

Revivals And Church History :: In the day of Thy Power**In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/23 8:03****IN THE DAY OF THY POWER**

The Scriptural Principles of Revival

By Arthur Wallis

Chapter 15

THE SOLEMN ALTERNATIVE

“For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17).

The Divine Purpose

God has a grander and greater purpose for this age than simply saving souls from hell; He is bringing “sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10). He is not now concerned with improving the world, but with gathering out of it a people for His Name. He is forging an instrument, glorious and holy, that shall rule and administer the world in the coming age under the sovereignty of His Son.

In this age it is the angels, “sons of God” by creation, who govern the universe. In the age to come it will be the saints, “sons of God” by redemption, who shall judge the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Heb. 2:5). Thus God is now displaying through the church His manifold wisdom to those heavenly powers soon to be replaced by the church (Eph. 3:10). We can hardly contemplate these tremendous events without realizing that something radical must take place in the church as we see it today, if it is ever to be worthy of association with the Son of God in such a capacity, if in fact it is to be “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but . . . holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27).

If an exiled monarch had hopes of returning in power to judge the usurper, claim his throne, and set up again his kingdom, he would surely choose his ministers and administrators from among those who had shown unswerving loyalty towards him, and where possible he would train them in advance to fulfil their future functions. How could he promote to such executive positions those whose devotion to his cause had been lukewarm, who had been ashamed to side openly with him in his rejection, or who had been more concerned in his absence to serve their own selfish interests than his? It is such a picture that Christ paints in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11), in which He teaches us that His servants are on probation in this age, being trained and fitted for their function in the age to come. With Christ “the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom” (Dan. 7:18, 22). But how are they to be made fit? There must of necessity be a purifying, a making white, a refining, as Daniel also foretold (Dan. 12:10). In the larger scheme of things, God has commonly effected this purifying by:

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/23 16:45

Revival or judgment

2. Strange though it may seem, there are distinct similarities between the ways of God in revival and in judgment. Throughout the prophets the thought of a divine visitation is used to describe blessing and revival on the one hand (Jer. 27:22) and a season of judgment on the other (Jer. 50:31). Likewise the overflowing rain could picture a time of spiritual revival (Ezek. 34:26) or of divine judgment (Gen. 6:17). Another figure used of the mighty operation of the Spirit in revival is fire from heaven (I Kings 18:38; Acts 2:3), but it is also typical of the judgment of God (2 Kings 1:10). All this may be partly explained by the fact that there is an element of judgment present in every revival.

But it is also true that judgment is the solemn alternative to revival. The purifying and quickening of the people of God are a moral and spiritual necessity. Because of His very nature, God cannot and will not permit spiritual decline to continue unchecked. He is ever halting and reversing the trend of the times by means of revival - or judgment. Where His people are not prepared for the one, they shut themselves up to the other.

Some may wonder whether there can be any question of divine judgment upon a true child of God or a true church of God, since the Saviour declared that a believer "hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). There can certainly be no question of judgment for being dead in trespasses and sins, because those who believe have passed once for all out of the realm of death into that of life, and there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Subsequent unbelief and disobedience are another matter, and if persisted in must sooner or later evoke the chastisement of the Father.

The Egyptians did not hear Moses' word, nor did they believe on Him who sent him, therefore they came into judgment culminating in the death of the firstborn. The Israelites who heard and believed did not come into judgment, but passed out of death into life. Once redeemed, however, God began to deal with them as a father with his children, and thereafter they suffered chastisements and judgments, some of them severe, at His hands. The apostles drew valuable lessons from this for the warning of the church (Jude 5; 1 Cor. 10). Paul showed that not only the sins of redeemed Israel (1 Cor. 10:6), but the judgments that befell them were "by way of example; and they were written for our admonition" (verse 11). There are also New Testament illustrations of the truth that "the Lord shall judge His people" (Heb. 10:30).

We see from the history of Israel, in Canaan as well as in the wilderness, that God has always worked in His people through revival and through judgment. A time came, however, when there was no remedy and God could revive them no longer as a nation, but shut them up to the overwhelming judgments of the captivities. Even in the midst of these desolations of Zion we hear the cry of the faithful remnant, "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South" (Ps. 126:4), and we witness the mercy of God in granting to a few under Ezra and Nehemiah "a little reviving in bondage" (Ezra 9:8).

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/24 1:08

3. The close of the New Testament revelation brings again the message of revival or judgment. Before Paul laid down his pen and sealed his faith with his blood, that great sweep of the Spirit that began at Pentecost had begun to wane, with accompanying signs of spiritual decline. John, writing at the close of the first century, conveys to a small circle of seven churches a personal message from the risen Christ (Rev. 2 and 3). Five of them are charged by the Head of the church with sins of departure and commanded to repent. The "germs" which Paul had diagnosed years before, and about which he had faithfully warned the churches (Acts 20: 29), were now an epidemic.

The Lord showed these five churches that there could be no reviving without repentance, and if they were unwilling for this, the alternative was judgment. Doubtless then, as now, the Lord longed to pour out His Spirit, but how could He do this greater thing until they were willing for personal reviving? In these five letters the need of this reviving is laid bare, the way to it is marked out, and the solemn alternative is set forth; it is only these points in the letters we need now consider. If ever there was a message to the churches of today it is here in Revelation 2 and 3.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/24 12:24

Love

4. "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love" (Rev. 2:4). The Lord's contention with His people at Ephesus centered in this terse and pointed accusation.

