

Chapter 27

An Honored Minister

Loss of Influence and Reputation—Dear Brother H: I have somewhat to say unto thee....

My brother, you have had the respect of the church, old and young. But your course is condemned of God, and you have not had His Spirit, and you are not a free man. You have pursued a course that has caused your good to be evil spoken of. The very things that transpired at the Piedmont Sabbath school reunion, I would not have [had] occur for thousands of dollars. You, a gray-haired man, lying at full length with your head in the lap of Georgie S. Had I done my duty, I would have rebuked you there. Many saw this and made remarks about it. After such exhibitions as this, of what value would be your admonitions to them to be guarded against everything of this free and easy familiarity? You have yourself neutralized your efforts to elevate the young by

your example.

The course of intimacy with Sister S and her family has been a subject of remark. And how could you expect to have influence with the young as a father when such manifest want of judgment and such weakness has been exhibited by you? If you will only be a man in your old age instead of a sentimental lover; if you would only be guarded, God would not remove His wisdom from you as He has done. Your reputation would have been dearer to you than your very life. Better, far better, go down to the grave with honor untarnished, than to live with a reproach upon your name.

When the Lord Is Not Supreme—Now look, my brother, at the years you have been living in unlawful sympathy and love with another man's wife. And you have a daughter who would be glad to give you attention and sympathy and make a home for you, but you have been so completely infatuated that everything in this life that was sensible and proper has been distasteful and insipid to you. I do not feel that the charm is broken, that

you are a free man. You have not broken the snare. The Lord is not supreme with you.

Now, my brother, it would be folly for you to think that you have wisdom to discern spiritual things while you have been growing weaker and weaker for years in moral power, and separating from the God of wisdom. The letters written to your wife are harsh and unfeeling. The withdrawing of your support in a large degree is not wisdom or right on your part. And had she not a cause when she was at Oakland to be jealous of you? Did not she see in you the interest, sympathy, and love you gave to Sister S?

Now, for Christ's sake, save your harsh condemnation of others, for this shows that you are not Christlike, that you have another spirit. I write thus plainly because I feel deeply that you need to make a more determined effort than you have done before you stand free in the sight of God. All your sharpness and overbearing comes from you with an ill grace. Do humble yourself under the hand of God. Do make sure of the favor of God, and put sin

away from you.

There are but few who know to what extent this intimacy has gone, and God forbid it shall be known and your influence lost to God's cause and your soul lost. I beg of you not to take it upon you to pronounce judgment against anyone but yourself.—Letter 10, 1885.

For the Good of the Cause—Dear Brother Butler: ... I have spoken quite freely upon some things. I thought I had to do this. Am inclined to say I will hold my peace henceforth, but as I am not my own and as I am mightily wrought upon at times to write, I dare not say this. I have but one object in view—not only the present but future good of the cause and work of God. Should I resist these impressions to write, when I am so burdened? I cannot now promise. I must ponder these things in my heart. I must pray about them, and obey the movings of the Spirit of God or withdraw myself from having any connection with the work.

The Lord knows I am not pleased with this kind

of work. I love and respect my brethren, and would not in the slightest manner demerit them, cause them pain; but I have tried to move with an eye single to the glory of God. I feel a sadness now upon me and confusion that I cannot see clearly my duty.

God's Answer to Prayer for Victory—I wrote some things to H. He wrote me that it was just as I had stated the matter. I was so burdened with a dream I had that I arose at three o'clock and wrote to Elder H that he had not kept his promise, that while he was engaged in teaching the commandments of God he was breaking them, that he was giving attentions to Sister S which should be bestowed only upon his wife. I wrote very pointedly to him.

He admitted my statements, said he had prayed over the matter and felt that his course was wrong, but did not say he would cease this thing forever. He says,

“Your strong condemnation of me is only just.

