A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE FIRE

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“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair miter upon his head. So they set a fair miter upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.”

Joshua represents those who are seeking God and keeping his commandments. Ever since the fall, Satan has sought to bring a reproach upon God’s cause. The word of God declares that he is an accuser of the brethren. As the end is brought near, he will work with more determination to bring God’s people under condemnation. Satan is represented as presenting the mistakes and errors that he has caused the people of God to commit, urging this as a reason why the Lord should not bless and guard them. He claims that it is his right to do with them as he pleases. It is impossible for us to understand his plans unless we have the Spirit of God abiding in our hearts.

It is the care of the heavenly angels that keeps us from being destroyed by Satan’s cruel power; for those who seek God and are preparing for the coming of Christ, are the objects of his enmity. He constantly seeks to bring them into reproach before God. He is represented as resisting the work of Jesus in behalf of his people. Joshua stands before the angel of the Lord, and Satan stands at his right hand to resist him. But “the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

Jesus speaks of his people as a brand plucked out of the fire, and Satan understands what this means. The infinite sufferings of the Son of God in Gethsemane and on Calvary were endured that he might rescue his people from the power of the evil one. The work of Jesus for the salvation of perishing souls is as if he thrust his hand into the fire to save them. Joshua, who represents God’s people, is clothed in filthy garments, and stands before the angel; but as the people repent before God for the transgression of his law, and reach up by the hand of faith to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ, Jesus says, “Take away the filthy garments from them, and clothe them with change of raiment” It is through Christ’s righteousness alone that we are enabled to keep the law. Those who worship God in sincerity and truth, and afflict their souls before him as in the great day of atonement, will wash their robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Satan seeks to bind about the human mind with deception, so that men will not repent and believe, that they may have their filthy garments removed. Why will you cling to your miserable defects of character, and by so doing bar the way, that Jesus may not work in your behalf?

During the (little) time of trouble, the position of God’s people will be similar to the position of Joshua. They will not be ignorant of the work going on in heaven in their behalf. They will realize that sin is recorded against their names, but they will also know that the sins of all who repent and lay hold of the merits of Christ will be canceled. Jesus says: “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his
angels.” The judgment of the dead has been going on, and soon the judgment will begin upon the living, and every case will be decided. It will be known whose names are retained upon the book of life, and whose are blotted out. Every day the angels of God keep a record of the transactions of men, and these records stand open to the eyes of angels, and Christ, and God. Those who have manifested true repentance for sin, and by living faith in Christ are obedient to God’s commandments, will have their names retained in the book of life, and they will be confessed before the Father and before the holy angels. Jesus will say, “They are mine; I have purchased them with my own blood.”

The time of trouble is soon to break upon us, and the decree will go forth that everyone who will not keep the first day of the week shall be put to death. Those who have not regarded the Sabbath as they should, who have exalted their business above God’s commandment, will trample upon the Sabbath and keep the first day of the week, because they have consulted their own convenience before the honor of God. They did not learn to bring themselves into harmony with the Sabbath, but sought to bring the Sabbath to meet their own convenience. With the preparation they have made, they are no more fitted to stand in the day of judgment than the greatest sinner. Their ideas are confused; they have tried to serve God and mammon; they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Those who love God with all the heart, and their neighbor as themselves, will be the only ones who will stand the test of the decree. When Satan brings his power to bear upon half-hearted professors, he will sweep them over to his side, he will claim his right to do with them as he pleases. But of those who honor God, the Lord says, “They shall be mine, ... in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

Those who are in the favor of God will not be deceived. Many now pass as Sabbath-keepers who, when the test comes upon the question, will no longer have a place among those who observe God’s commandments. The prophet says, “Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.” Those who are determined to have their own way, who measure themselves by their own standard, will have their time of trouble. The prophet declares: “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.”

The Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon those who have kept the commandments of God. Those who think that they can set their will against God’s will are in the greatest danger. Those who wish to be covered in the day of God’s anger, must be true to God now. Now is the time to show our fidelity to God, and our faith in Christ. The sins that have been committed against God will be blotted out if they are repented of. Christ said: “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair miter upon his head. So they set a fair miter upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.” Who are these that stand by? — The angels of God. They will be as a wall of fire round about the people of God, and the hosts of evil will not be able to pass their ranks. The angels of Satan are
working with the children of disobedience to inspire them with madness against those who are loyal to the law of God. Although the people of God are despised by the world, and “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” yet the wicked will one day see God’s people glorified; they will see the promise fulfilled, “Them that honor me, I will honor.

