

The Laodicean Church – T v1 c35 p185-195

Dear Brethren and Sisters: The Lord has again visited me in much mercy. I have been greatly afflicted for a few months past. Disease has pressed heavily upon me. For years I have been afflicted with dropsy and disease of the heart, which has had a tendency to depress my spirits and destroy my faith and courage. The message to the Laodiceans has not accomplished that zealous repentance among God's people which I expected to see, and my perplexity of mind has been great. Disease seemed to make continual progress upon me, and I thought that I must lie down in the grave. I had no desire to live, therefore I could not take hold of faith and pray for my recovery. Often when I retired to rest at night I realized that I was in danger of losing my breath before morning. In this state I fainted at midnight. Brethren Andrews and Loughborough were sent for, and earnest petitions were offered to God in my behalf. The depression, the heavy weight, was lifted from my aching heart, and I was taken off in vision, and shown the things which I now present before you.

I saw that Satan had been trying to drive me to discouragement and despair, to make me desire death rather than life. I was shown that it was not God's will that I should now cease from the work and lie down in the grave; for then the enemies of our faith would triumph, and the hearts of God's children would be made sad. I saw that I should often feel anguish of spirit, and should suffer much; yet I had the promise that those around me would encourage and help me, that my courage and strength might not fail while I was so fiercely buffeted by the devil.

I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time, and the reason it has not accomplished a greater work is because of the hardness of their hearts. But God has given the message time to do its work. The heart must be purified from sins which have so long shut out Jesus. This fearful message will do its work. When it was first presented, it led to close examination of heart. Sins were confessed, and the people of God were stirred everywhere. Nearly all believed that this message would end in the loud cry of the third angel. But as they failed to see the powerful work accomplished in a short time, many lost the effect of the message. I saw that this message would not accomplish its work in a few short months. It is designed to arouse the people of God, to discover to them their backslidings, and to lead to zealous repentance, that they may be favored with the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel. As this message affected the heart, it led to deep humility before God. Angels were sent in every direction to prepare unbelieving hearts for the truth. The cause of God began to rise, and His people were acquainted with their position. If the counsel of the True Witness had been fully heeded, God would have wrought for His people in greater power. Yet the efforts made since the message has been given, have been blessed of God, and many souls have been brought from error and darkness to rejoice in the truth.

God will prove His people. Jesus bears patiently with them, and does not spew them out of His mouth in a moment. Said the angel: "God is weighing His people." If the message had been of as short duration as many of us supposed, there would have been no time for

them to develop character. Many moved from feeling, not from principle and faith, and this solemn, fearful message stirred them. It wrought upon their feelings, and excited their fears, but did not accomplish the work which God designed that it should. God reads the heart. Lest His people should be deceived in regard to themselves, He gives them time for the excitement to wear off, and then proves them to see if they will obey the counsel of the True Witness.

God leads His people on, step by step. He brings them up to different points calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested and tried a little closer. If the professed people of God find their hearts opposed to this straight work, it should convince them that they have a work to do to overcome, if they would not be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Said the angel: "God will bring His work closer and closer to test and prove every one of His people." Some are willing to receive one point; but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find that it strikes directly at some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. They prize something higher than the truth, and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the counsel of the True Witness. If any will not be purified through obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the charge: "They are joined to their idols, let them alone," and they pass on to their work, leaving these with their sinful traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation.

God proves His people in this world. This is the fitting-up place to appear in His presence. Here, in this world, in these last days, persons will show what power affects their hearts and controls their actions. If it is the power of divine truth, it will lead to good works. It will elevate the receiver, and make him noblehearted and generous, like his divine Lord. But if evil angels control the heart, it will be seen in various ways. The fruit will be selfishness, covetousness, pride, and evil passions.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Professors of religion are not willing to closely examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith; and it is a fearful fact that many are leaning on a false hope. Some lean upon an old experience which they had years ago; but when brought down to this heart-searching time, when all should have a daily experience, they have nothing to relate. They seem to think that a profession of the truth will save them. When they subdue those sins which God hates, Jesus will come in and sup with them and they with Him. They will then draw divine strength from Jesus, and will grow up in Him, and be able with holy triumph to say: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It would be more pleasing to the Lord if lukewarm professors of religion had never named His name. They are a continual weight to those who would be faithful followers of Jesus. They are a stumbling block to unbelievers, and evil angels exult over them, and taunt the angels of God with their crooked course. Such are a curse to the cause at home or abroad. They draw nigh to God with their lips, while their heart is far from Him.

