

Hidden Treasures 210

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7

PERILOUS TIMES

In 2 Timothy 3 we read that in the last days perilous times will come. Most believers are in agreement, no matter what denomination they belong to, that we have come to the end of this period of grace. What is it that is so perilous in these last days?

We can read here in 2 Timothy 4:3: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers."

It has really become like that in our day that nearly all believers are deceived. With most of them, Christianity has sunk down to being just a theory. The fruits of the Spirit were intended to come forth, a new, godly life; for example, love, joy, peace, patience, friendliness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, chastity, etc. But what has actually come forth? Quarrelling, contentions, party spirit, dissen-

sions, fightings, envy, murder, adultery, separation, divorce, etc. - all of this is found right in the midst of God's people and among their leaders.

Sadly to say, this is a sorrowful outcome. But how could this development have taken place since there are so many believers who are awaiting Jesus' return, and want to be raptured? How could they have fallen prey to Satan's deceit to such a degree?

We read before that they would not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they would heap up for themselves teachers. "Sound doctrine" - What does that actually mean? Jesus said in Matthew 16:24: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." That is sound doctrine. If I accept this and follow it, that is, if I do it, then I will be saved from sin.

To deny oneself - what is that? How can one do that? This is such an uncommon term, that it is not easy to understand. But it can be explained in a few words: not to do that which my indwelling, fleshly lusts and desires tempt me to do. For example: Someone tells lies and speaks evil against me which others hear and then come and report it all to me. The lusts and desires in my flesh are awak-

ened and I react by becoming angry, seeking vengeance, sensing hatred, envy and evil. I am tempted to pay back the other person, and even to pay it back with twice as much as he did to me. That is what lives in me - in my flesh (Romans 7:18).

If we live according to the flesh, we will have to die (Romans 8:13). But if we, by the Spirit, put to death the works of the flesh, we will live.

Then the Spirit comes to our assistance and admonishes us: "Don't get angry," - "Love thinks no evil" - or, "He committed it to Him who judges justly". By means of this help, we receive faith and strength, and then we are able to take a stand to repay evil with good. We do not permit the evil lusts which live within us to control us. That is what is meant by denying myself, or, as it is written in another place: ". . . to suffer in the flesh".

"Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh for us, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." 1 Peter 4:1. We are to stop living according to our human will, and to do, instead, the will of God.

Another example: When my wife or my mother does not have the meal ready on time, or she serves something that I don't like, then

I am tempted to complain or to be unthankful. Most people do this - emphatically! They grumble and complain about many things and they are miserable . They live according to the lusts of their flesh.

But now we have the possibility of accepting a glorious salvation by suffering in the flesh. We pray to God for help and deny our fleshly lusts. We do not give in and obey the lusts of the flesh. The result is that we suffer in the flesh. If we are faithful and persevere, the death of Christ will become powerful in us. The evil lusts die out and we cease from sin. We enter into rest. Then we come to peace and joy, to happiness and fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

To the same extent that indwelling sin has been put to death within us, the kingdom of heaven enters in. It takes place little by little, through suffering to glory. And this takes place right in the midst of these evil and perilous days when people are plaguing and deceiving one another.

But this message is very rarely ever heard. Almost everywhere they say: "We can't do anything, and we cannot attain perfection. Jesus lived a perfect life, which the Father reckoned to us just as if we had lived it ourselves. Don't look at yourself, look at Jesus!" In this way, they have removed all yearning

for living a victorious life, and it goes on in the old groove just as before.

Indeed, these really are perilous times. Satan has deceived people by means of unfaithful preachers of the Word. He disguises himself as an angel of light, and his servants are disguised as preachers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Did you ever hear these satanic preachers? They don't want to have anything to do with sound doctrine. At this point, the cry to wake up should resound so that we will not fall into an even greater deception. The most dreadful thing is the tragic consequences that come forth as a result of this false teaching.

Many believers think that they are going to be raptured when Jesus returns. But the fact is they are going to stay behind if they have not become pure and holy, and if they have not come to the place where they do what Jesus commanded. There is, of course, no excuse for anyone because it lies within the power of each of us to search for this, earnestly and sincerely. But the words of Jesus still apply: "He who seeks will find; he who asks will receive, he who knocks, to him it will be opened."

Indeed, the spirit of antichrist has been carried very far into the ranks of believers. This spirit is against all practical Christianity. It

distorts the understanding of the word "grace" in such a way that a person is led to believe that grace is available in order to cover up all the impurity and filth of sin, and that he will be able to hide himself under it all. Such a person does not want to come to the light and be cleansed. It was not like that with the apostles. Paul writes in Titus 2:11+12: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age." That is no falsified grace, no, it will lead us to a victorious life in Jesus.

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