While we are in the world, we should be the light of the world; for God has a work for each one to do. Only a few will choose to obey the truth, and we should seek for the grace of God that we may represent his service aright. There is a spirit in the church which greatly misrepresents the exalted character of the truth. In place of having your attention turned toward Jesus, in place of studying his life and character that you may copy the divine pattern, you have measured yourselves among yourselves, and in this way the truth of God has been greatly dishonored. Envy, jealousy, criticism of others, love of supremacy, have all flourished among the professed people of God. Some have claimed that special messages have been given them of God, and their attention has been turned away from the preparation of heart necessary to meet Christ in peace. Satan will invent everything possible to lead men away from the real work. If the members of the church are not subject one to another, if they go here and there with a message God has not given them, the church will become demoralized, and fanaticism of the worst order will come in. There are conscientious souls who will accept anything that calls for sacrifice. Christ has said, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” God sends his messenger, and if the people will receive the message, they will not be led into error.

The Lord wants you to consult together. If, in years past, there had been more consultation concerning the work in Norway, it would have been far in advance of what it is today. Personal effort, personal opinion, personal plans, have placed upon the work a mould that does not elevate and enoble the people of God. The enemy is trying to make of none effect the word of God. Those in the church who ought to set an example to the flock, have had such a lax hold of God that they have not been able to influence the people.

You are to be obedient to all the requirements of God. When you bring your own work into God’s time, when you violate the Sabbath, your moral sense becomes clouded, and you cannot discern that your course is an offense to God. If your eyes could be opened, you would see the Saviour by your side with blood-stained hands. He was wounded for your transgressions; will you refuse to accept the great sacrifice that was made in your behalf? For your sake, Christ became poor, that you through his poverty might be made rich in heavenly riches. Today we present the cross of Calvary. It speaks in plain language to every soul that is not deluded by the temptation of Satan in consequence of disobedience to God’s law. Christ came to our world and died a shameful death because the precepts of the law could not be changed. He endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He suffered all this for the joy that was set before him,—the joy of bringing many sons and daughters to God. He died to bring us into harmony with the law of Heaven. He has said: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven

Many are in peril today; their eyes have been blinded; and as Christ said to Nicodemus, I say to them, “Ye must be born again.” I expect to meet my words in the last great day. When I look at the people here who are trying to serve God, I would try to fulfill the words of the prophet, and comfort the people of God. Your Saviour is a living Saviour, who is pleading with the Father in your behalf. Everyone who will keep the word of his patience will be saved from the temptation that will come upon all the world. The smallest acts are written in the book of God, but God says that he will not despise a humble and a contrite heart. If you had all the
wealth of the world, it would not provide a ransom for your soul, or elevate you in the favor of Heaven. Will you be a child of God? Will you walk in humility before him? Your talents, your ability, your means, belong to God. Give all to him; for he has purchased all with an infinite price.

We exhort you to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Shut out everything that will separate you from God; put away sin from among you. The people of the world may seem to pass on without perplexity, and to be more favored than the righteous. David says: "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.... When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” There are many who are in the same condition of mind today as was David; but if they would go into the sanctuary, and understand the latter end of the wicked, they would be no more envious of them.

“Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and beheld a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for everyone that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and everyone that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.”

The angel is represented as flying through the midst of heaven with a roll in his hand, on which are written the deeds of our daily life. **God bears long with the children of men, but there is a time coming when he will cease to bear with them.** God wants them to get under the cover of his wings. Jesus is pleading his blood in our behalf, but Satan is standing at his right hand, resisting every effort in our behalf. May God help us to humble our hearts, before it shall be forever too late to make wrongs right.

Let the Spirit of God fashion our character and our work. We are responsible for the manner in which the truth is presented. We should seek to impress unbelievers with its exalted character. Christ is soon coming, and those who have not kept the Sabbath sacredly should reform. God will frown upon those who disregard his commandments, and he cannot bless the church that retains Sabbath-breakers in its fellowship.

Oh, that Christ might walk among you, that he might say, “Take away the filthy garment, and clothe them with change of raiment.” We want to know that we are on the Lord’s side. We want to dwell with him through all eternity. Those who sit with Christ on his throne must be partakers with him of his sufferings. They must drink of the cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with.