I was shown that the people of God should not imitate the fashions of the world. Some have done this, and are fast losing the peculiar, holy character which should distinguish them as God's people. I was pointed back to God's ancient people, and was led to compare their apparel with the mode of dress in these last days. What a difference! what a change! Then the women were not so bold as now. When they went in public, they covered their faces with a veil. In these last days, fashions are shameful and immodest. They are noticed in prophecy. They were first brought in by a class over whom Satan has entire control, who, "being past feeling [without any conviction of the Spirit of God] have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." If God's professed people had not greatly departed from Him, there would now be a marked difference between their dress and that of the world. The small bonnets, exposing the face and head, show a lack of modesty. The hoops are a shame. The inhabitants of earth are growing more and more corrupt, and the line of distinction between them and the Israel of God must be more plain, or the curse which falls upon worldlings will fall on God's professed people.

I was directed to the following scriptures. Said the angel: "They are to instruct God's people." 1 Timothy 2:9, 10: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing Godliness) with good works." 1 Peter 3:3-5: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves."

Young and old, God is now testing you. You are deciding your own eternal destiny. Your pride, your love to follow the fashions of the world, your vain and empty conversation, your selfishness, are all put in the scale, and the weight of evil is fearfully against you. You are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. While evil is increasing and taking deep root, it is choking the good seed which has been sown in the heart; and soon the word that was given concerning Eli's house will be spoken to the angels of God concerning you: Your sins "shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever." Many, I saw, were flattering themselves that they were good Christians, who have not a single ray of light from Jesus. They know not what it is to be renewed by the grace of God. They have no living experience for themselves in the things of God. And I saw that the Lord was whetting His sword in heaven to cut them down. Oh, that every lukewarm professor could realize the clean work that God is about to make among His professed people! Dear friends, do not deceive yourselves concerning your condition. You cannot deceive God. Says the True Witness: "I know thy works." The third angel is leading up a people, step by step, higher and higher. At every step they will be tested.

The plan of systematic benevolence is pleasing to God. I was pointed back to the days of the apostles, and saw that God laid the plan by the descent of His Holy Spirit, and that by the gift of prophecy He counseled His people in regard to a system of benevolence. All were to share in this work of imparting of their carnal things to those who ministered unto them in spiritual things. They were also taught that the widows and fatherless had a

claim upon their charity. Pure and undefiled religion is defined, To visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep unspotted from the world. I saw that this was not merely to sympathize with them by comforting words in their affliction, but to aid them, if needy, with our substance. Young men and women to whom God has given health can obtain a great blessing by aiding the widow and the fatherless in their affliction. I saw that God requires young men to sacrifice more for the good of others. He claims more of them than they are willing to perform. If they keep themselves unspotted from the world, cease to follow its fashions, and lay by that which the lovers of pleasure spend in useless articles to gratify pride, and give it to the worthy afflicted ones, and to sustain the cause, they will have the approval of Him who says, "I know thy works."

There is order in heaven, and God is well pleased with the efforts of His people in trying to move with system and order in His work on earth. I saw that there should be order in the church of God, and that system is needed in carrying forward successfully the last great message of mercy to the world. God is leading His people in the plan of systematic benevolence, and this is one of the very points to which God is bringing up His people which will cut the closest with some. With them this cuts off the right arm, and plucks out the right eye, while to others it is a great relief. To noble, generous souls the demands upon them seem very small, and they cannot be content to do so little. Some have large possessions, and if they lay by them in store for charitable purposes as God has prospered them, the offering seems to them like a large sum. The selfish heart clings as closely to a small offering as to a larger one, and makes a small sum look very large.

I was pointed back to the commencement of this last work. Then some who loved the truth could consistently talk of sacrificing. They devoted much to the cause of God, to send the truth to others. They have sent their treasure beforehand to heaven. Brethren, you who have received the truth at a later period, and who have large possessions, God has called you into the field, not merely that you may enjoy the truth, but that you may aid with your substance in carrying forward this great work. And if you have an interest in this work, you will venture out and invest something in it, that others may be saved by your efforts, and you reap with them the final reward. Great sacrifices have been made and privations endured to place the truth in a clear light before you. Now God calls upon you, in your turn, to make great efforts and to sacrifice in order to place the truth before those who are in darkness. God requires this. You profess to believe the truth; let your works testify to the fact. Unless your faith works, it is dead. Nothing but a living faith will save you in the fearful scenes which are just before you.