The life of God that comes into the center of a newborn soul does not always or at once influence, as it should, the whole circumference of the outer life; hence the exhortations to true believers not to lie, steal, commit fornication, bite and devour one another, etc. Conversely, spiritual decay may be at work in the heart of a believer or a church without the signs of decline being at once manifest.

The rosy apple with unblemished skin may be rotting at the core. It was so with Ephesus. The glowing commendation of verses 2 and 3 might lead one to suppose that here was a church that left nothing to be desired. This was no doubt man's verdict, but it was not God's; "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Those eyes which were as a flame of fire, piercing through every veneer and searching the hidden depths, had perceived in this church, despite its orthodoxy and its activity, the symptoms of spiritual decline. Ephesus, to whom Paul had declared "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), to whom had been committed the sublimest truths in the New Testament regarding the church as the bride to be of Christ (Eph. 5:22-32), had declined in that very relationship: she had left her first love.

How true is the saying, "Christianity is a religion of the heart." It is not a religion of the head, though it is essentially rational. It is not a religion of the hand, though it is essentially practical. It is a religion of the heart: for what a man is in his heart that is he in the sight of God. Christ taught that the thoughts, words, and actions that go to make up the life, proceed from the heart (Matt. 12:34; 15:19). Since the heart is the very fountain of man's personality, it is ever the object of Satan's attack. If he can but corrupt the heart he will soon defile the whole life. Solomon was wise to warn us, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). He would have been wiser still had he practiced what he preached. Implicit in this heart condition of Ephesus were solemn possibilities that only Christ could see. He had diagnosed in the heart of this church that deadly germ which is responsible for all spiritual decline. Such a condition, threatening as it did the very life of the body, called for drastic action by the Surgeon. Hence the sternness and solemnity of Christ's words to these believers.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/24 13:30

5. What is this "first love" that Ephesus had forsaken? It is the love of her whose every fear and prejudice and reserve have been broken down; whose heart has been utterly captured, she knows not how; and who presents herself to her beloved as his, and his for ever. It is the love of betrothal. It was this love that drew Israel out of the bondage of Egypt into a covenant relationship with the Lord, anticipating a day when He should say to them, "thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name" (Isa. 54:5). Alas, they too left their first love, and sorrowfully God had to remind them of it: "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. . . My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. . . My people have forgotten Me days without number" (Jer. 2:2, 13, 32). Thus this church of the New Testament, heedless of that which had been recorded for her admonition, was repeating the sin of "the church in the wilderness."

Not only is a first love towards Christ one of the most precious and sacred and beautiful things under heaven, but it is vital to a deeper life and growth in the things of God. When the love wanes, the life will soon decline. Is this the reason why the life of the church today is so low, and the need for its reviving so great? As we consider some of the characteristics of "first love," let us ask ourselves whether the church, whether we ourselves, are guilty of the sin of having left it, or the greater sin of never having had it.

It is pure love, without the taint of worldly attraction, and unweakened by ulterior motive. It is the love of the "pure virgin," uncorrupted "from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2, 3). It is a tender love, sensitive to the smallest thing that might bring grief or displeasure to the Beloved, ever seeking to be well pleasing unto Him who aids, "If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). It is a supreme love that has conquered all other loves and brought them into subjection, according to His own word, "He that loveth father or mother, etc. . . more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). It comes from a heart that can sing:

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me,
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
Oh, knit my thankful heart to Thee,
And reign without a rival there.
P. GERHARDT.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/25 1:27

6. It is a sacrificial love, because it partakes of the very nature of the love of God and of Christ. "God so loved. . . that He gave His only begotten Son." "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it." And this "first love" is but the offspring of the divine love, which ever brings forth after its own kind. It is a love that gives itself up and pours itself out. This had once been the love of the Ephesian church. This was the love she had forsaken.

These are not so much the words of an offended Lord as of a wounded Lover, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." The toil, the zeal, and the orthodoxy of this church could never compensate for the loss of that first love. Her need, more desperate and urgent than she could know, was for a revived love. Is it not the need of the church today? Is it that many believers have lost, or is it that they have never known the freshness and fervency of "first love?" How easy it is to be deceived over this matter. One may perform the same exercises, pray with the same words,

sing the same hymns, as one has always done, and yet the whole be no longer an exercise of the heart, but simply a matter of form or of duty. Said Christ, "This people honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8).

John in his first epistle brings the matter of love for the Lord down to a very practical issue by showing that the measure of a believer's love for God is the measure of his love for his brother, that much and no more (1 John 4:11-21). The Saviour said that His disciples were to be known by their love for each other (John 13:35); instead they have become marked before the world by their strife and division. Is there any need for further evidence that the first love of the early church, who were of "one heart and one soul," and of whom men had to exclaim, "Behold how they love one another," has been largely lost by the church of today?

Compassion for the perishing is another expression of this first love. Most are prepared to pay lip service to the need of the lost, but with how many is there practical indifference? How few are the churches today with a heart like the church of the Thessalonians, to whom Paul said, "From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord. . . in every place. . . so that we need not to speak anything" (1 Thess. 1:8). Is it not evident that we need a revived love?

The One who still walks in the midst of the lampstands, and before whose eyes every heart is laid bare, not only reveals the condition, but also the cure. Here are the three steps to a revived love: "Remember. . . repent. . . do the first works" (verse 5). "Remember from whence thou art fallen." Christ is not addressing the individual; He is addressing the church. There had been corporate failure, and the Lord calls for corporate action. As a church they had lost their first love; as a church they had fallen; and therefore as a church they needed to remember, that is to go back in thought to their beginning, and realize how great their fall was.