That I know, and feel the difficulty with me was this: it was so hard for me to realize the sinfulness of my course. My reason, my judgment, the testimony and the Scriptures, all combined to teach me that it was wrong. Yet it had such a hold of me that I failed to realize it as I should. I could not bring myself to feel the extent of my wrong, and gradually it proved a snare to me. But I had been making it a subject of special prayer some time before I received your last letter, that God would enable me to see it in its proper light and to feel over it as I should; and I have reason to believe that my prayer was answered.

“If I know anything of the blessing of grace, I know that I was blessed in the effort. I greatly needed this blessing to enable me to do the work aright, which was put upon me here. It was expressed of all that I was helped of heaven to write the report on the matter of the arrest of our people for working on the Sunday and other important writings which it fell to me to do. But I am painfully conscious of my weakness and that my only safety is in constant watchfulness such as I

did not exercise before. I see now that it is a question of life and death with me and shall strive to act accordingly.”—Letter 73, 1886.

Workings of an Unsanctified Heart—Dear Brother Butler. [This letter was sent to Elder George I. Butler, the General Conference president, but Ellen White also directly addresses Elder H, the guilty minister] I am troubled in regard to Elder H. He writes me nothing, and I feel deeply pained on his account. It seems sometimes to me that the Lord is testing us to see whether we will deal faithfully in regard to sin in one of our honored men. The time is close at hand when the General Conference will have to decide the points whether or not to renew his credentials.

If the Conference does this, they will be saying virtually, “We have confidence in you as a man whom God recognizes as His messenger; one to whom He has entrusted the sacred responsibilities of caring for the sheep of the Lord’s pasture; one who will be in all things a faithful shepherd, a representative of Christ.” But can we do this? Have

we not seen the workings of an unsanctified heart?

A Man Bewitched—The persistency in Elder H to accept and claim Mrs. S as his—what shall I call it—his affinity? What is this? Who can name it? Is Elder H one who has hated the light God has given him, showing that his preferences for Mrs. S's society, and his intimacy with her, was sinful as in the light of the Word of God? Or did he accept the message and act upon it?

Notwithstanding, I went to Elder H with the testimony given me of God, yet he did not reform. His course has said, "I will do as I please in the matter; there is no sin in it." He promised before God what he would do, but he broke his promises made to Brother C. H. Jones, W. C. White, and myself, and his feelings did not decidedly change; but he seems to act like a man bewitched, under the spell of the devil, who had no power over his own inclinations. Notwithstanding all the light given, he has evidenced no real conviction or sense of sin; no repentance, no reformation. Hearts have ached sorely over this state of things, but they had no

power to change his heart or his purposes.

Perversion of God-given Powers—Now, we should be very grateful for the help of Elder H in England, and in Switzerland, but what can we decide upon? We must have evidence that he is clear before God. We do not want to make a light matter of sin, and say to the sinner, “It shall be well with thee.” We do not want to connect Elder H with the work here unless he has a connection with God. We do not want to have the drawback that would come by connecting a man with the work who has a blot on his garments. We cannot pass lightly over this matter.

The plague of sin is upon Elder H, and pain and sorrow are upon the souls of all who are aware of this chapter in his experience. Christ is dishonored. A man blessed with superior light and knowledge, endowed with great capacity for good, that he may by a life of obedience and fidelity to God become equal with angels [and] his life measure with the life of God, has perverted his God-given powers to administer to lust, coveting the wife of another.

God finds Elder H setting at naught the most costly lessons of experience, violating the most solemn admonitions of God, that he may continue in sin.

I have hoped and prayed that he would restore reason to its right throne and break the fetters that for years Satan has been weaving about him, soul and body, and that the clouds that have shadowed his pathway be removed, and Christ come to his soul to revive and bless it. Christ will lift the heavy burden from weary shoulders, and give rest and peace to those who will wear His yoke and lift His burdens.

Appeal to a Leading Worker—I will say, Elder H, What can be the character of your experience when in the face of many warnings and reproofs you continue to pursue a course condemned of God? Can you think well of yourself? Just think of Jesus, crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross for our sins, and let it humble—yes, let it break—your heart. Look at the meekness of Christ, His loveliness, and then bow in the dust with shame and humiliation.

