleasing, bewitching fables captivate the senses and lead men to reject the Bible as the foundation of their faith. Christ is as verily denied as before; but Satan has so blinded the eyes of the people that the deception is not discerned.

There are few who have any just conception of the deceptive power of spiritualism and the danger of coming under its influence. Many tamper with it merely to gratify their curiosity. They have no real faith in it and would be filled with horror at the thought of yielding themselves to the spirits' control. But they venture upon the forbidden ground, and the mighty destroyer exercises his power upon them against their will. Let them once be induced to submit their minds to his direction, and he holds them captive. It is impossible, in their own strength, to break away from the bewitching, alluring spell. Nothing but the power of God, granted in answer to the earnest prayer of faith, can deliver these ensnared souls.

All who indulge sinful traits of character, or willfully cherish a known sin, are inviting the temptations of Satan. They separate themselves from God and from the watchcare of His angels; as the evil one presents his deceptions, they are without defense and fall an easy prey. Those who thus place themselves in his power little realize where their course will end. Having achieved their overthrow, the tempter will employ them as his agents to lure others to ruin.

Says the prophet Isaiah: "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:19, 20. If men had been willing to receive the truth so plainly stated in the Scriptures concerning the nature of man and the state of the dead, they would see in the claims and manifestations of spiritualism the working of Satan with power and signs and lying wonders. But rather than yield the liberty so agreeable to the carnal heart, and renounce the sins which they love, multitudes close their eyes to the light and walk straight on, regardless of warnings, while Satan weaves his snares about them, and they become his prey. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," therefore "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11.

Those who oppose the teachings of spiritualism are assailing, not men alone, but Satan and his angels. They have entered upon a contest against principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places. Satan will not yield one inch of ground except as he is driven back by the power of heavenly messengers. The people of God should be able to meet him, as did our Saviour, with the words: "It is written."

Satan can quote Scripture now as in the days of Christ, and he will pervert its teachings to sustain his delusions. Those who would stand in this time of peril must understand for themselves the testimony of the Scriptures.

Many will be confronted by the spirits of devils personating beloved relatives or friends and declaring the most dangerous heresies. These visitants will appeal to our tenderest sympathies and will work miracles to sustain their pretensions. We must be prepared to withstand them with the Bible truth that the dead know not anything and that they who thus appear are the spirits of devils.

Just before us is "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Revelation 3:10. All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome. Satan "works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" to gain control of the children of men, and his deceptions will continually increase. But he can gain his object only as men voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who are earnestly seeking a knowledge of the truth and are striving to purify their souls through obedience, thus doing what they can to prepare for the conflict, will find, in the God of truth, a sure defense. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee" (verse 10), is the Saviour's promise. He would sooner send every angel out of heaven to protect His people than leave one soul that trusts in Him to be overcome by Satan.

The prophet Isaiah brings to view the fearful deception which will come upon the wicked, causing them to count themselves secure from the judgments of God: "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." Isaiah 28:15. In the class here described are included those who in their stubborn impenitence comfort themselves with the assurance that there is to be no punishment for the sinner; that all mankind, it matters not how corrupt, are to be exalted to heaven, to become as the angels of God. But still more emphatically are those making a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, who renounce the truths which Heaven has provided as a defense for the righteous in the day of trouble, and accept the refuge of lies offered by Satan in its stead—the delusive pretensions of spiritualism.

Marvelous beyond expression is the blindness of the people of this generation. Thousands reject the word of God as unworthy of belief and with eager confidence receive the deceptions of Satan. Skeptics and scoffers denounce the bigotry of those who contend for the faith of prophets and apostles, and they divert themselves by holding up to ridicule the solemn declarations of the Scriptures concerning Christ and the plan of salvation, and the retribution to be visited upon the rejecters of the truth. They affect great pity for minds so narrow, weak, and superstitious as to acknowledge the claims of God and obey the requirements of His law. They manifest as much assurance as if, indeed, they had made a covenant with death and an agreement with hell—as if they had erected an impassable, impenetrable barrier between themselves and the vengeance of God. Nothing can arouse their fears. So fully have they yielded to the tempter, so

closely are they united with him, and so thoroughly imbued with his spirit, that they have no power and no inclination to break away from his snare.

Satan has long been preparing for his final effort to deceive the world. The foundation of his work was laid by the assurance given to Eve in Eden: "Ye shall not surely die." "In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4, 5. Little by little he has prepared the way for his masterpiece of deception in the development of spiritualism. He has not yet reached the full accomplishment of his designs; but it will be reached in the last remnant of time. Says the prophet: "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs; ... they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Revelation 16:13, 14. Except those who are kept by the power of God, through faith in His word, the whole world will be swept into the ranks of this delusion. The people are fast being lulled to a fatal security, to be awakened only by the outpouring of the wrath of God.

Saith the Lord God: "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." Isaiah 28:17, 18.