The church of today must do the same. Only through an honest comparison of the love of the early church with the love of the church today can we appreciate the greatness of our fall. Then "Repent." Long have we urged the sinners to do it: now the Lord commands us to do it ourselves. This involves a change of attitude, a change of heart, a humbling before God, who has promised to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Finally, "Do the first works." The church must go back to the beginning, and tread again the pathway of the first love. Of the Macedonian churches we read, "First they gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5). This in a phrase is doing the first works. There must be a renewed dedication, presenting ourselves afresh to our Beloved as "in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart" (Song 3:11).

If the church was not willing to pay the price of a revived love, there could be but one alternative - He would visit her in judgment: "Or else I come to thee, and will move thy lampstand out of its place, except thou repent." The lampstand is the proper place for the light. "Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house" (Matt. 5:15). The threatened judgment upon Ephesus was that of having the lampstand removed, so that the lamp of corporate testimony would cease to shine. Her organization, her activities, and even her form of witness might continue, but there would be no light there. Can any greater tragedy overtake a church than to lose its testimony? Souls would stumble and perish in the darkness because the light was not shining where it ought to be. Ships that might have found the haven of this church would make shipwreck because the harbor light was not in its place. They shall perish in their iniquity, but their loss God will require at the church's hands - the church that lost her light because she lost her love.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" today. If the church is not willing to return to her first love, can we expect God to pour out His Spirit? - can we expect Him to withhold His judgment? As we face the alternatives, let us pray individually:

Oh, grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but Thy pure love alone;
Oh, may Thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown:
All coldness from my heart remove;
May every act, word, thought, be love.
P.GERHARDT.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/25 14:36

Truth
7. "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam. . . of the Nicolaitans. . . thou sufferest the woman Jezebel. . . and she teacheth and seduceth my servants" (Rev. 2:14-20). These were the charges Christ brought against the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira. Since they had much the same condition and need, they can be considered together. Their spiritual decline was manifest in an attitude of complacency towards the truth.

Where Ephesus had stood firm, intolerant of evil men and judging those who posed as apostles (2:2), these two churches had slipped. They had not apostatized as a whole, in fact Pergamum earned the commendation, "Thou holdest fast My Name, and didst not deny My faith" (2:13), but both were guilty of an easygoing attitude towards false teaching in the fellowship. Unlike Ephesus, these churches had become tolerant where their Lord was intolerant (2:6). They were treating those teaching error with weak indulgence, when they had been told to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). By failing in the exercise of discipline, they revealed that they were no longer jealous for the truth. They were busying themselves about "the house of God, which is. . . the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), unconcerned about the men who were tampering with its foundations.

What was this error that had reared its head in these churches? It was the teaching of Balaam that led those holding it "to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14, 20). Nothing definite appears to be known about the teaching of the Nicolaitans, but the fact that it was linked with the teaching of Balaam, and that there were those holding it "in like manner" (verse 15), is an indication that it may have been the same evil, though perhaps in a different form. Similarly with the self-styled prophetess in the church at Thyatira; Jezebel was probably a figurative name which described her character, but her teaching was that of Balaam (cf. verses 14, 20).

In Numbers (chaps. 25 and 31:16) the origin of the teaching is recorded. It began in the heart of a covetous man who loved the hire of wrongdoing; thus the motive was evil gain. Balaam, whom God had compelled to bless Israel instead of cursing them, counselled the Moabites to seduce the Israelites into the licentious idolatry of Baal Peor. It was a teaching of guile (Num. 25:18) that succeeded all too easily in seducing a people whose strength lay in being separate and undefiled in comparison with the other nations. Balaam himself had testified of this: "It is a people that dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9); and again, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel" (Num. 23:21).

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/26 5:31

8. The epistles disclose that two principal threats to the life of the New Testament churches were: firstly, the teaching of Judaism with its return to the bondage of ceremonies and rituals; and secondly, this teaching of Balaam in various forms, with its return to the bondage of the world.

The council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) had the delicate task of marking out for the guidance of the churches the middle path between these two extremes of error. It refused to put the yoke of Judaism upon the neck of the disciples by insisting on circumcision and the keeping of the ceremonial law. But it warned them to abstain from that which would lead to the bondage of the world, such as, "things sacrificed to idols. . . and fornication," which was the teaching of Balaam.

This doctrine of worldliness under the guise of Christianity was gaining momentum in the latter part of the first century. In his second epistle, Peter devotes almost the whole of chapter 2 to those teachers who "followed the way of Balaam," and it is the burden of Jude's whole epistle. These two give us a clear view of the character of the teachers and their doctrine. They despised dominion. They were revelers, adulterous, and covetous. They enticed steadfast souls. As Balaam may have justified his evil counsel by arguing that, since God had promised to bless Israel and no one could reverse it (Num. 23:19), therefore they could sin with impunity, so were these Balaam teachers of the New Testament guilty of "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

In other words, they followed and taught a worldly policy of self-indulgence under the cloak of grace, denying thereby the Lordship of Christ. They argued that they were no longer under the bondage of the law, and therefore could do as they pleased. Their motto might have been, "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound," or "Let us do evil that good may come." They held out a way of escape from the strait gate and the narrow way, offering the wavering believer a new "liberty," while they themselves were "slaves of corruption" (2 Pet. 2:19).