Will you please think what you would do in case one of our leading men should be found in the position you are in? Could you, without any greater evidence on his part of the sense of his sin than you have given, advise that he have credentials as one of pure and holy purposes before God? Cannot you see you are placing your fellow laborers in a very unpleasant and unenviable position? Will they venture to become responsible for your character and your influence in the future in the work and cause of God?

Responsibility of Greater Light—Your case has been shown me to be worse than that of Elder R, because you had greater light, capacity, and influence; and his course is a beacon to warn you off from following in his steps. Elder R's credentials were taken away from him; he is a deeply repentant man, humbled in the dust.

Supposing David should, after being reprov'd by Nathan, have repeated the same offense, would the Lord then have had compassion upon him? But

he repented bitterly; he declared his transgression was ever before him. Hear his humiliating confession, and listen to his despairing cries.

Cleansing of the Camp—We must as a people arouse and cleanse the camp of Israel. Licentiousness, unlawful intimacy, and unholy practices are coming in among us in a large degree; and ministers who are handling sacred things are guilty of sin in this respect. They are coveting their neighbors' wives, and the seventh commandment is broken. We are in danger of becoming a sister to fallen Babylon, of allowing our churches to become corrupted, and filled with every foul spirit, a cage for every unclean and hateful bird; and will we be clear unless we make decided movements to cure the existing evil?

Will you have others follow your example? Will you wish them to pass over the ground you have traveled, and feel that they have done no great wrong? Without repentance and conversion, you are a ruined man.

I hear you [Elder H] are taking treatment at the sanitarium, acting as chaplain, speaking in the Tabernacle. Now, this does not look right for you to take such positions, until you have done all in your power to correct past evils.

Self-righteousness and Inward Corruption—
I have felt, for your sake, restrained from opening the matter of Mrs. S's infidelity to her husband, but I fear I have neglected my duty. If we had dealt with this matter as if it had been the case of a lay member of the church, I believe God would have then sent you repentance that needed not to be repented of.

Our pity, our love, to save you from reproach, has hurt you. My heart is so sad and agonized at times for you, I can only weep. I say, "Must he be lost? Must he, after suffering for the truth's sake, after standing in its defense until he is old and gray-headed, become an idolater, as did Solomon? Will he, for the love of a woman, trample down the law of God and look about him as much as to say, I do no sin; I am all right?"

Need of Heart Change, Not Change of Location—Will we be clear to let such things be concealed and sins hidden, with no real evidence of repentance or reform? Your leaving California does not give you a new heart. You are out of sight of the infatuating influence of your “adorable charmer,” but this does not change the affections or impulses of the heart. Elder W might have finished his course with joy had it not been for sensual practices, but he was led away of his own lusts and enticed. The days and years which might have been his very best were his worst.

We see in the character of Solomon intellectual greatness combined with moral degradation. He might have gone forward from strength to strength, but instead of this he went backward from weakness to weakness. After a life of promise, his history was one of deterioration.

The Very Brink of the Precipice—My brother, my heart yearns toward you for Christ’s sake. You have been attempting what other

ministers have attempted—to harmonize light with darkness, Christ with Belial, purity with impurity, good with evil. The result will be moral ruin, unless you can be aroused to see that you are standing upon the very brink of the precipice. There are many such cases that I have to write about.

It alarms me to see how the sin of licentiousness is coming in upon us. I felt this when I wrote to Elder Butler upon this point at the last General Conference, begging him to do all that he could to fence against what was coming in upon us. We must elevate the standard and build up barriers about the soul so that nothing shall mar its simplicity and purity, and thus defile the religious character. God has given man intellect, and let every soul beware how this great gift is prostituted to the soul's eternal ruin.