I saw that it is time for those who have large possessions to begin to work fast. It is time that they were not only laying by them in store as God *is now* prospering them, but as He *has* prospered them. In the days of the apostles, plans were especially laid that some should not be eased and others burdened. Arrangements were made that all should share equally in the burdens of the church of God according to their several abilities. Said the angel: "The ax must be laid at the root of the tree." Those who, like Judas, have set their hearts upon earthly treasure will complain as he did. His heart coveted the costly ointment poured upon Jesus, and he sought to hide his selfishness under a pious, conscientious regard for the poor: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred

penance, and given to the poor?" He wished that he had the ointment in his possession; it would not thus be lavished upon the Saviour. He would apply it to his own use; sell it for money. He prized his Lord just enough to sell Him to wicked men for a few pieces of silver. As Judas brought up the poor as an excuse for his selfishness, so professed Christians, whose hearts are covetous, will seek to hide their selfishness under a put-on conscientiousness. Oh, they fear that in adopting systematic benevolence we are becoming like the nominal churches! "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." They seem to have a conscientious desire to follow exactly the Bible as they understand it in this matter; but they entirely neglect the plain admonition of Christ: "Sell that ye have, and give alms."

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them." Some think this text teaches that they must be secret in their works of charity. And they do but very little, excusing themselves because they do not know just how to give. But Jesus explained it to His disciples as follows: "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They gave to be regarded noble and generous by men. They received praise of men, and Jesus taught His disciples that this was all the reward they would have. With many, the left hand does not know what the right hand does, for the right hand does nothing worthy of the notice of the left hand. This lesson of Jesus to His disciples was to rebuke those who wished to receive glory of men. They performed their almsgiving at some very public gathering; and before doing this, a public proclamation was made heralding their generosity before the people; and many gave large sums merely to have their name exalted by men. And the means given in this manner was often extorted from others, by oppressing the hireling in his wages, and grinding the face of the poor.

I was shown that this scripture does not apply to those who have the cause of God at heart, and use their means humbly to advance it. I was directed to these texts: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "By their fruits ye shall know them." I was shown that Scripture testimony will harmonize when it is rightly understood. The good works of the children of God are the most effectual preaching that the unbeliever has. He thinks that there must be strong motives that actuate the Christian to deny self, and use his possessions in trying to save his fellow men. It is unlike the spirit of the world. Such fruits testify that possessors are genuine Christians. They seem to be constantly reaching upward to a treasure that is imperishable.

With every gift and offering there should be a suitable object before the giver, not to uphold any in idleness, not to be seen of men or to get a great name, but to glorify God by advancing His cause. Some make large donations to the cause of God while their brother who is poor, may be suffering close by them, and they do nothing to relieve him. Little acts of kindness performed for their brother in a secret manner would bind their hearts together, and would be noticed in heaven. I saw that in their prices and wages the rich should make a difference in favor of the afflicted and widows and the worthy poor among them. But it is too often the case that the rich take advantage of the poor, reaping

every benefit that is to be gained, and exacting the last penny for every favor. It is all written in heaven. "I know thy works."

The greatest sin which now exists in the church is covetousness. God frowns upon His professed people for their selfishness. His servants have sacrificed their time and strength to carry them the word of life, and many have shown by their works that they prize it but lightly. If they can help the servant of God just as well as not, they sometimes do it; but they often let him pass on, and do but little for him. If they employ a day laborer, he must be paid full wages. But not so with the self-sacrificing servant of God. He labors for them in word and doctrine; he carries the heavy burden of the work on his soul; he patiently shows from the word of God the dangerous errors which are hurtful to the soul; he enforces the necessity of immediately tearing up the weeds which choke the good seed sown; he brings out of the storehouse of God's word things new and old to feed the flock of God. All acknowledge that they have been benefited; but the poisonous weed, covetousness, is so deeply rooted that they let the servant of God leave them without ministering to him of their temporal things. They have prized his wearing labor just as highly as their acts show. Says the True Witness: "I know thy works."

I saw that God's servants are not placed beyond the temptations of Satan. They are often fearfully beset by the enemy, and have a hard battle to fight. If they could be released from their commission, they would gladly labor with their hands. Their labor is called for by their brethren; but when they see it so lightly prized, they are depressed. True, they look to the final settlement for their reward, and this bears them up; but their families must have food and clothing. Their time belongs to the church of God; it is not at their own disposal. They sacrifice the society of their families to benefit others; and yet some who are benefited by their labors are indifferent to their wants. I saw that it is doing injustice to such to let them pass on and deceive themselves. They think they are approved of God, when He despises their selfishness. Not only will these selfish ones be called to render an account to God for the use they have made of their Lord's money, but all the depression and heartache which they have brought upon God's chosen servants, and which have crippled their efforts, will be set to the account of the unfaithful stewards.

The True Witness declares: "I know thy works." The selfish, covetous heart will be tested. Some are not willing to devote to God a very small portion of the increase of their earthly treasure. They would start back with horror if you should speak of the principal. What have they sacrificed for God? Nothing. They profess to believe that Jesus is coming; but their works deny their faith. Every person will live out all the faith he has. Falsehearted professor, Jesus knows thy works. He hates your stinted offerings, your lame sacrifices.