Down the centuries all the seductive skill of Satan has been employed in seeking to break down the fence that God has

placed around His people. He has used his evil genius to thwart those glorious purposes that can only be achieved through "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet. 2: 9). Paul told the Corinthian believers, "I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). No wonder James addresses the worldly Christians thus: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (Jas. 4:4).

Let us face it now: a teaching that encourages conformity to the world, though it takes to itself the name of Christian, and though it works under the orthodox evangelical phraseology, is a doctrine of Balaam. "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first" (2 Pet. 2:20). It were better never to have had opportunity to be espoused to the Lord, than having been betrothed to play the harlot with the world.

The woman who has lost her first love for her husband is the one most open to the temptation of being unfaithful. It is not such a big step from the sin of Ephesus to that which threatened the life of Pergamum and Thyatira. Who can estimate the devastating effect upon the church today of the teaching of Balaam? It is finding its way into circles which one might have thought were forever immune. This modern form of the pollution of idols and committing fornication with the world is one of the greatest scourges among the people of God. As with these two churches, God holds responsible those who, though they have not been deceived and do not follow the teaching, countenance it being taught, and with a criminal indulgence allow it to be followed. The Lord is here contending with those who tolerate that which He has specifically stated He hates (Rev. 2:6). It is they who are commanded to repent. It is they who must judge this evil thing. The reviving of the truth that the church is set apart as holy for her Lord is in their hands.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/28 1:21

9. "Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth" (verse 16) "And I gave time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works" (verses 21-23).

Once again the alternatives are clear. The Lord was calling these churches to repentance with a view to their being purified and revived. They must deal with this complacency towards worldliness in their midst and the teaching that fostered it. If they refused to exterminate this evil the Lord would visit them, not in revival but in judgment. What the Lord said to His people long ago in the visions of Patmos, He is saying to His people today, "If you will not purge away the harlotry of the church, I will do it in judgment."

Pergamum and Thyatira were guilty of the sin of Eli, whose covetous and licentious sons made themselves vile in the priesthood and he restrained them not, concerning whom the Lord said, "I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knew" (1 Sam. 3:13), and because he refused to repent at the warning of God. But when the time came for judgment to begin, the thing was not done in a corner, but before all Israel. God was fulfilling His word, "Behold I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that heareth it shall tingle" (1 Sam. 3:11). So the Lord warns these New Testament believers, "I will deal with this thing," and "all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts." His visitation in judgment would be vindicated before the eyes of all.

When, through the counsel of Balaam, Israel began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, there was one in the camp of Israel who saved the situation by drastic discipline. Phinehas felt as God did about the matter: "He was jealous with My jealousy among them," declared the Lord, therefore "behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace. . . the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was jealous for his God" (Num. 25). The God who cut off the house of Eli because of his tolerance of this evil, perpetuated for ever the house of Phinehas because of his holy intolerance. The truth must be revived that a holy God requires a holy people. Where are they who may, like Phinehas, save the churches of today from the wrath of the Lord's jealousy?

There was another in a similar day of apostasy, who was "very jealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts" (1 Kings 19:10). He acted as drastically as his forebear to purge out the idolatry and fornication from the midst of God's people. In his jealousy for the Lord Elijah averted the fire of divine wrath and brought down the fire of revival. He slew the worshipers of Baal and opened the windows of heaven. "The God that answereth by fire" is still God. Shall it be the fire of judgment or of revival?

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/28 14:21

Life

10. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead" (Rev. 3:1). This was the divine estimate of the church in Sardis. Since Scripture clearly teaches that a church is composed only of "living stones," those who have been spiritually quickened and possess life in Christ, how could Christ say of this church, "Thou art dead?" . . . Clearly it was meant in a relative sense, not in an absolute sense. If this company had never possessed life Christ would never have exhorted them to "stablish the things that remain." Since He obviously addresses them as believers, He teaches us that there is a sense in which believers may be dead. Christ's statement follows from His absolute knowledge of their works, "I know thy works, that . . . thou art dead." In essence they had life, but when it came to manifestation or "works," they were dead. This church was like the boy whom the Lord delivered from an unclean spirit of whom it is recorded, "the child became as one dead; insomuch that the more part said, He is dead" (Mark 9:26). The life was there, but it was not being manifested.

There is no suggestion that these believers were dead because of an absence of works. Here is not the deadness of inactivity, for Christ clearly stated that they had works, that He knew them, and that He had found them unfulfilled. Nor is there any suggestion that they were dead because they held heterodox teaching, for though Christ had many things to judge of them, He never implied that they had departed from the faith. Here, then, we are faced with the anomaly of a church which is evangelically orthodox, manifestly active – but dead in the estimate of the Lord. In His address to these believers, the Lord discloses the reasons for their state, and marks out the way whereby the life of the church may be revived .

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/28 16:44

11. Firstly, Sardis was a church relying on her past reputation. "Thou hast a name that thou livest." Here was evidently a company with a great spiritual tradition, that had succumbed to the temptation of looking backwards in pride instead of looking upwards in humility and dependence. Doubtless there had been a day when the eyes of this church were truly fixed on Christ, seeking to do all as unto Him; thus had she become great in spiritual power and influence, and had a name among the churches. Now, alas, she had taken her eyes off the Lord and fixed them upon men, more concerned with their commendation than His, striving to live in the borrowed glory of a day that had passed.