Repentance and Rebaptism—There is no more hope of you than of any common sinner, nor as much, unless you greatly humble your soul before God, repent, and are converted. Take the

first steps in the way to life—repentance, faith, and baptism. You have tampered with the divine safeguards of your peace. If you refuse to listen to the voice of reproof, if you choose your own course, if you will not allow the grace of Christ to transform you, your guilt will be as much greater than that of the common sinner as your advantages of light and influence have been greater.

Great care should be exercised in companionship and friendship lest the soul be imperiled, lest there be even an appearance of evil which in the eyes of others would lower the standard of religious principle and sap the foundation of religious belief.

The Sad Example of Solomon—How many, even in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers, are forming unsanctified connections. Men who have wives, and women who have husbands, are showing affection and giving undue attention to [those of the opposite sex]. How many men of promise there are in our ranks who no longer have pure faith and holy trust in God, because they have betrayed

sacred trusts. Noble aspirations are quenched. Their steps are retrograding because they covet another man's wife or are unduly familiar with unmarried women. Their frivolous conduct leads them to break the seventh commandment.

Of Solomon, the inspired record says, "His wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God" (1 Kings 11:4).

Perpetuating Power of Evil Influence—This is no theme to be treated with a smile. The heart that loves Jesus will not desire the unlawful affections of another. Every want is supplied in Christ. This superficial affection is of the same character as that exalted enjoyment which Satan promised Eve. It is coveting that which God has forbidden.

When it is too late, hundreds can warn others not to venture upon the precipice. Intellect, position, wealth can never, never take the place of moral qualities. The Lord esteems clean hands, a

pure heart, and noble, earnest devotion to God and the truth above the golden wedge of Ophir. An evil influence has a perpetuating power. I wish I could set this matter before God's commandment-keeping people just as it has been shown me. Let the sad memory of Solomon's apostasy warn every soul to shun the same precipice. His weakness and sin are handed down from generation to generation.

The greatest king that ever wielded a scepter, of whom it had been said that he was the beloved of God, through misplaced affection became contaminated and was miserably forsaken of his God. The mightiest ruler of the earth had failed to rule his own passions. Solomon may have been saved "as by fire," yet his repentance could not efface those high places, nor demolish those stones, which remained as evidences of his crimes. He dishonored God, choosing rather to be controlled by lust than to be a partaker of the divine nature.

What a legacy Solomon's life has committed to those who would use his example to cover their own base actions! We must either transmit a

heritage of good or evil. Shall our lives and our example be a blessing or a curse? Shall people look at our graves and say, He ruined me, or, He saved me? ...

Ministers Subjects of Satan's Temptations—
Satan's special efforts are now directed toward the people who have great light. He would lead them to become earthly and sensual. There are men who minister in sacred things whose hearts are defiled with impure thoughts and unholy desires. Married men who have children are not satisfied. They place themselves where they invite temptation. They take liberties that should only be taken with their lawful wives. Thus they fall under the rebuke of God, and in the books of heaven "adultery" is written opposite their names.

There should be no approach to danger. If the thoughts were where they should be, if they were stayed upon God, and the meditations of the soul were upon the truth and the precious promises of God and the heavenly reward that awaits the faithful, they would be guarded against Satan's

temptations. But, by many, vile thoughts are entertained almost constantly. They are carried into the house of God and even into the sacred desk.

Discipline of Erring Ministers—I tell you the truth, Elder Butler, that unless there is a cleansing of the soul temple on the part of many who claim to believe and to preach the truth, God’s judgments, long deferred, will come. These debasing sins have not been handled with firmness and decision. There is corruption in the soul, and, unless it is cleansed by the blood of Christ, there will be apostasies among us that will startle you.

I ask myself the question, “How is it possible for men who are opening the Scriptures to others—men who have abundance of light—men who have good ability—men who are living in the face of the judgment, upon the very borders of the eternal world—to give their thoughts and bodies to unholy practices? Well may the words of the apostle be repeated with emphasis: “Cleanse your hands, ye sinners: and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your

laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up” (James 4:8-10).—Letter 51, 1886.