Men are impressed by externalities, the Lord only by realities. When the saints at Sardis lost that "single eye" that was set on pleasing the Lord, they became occupied with maintaining forms and traditions, "sadly contented with a show of things." Activity and organization continued, but life and power waned. The church had striven to maintain appearances, and she had succeeded - "Thou hast a name that thou livest," but at the cost of her life - "Thou art dead." Sardis had become like the Necropolis of Cairo, whose streets and houses appear from a distance like those of a thriving community, but when viewed from within it is discovered that the houses are roofless, and in place of the hearthstone there is a tombstone.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/29 9:42

12. Secondly, Sardis was a church not fulfilling her works. "Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine fulfilled before My God" (Rev. 3:2). It has already been pointed out that the deadness of Sardis was not to be accounted for on the ground of her inactivity. It was the quality rather than the quantity of her works that revealed that she was dead. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3).

The output of this church, when placed upon the balances of the sanctuary, was found to be deficient of that vital element, "the spirit of life." Here was the activity of converted men without the activity of God. Here was action without union. Here was a form of religion that, despite its orthodoxy, denied the power thereof.

Thus with all the energy put forth there was no consummation and no fruition. Before God the works were unfulfilled, that is, the divine purpose in them was not being achieved. There was gospel testimony with no conversions; prayer gatheri

ings with no spirit of intercession and no answers from heaven; ministry of the word with no enrichment to the church; much being done but nothing being achieved. "I have found no works of thine fulfilled." Unless the life of the Spirit was pulsating through her activities, how could there be fulfilment so as to satisfy the eye of God? She was working in the energy of the flesh, and it is always true that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). The case of Sardis is a vivid illustration of the truth that "the mind of the flesh is death" (Rom. 8:6). She was sowing to the flesh, and thus she could not reap fruition and fulfilment, only corruption (Gal. 6:8). Well might the Lord have said to Sardis what He said to Israel years before: "Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hag. 1:5, 6).

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/29 16:43

13. Thirdly, Sardis was a church not living up to her privileges. "Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent" (verse 3). She is now reminded by the Lord of how she had received the truth. It is possible that she had been entrusted with a fuller measure of spiritual light than many other churches; and that this was why she had "a name," a reputation among the others. At the first she had accepted in humility and obedience this sacred trust, for Christ reminds her, "Thou . . . didst hear." She had become "obedient from the heart" to that which she had received. The truth had been embraced.

As Ephesus had to be reminded that she had lost her first love, so Sardis had now to be reminded that she had lost her first obedience. Privileged beyond many, and with a reputation surpassing most, she had become careless of her holy stewardship. God had given these believers light that they might walk in it, not boast about it. Every privilege brings an attendant responsibility. Failure to live up to the light received had brought this church to a worse state than if she had never had that fuller light. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matt. 6:23).

Christ had now to command this church to "keep" that which she had at the first received and heard, and to "repent" of her failure to do so. She had let the truth slip, not mentally perhaps, but experimentally. Have we done the same? "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them" (Heb. 2:1). It is a most solemn thing to receive and not to keep. If there are churches today who, like Sardis, have a name that they live, who speak of the greater light that they have received, they would do well to ponder what Paul would describe as "sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:3), when He spoke of our accountability as servants in view of the privileges we have received: "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. . . . And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more" (Luke 12:47, 48).

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/30 1:23

14. Finally, Sardis was a church failing to maintain her purity. The heart attitude of these believers resulted in defilement as well as deadness. There were only "a few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments" (Rev. 3:4). These garments speak of the outer life, that which is plain for all to see. These who were resting on a past reputation, who were satisfied to think that they had been privileged to receive the fuller light, had grown careless about their outward purity. The garments of glory and of beauty had been defiled by the works of the flesh. Instead of "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23), they were hardly conscious of any defilement there, or that the outer garments were any less pure than they ought to have been. It was clearly taught in the Old Testament that where there was death there was defilement (Lev. 21:1, 11, etc.).

Had these Christians been full of life they would have been vigilant, and so have avoided the spotting of their garments. Only he who watches can expect "to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). The moment of decline was when they ceased to watch. The Lord had thus to bring them back to the point of departure in order to show them the way to recovery, to the reviving of their life.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/30 13:38

15. "Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine fulfilled" (Rev. 3:2). The things that remained in Sardis were her incomplete works. These spiritual activities were a mere shell devoid of the kernel of life, and now even the shell was about to pass away. That which remained could only be saved from final decay and established by a new inflow of divine life. For this the church must awake. There must be a new spirit of vigilance, of obedience, of repentance.

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Once again the solemn alternative is set forth. If the church was not willing to watch that her life should be revived Christ would visit her in judgment. The words of the Lord to these believers, "I will come as a thief," had evidently no immediate reference to His return, although His second advent is thus described elsewhere. This coming was not a promise but a warning, and its fulfilment was contingent upon the failure of the church to watch - "if. . . thou shalt not watch, I will come," implying that vigilance could avert it. It was a coming of Christ in judgment - "I will come upon thee." And finally, whatever application the warning may have for believers today it applied primarily to this church in Sardis, who Christ knew would no longer exist when He should come again. If the church did not repent Christ must fulfil His word.

The thief comes to dispossess his victim of the precious things in his keeping. In such a manner would Christ come upon this church in judgment if she did not repent and watch. Did these believers boast that they had a name that they lived? He would come and take it from them, and all the churches would know that Sardis was dead. Were they still making much of "the things that remain," the works that were unfulfilled? He would come and these things that were "ready to die" would pass away. Were they satisfied with the light that they had received? He would come and take this from them so that the light that was in them would become darkness. As for the garments that were spotted and defiled, He would come and strip these from them, and their nakedness would be seen by all. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15). In a word, this church lacked the one thing needful, the spirit of life; and if she would not remedy the situation He would come to fulfil His own words spoken here on earth, "whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. 13:12).

Not only would Christ come to do the work of a thief, but He could come in the manner of a thief. "Thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." As a thief comes stealthily, secretly, silently, so would Christ come upon this church in judgment. Unheralded He would arrive, undetected He would go. Her precious things would be taken from her without her realizing it. As Samson "awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times. . . But he wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (Judges 16:20); so would she awaken, all unconscious that "the thief" had visited her in her slumbers and that which she should have held fast till He came (Rev. 2:25) had gone.

As we have weighed up the Lord's description of the church in Sardis, has there risen up before us those churches that we know? Have we seen our own spiritual lives mirrored in the condition of these first century Christians? Then we can be assured the warnings apply to us also. It is ours to determine whether He shall come unto us as the rain, or as the thief, to quicken or to judge.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/30 16:57

Zeal

16. "Thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold" (Rev. 3:16). This was the Lord's appraisal of Laodicea. What is the spiritual significance of being hot, cold, or lukewarm? The final command of the Lord to this church was, "Be zealous therefore and repent" (verse 19); He had evidently been registering the zeal or fervour of this church. Now zeal is not enthusiasm, though it may contain it. There is, however, a fleshly enthusiasm in spiritual things which is the offspring of pride, and which bears no relation to spiritual zeal. To be fervent and to be zealous both convey in the original the idea of heat, of intensity of feeling. Zeal also contains the thought of a jealous concern: "zealous" and "jealous" being interchangeable words in Scripture. A jealous concern for God's glory is the motive of true spiritual zeal. It was jealousy for God's honour that moved the Saviour to purge the temple, but it reminded the disciples of the Scripture, "The zeal of Thine house shall eat me up" (John 2:17).

Registering the temperature of this church's zeal, the Lord says to her, "I would thou wert. . . hot." The zeal that God looks for is "boiling hot," for this is what the word means in the original. How many there were in the sacred records who

ho were "hot" in their zeal for God. Said David, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire kindled: the n spake I with my tongue" (Ps. 39:3). Jeremiah declared, "If I say I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His Name, then there is in mine heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones" (Jer. 20:9). But who among the sons of men ever exceeded the zeal of him who described himself as "the least of the apostles," but who "laboured more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor. 15:9, 10). "I am ready," he could say, "not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

Paul's Christianity was not a pastime but a passion. The zeal that was once engaged in persecuting the church had been reclaimed for God, purged and sanctified; and now, fed by the Spirit of God and burning with holy intensity, it was ever urging him forward "toward the goal for the prize." One can only imagine the feelings of the Saviour as He looked sorrowfully at this church of Laodicea and said, "I would thou wert. . . hot."

"I would thou wert cold." This does not suggest an unregenerate state, for Christ could not have wished that these Laodicean believers had never been redeemed, unless He thereby denied the value of His redemptive work in them. No, the state here described is that of the backslider, who has slipped so far as to reveal no concern at all for the things of Christ. He has opened his life to the world with its icy blast. He has become manifestly cold towards the One to whom he once yielded allegiance. The cares, riches, and pleasures of this life have frozen his soul. There is not even a pretense of zeal; he is cold. But this was not the state of the Laodiceans.

"Thou art lukewarm," that is, the state between the two. Laodicea had neither the spiritual intensity of the hot, nor the spiritual honesty of the cold. The hot are fervent, the cold are indifferent, but the lukewarm are complacent. According to her confession, this church was "hot," for she professed so much: according to her condition, this church was cold, for she possessed so little. These believers were tepid because they had not the concern, the passion, the zeal which would make them hot; and because they were too self-respecting to be numbered with those who were openly cold. "Tepid is that condition in which conviction does not affect conscience, heart, or will" (Campbell Morgan). Whatever convictions these Christians had, they did not lead to action.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/1 1:47

17. "I would thou wert cold or hot." That the Lord would rather they were hot than lukewarm we can readily understand, but why would He rather they were cold than lukewarm? Firstly, because a lukewarm state is a mixture of hot and cold, and the Lord abhors mixtures. Mixture is the work of Satan and spells chaos. This was the state of the creation as we find it on the first page of Scripture (Gen. 1:2), and God set to work to renovate and restore by dividing the things that were different, the light from the darkness, the waters beneath the firmament from those above, the seas from the earth, etc. The same lesson was enshrined in the law. "Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of seed: neither shall there come upon thee a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together" (Lev. 19:19). "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together" (Deut. 22:9-11). Divine order necessitates the separation of those things which by their very nature are irreconcilably distinct.

Secondly, the Lord prefers the cold, because there is an element of hypocrisy in the lukewarm state that is not so with the cold; and the Lord abhors hypocrisy. The profession of those believers, "Thou sayest, I am rich," was denied by their true condition, "and knowest not that thou art. . . poor." When a man's condition denies his profession, that is hypocrisy, even though he may be blind to it. It is the same in the realm of salvation: compare the attitude of Jesus to the self-confessed sinner, tax gatherer, and harlot with his attitude to the hypocritical, self-righteous Pharisee. To the former He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour" (Matt. 11:28); to the latter, "Ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" (Matt. 23:33). Though the Laodiceans were hardly conscious of their hypocrisy, they were not thereby absolved from it.

Finally, the Lord prefers the cold because there is more hope for the recovery of the cold than of the lukewarm. There was more hope for the son (representing the tax gatherer) who said, "I will not," but afterwards repented and went, than for the son (representing the Pharisee) who said, "I go, sir," and went not. To the latter Jesus said, "the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31).

It was to these two classes that the parable of the prodigal was directed (Luke 15: 1-3). Today we may rightly use the story to preach the gospel to sinners, but it has a more poignant application to those who are already sons of the Father, especially in relation to the elder brother in the plot. If the prodigal who openly left the home be taken to represent the cold backslider, and the elder brother who stayed at home, professing that he had never transgressed and yet who never possessed his possessions (verse 29), be regarded as the lukewarm believer, the story will live.

How would we expect a lukewarm, complacent Christian to react to a backslidden brother who not only returns to the Father's house, but into a fulness of joy and blessing that the other has never known? How would we expect him to beha

ve when he is entreated to come in and share these good things? Just as did the elder brother: "He was angry, and would not go in" (verse 28). Ah, there is more hope for the recovery of the cold than of the lukewarm.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/1 12:02

18. The Lord now proceeds to define this lukewarm state. "Because thou sayest, I am. . . and knowest not that thou art. . ." This was the whole situation in a nutshell. Even the hot could hardly be in a better state than rich, having gotten riches, and having need of nothing. Even the cold could be little worse than wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. They aspired to be among the hot, whereas in all but name they were among the cold.

Their claim was threefold. Firstly, they boasted of their spiritual inheritance: "I am rich." They made much of the great objective side of truth, their spiritual riches in Christ, without realizing that such is vain unless backed up by the subjective or experimental side. In other words it was no use talking about being spiritual millionaires, while they were living like spiritual paupers. It was no use congratulating each other that they were "Blessed with all spiritual blessings. . . in Christ," or that they were "in everything. . . enriched by Him," if they were manifestly not living in the goal of their inheritance.

Then they spoke of their spiritual increase: "I have gotten riches." They thus included riches gained by them as well as riches given to them. It is right and proper that riches received as an inheritance should be increased by proper use. The faithful servant who has received five talents will gain other five talents. Light obeyed will increase. God deals to each man a "measure of faith," but it may grow exceedingly. "Unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have a bundance" (Matt. 25:29). This boast might have been true, but was in fact a sad delusion. They mistook increased apprehension for increased appropriation.

Finally, they asserted their spiritual independence: "I have need of nothing." They were self sufficient. No minister of the word, no servant of God could impart anything to them. They knew it all, and they had it all. The exceeding riches of God's grace were not flowing through to meet the need of this poverty stricken church because she had "need of nothing." The Lord has no wealth for the rich, no food for the full. "The hungry He hath filled with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53).

Did someone suggest an extra church prayer meeting to implore God's blessing? They had no need of such a thing. Was mention made of a day to be set apart for humiliation and confession in view of the prevailing deadness? It was quite uncalled for—things were going well. Was concern expressed that the gospel service was not reaching the people, or resulting in conversions? The gospel service had always been quite adequate, and the results must be left with God. Did someone dare to suggest that there was a suspicion of coldness in the service of worship? The gatherings were all that could be desired.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/1 17:09

19. Such was the claim of these believers; but what had the Lord to say of their actual condition? "And knowest not that thou art. . ." They were oblivious of their true condition before God. Spiritual insensibility is always a mark of lukewarmness. They had not "their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). So much had they emphasized their standing and so little their true state that they were virtually saying, "Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them" (Mal. 2:17). "Thou art the wretched one and miserable." "Wretched" indicates the state of one in the midst of trouble or frustration, as when Paul cried out in the midst of his failures, "O wretched man that I am." "Miserable" means in a state to be pitied, an object of mercy. Paul used this word also to describe what a believer would be without the hope of resurrection: "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:19). Where they had thought to be congratulated they were in fact to be commiserated. Why were these believers wretched and miserable, though unconscious of it? Because they were "poor and blind and naked."

"Thou art. . . poor." They could talk about "the unsearchable riches of Christ," they could admire them as though they were their own, but they failed utterly to possess them. This church stands in striking contrast to that of Smyrna whom the Lord consoled in all her tribulation and poverty with the reminder, "But thou art rich" (Rev. 2:9). She had

learned the secret of "having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10).

"Thou art. . . blind." Not only is there a blindness which affects the minds of the unbelieving (2 Cor. 4:4), but of the believer also. Peter reminds us of those spiritual virtues that God has granted to us as believers, and how they may become ours; but he adds, "He that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near" (2 Pet. 1: 3-9). These believers were "short sighted" (2 Pet. 1:9, Darby), seeing only the temporal and transitory things of the passing world, and without the heavenly vision for "the things that are above, where Christ is" (Col. 3:1). These believers were indeed "wretched and pitiable," as was sightless Samson, grinding in the prison house.

"Thou art. . . naked." As God looked at this church all that He could see was "flesh." "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Rom, 7:18). "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). The eye of God can only find pleasure in looking upon one clothed with "the new man" which we are commanded to put on (Col. 3:10). If these believers had ever "put on," then they had certainly failed to keep on. "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15). Yes, there is an inevitable shame attached to nakedness in the spiritual as well as the natural realm, and this reproach was upon the Name they bore as well as upon themselves. Little wonder their Lord was deeply concerned that "the shame of nakedness be not made manifest" (Rev. 3:18).

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/2 3:30

20. Despite this pathetic picture the Lord had not yet despaired, even of these believers. He outlines the pathway to recovery: "I counsel thee to buy of Me. . ." This meant, firstly, they must renounce their boast to "have need of nothing," for clearly he who has no need, has no need to buy. Secondly, they must be prepared to pay the price, for all buying costs. This must be paid in humility, repentance, diligence, and sacrifice. Finally, they must buy of Him. In Christ Jesus their Lord were all the resources and blessings they could need to meet their poverty, blindness, and nakedness.

For their poverty He offered them "gold refined by fire." Gold means purchasing power. There is practically nothing material beyond the grasp of the natural man if he has gold. There is no spiritual blessing that is beyond the grasp of the spiritual man who has this gold that Christ offers. They needed everything, and they could have everything, if they had "gold refined by fire," that is, a purified faith. "The proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire" (1 Pet. 1:7). Faith is the great purchasing power of the believer. "Believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22) is an eternal principle of the ways of God. All things are within range of the one who believes (Mark 9:23).

If the Laodiceans' claim to be rich meant that they were well to do they were certainly devoid of this gold. Smyrna in her material poverty, however, had much of it (Rev. 2:9). It is indeed seldom that material gold and spiritual gold are found together in any quantity. "Did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith?" (Jas. 2:5). "Buy of Me gold." The gold was in Christ and of Christ. They could henceforth, if they would, "live by faith, the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20, Darby), just as a pauper, receiving a vast inheritance, would start to live by his newly acquired wealth.

For their nakedness He offered them "white garments." These were also to be bought of Him. If the gold was the faith of Christ, then these garments were the righteousness of Christ; not the imputed righteousness which is the portion of all who believe, but the imparted righteousness, seen in the practical outworking of holiness day by day. They were to "put on the new man." But what is meant by this? The passage goes on to explain, "Put on therefore. . . a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering," and so on (Col. 3:10, 12). "The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). The flesh was to be covered with the white garments of Christlikeness.

Not only had they to buy the garments, but also don them, "that thou mayest clothe thyself," as the R.V. rightly renders it. This is in keeping with the teaching concerning "the new man" which the saints themselves had to put on, and also concerning the Bride of whom we read, "It was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen" (Rev. 19:8). Only thus could the shame of their nakedness be covered.

Finally, for their blindness He offered them "eye salve to anoint eyes." Of the three things mentioned here, vision is perhaps the most difficult to recover, once it has been lost. Samson recovered his great strength before he died with the Philistines, but he never recovered his vision. In Christ there is an eye salve, more wonderful than that which He once made of clay to anoint the eyes of a man born blind (John 9:6). That day Christ "anointed on" the eyes for outer sight. To his eye salve they themselves had to "anoint in" that the inner sight might be restored. As the Anointed One, there rested upon Christ "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of

the fear of the Lord" (Isa. 11:2). The same anointing of the Spirit from Him could bring healing virtue to the blinded vision, causing these believers to know and to be taught concerning all things (1 John 2:20, 27). Thus would they receive "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of heart enlightened" (Eph. 1:17); thus would they see the wondrous ways and purposes of God.

That blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love,
Enables with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight.
FROM LATIN OF NINTH CENTURY.

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/2 9:45

21. Having sharply reproved these Christians, nauseating in their lukewarmness, the Chief Shepherd tenderly adds, "As many as I love I reprove." What matchless grace is this! In spite of everything He loved them still. Since He had not abandoned them, there was still hope of their recovery. "Be zealous therefore and repent" was His last exhortation. In place of their lukewarmness there must be a revived zeal accompanied by a thorough going repentance in view of what they had professed to be, and what in fact they were.

If the Laodiceans were not willing to heed the command of their Lord they would face the solemn alternative of a judgment more imminent than anything He had already issued. "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth" (Darby), as one would vomit out food disagreeable to the palate. If words have any significance, Christ was warning this church of some kind of imminent rejection. Paul was urging the Corinthians to be hot in their zeal for God when he said, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run that ye may attain." Then he added, "I therefore so run. . . lest by any means. . . I myself should be rejected" (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

This solemn warning to Laodicea is also a warning to every lukewarm church or Christian, that though their final salvation cannot be imperilled, they are in grievous danger of being rejected as to the prize. Paul took no chances. "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended: but one thing I do. . . I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13, margin).

Re: In the day of Thy Power - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/3 2:50

22. How would Christ reject this church? "I am about to spue thee out of My mouth." It was from the mouth of the Lord that this church would be rejected, if unrepentant and unrevived. He had once said, "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32).

If the promise concerning confession applies to true believers, so does the warning concerning denial. The lukewarm Laodiceans, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, with Christ standing outside the door, were virtually denying Him. He was about to reject them from His mouth by denying them before His Father, with all the loss that that would involve. "If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we endure, we shall also reign with Him: if we shall deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:11).

As we have contemplated this final message of the risen Christ, dare we say that the spirit of Laodicea is not abroad today? Is there no trace of it in our own hearts? Are we prepared to pay the price of a zeal revived, ablaze for God? Are we ashamed to be fervent in our devotion to the Lord? Have we faced the solemn alternative? What a need to cry,
Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
While harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
Equip Thy church to spread the light.
B. P. HEAD.

The words of Christ shut us up to the reviving of our love, our truth, our life, our zeal - or to certain judgment. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

END