

A GREAT MISTAKE AND THE WAY TO RECTIFY IT NO. 1677

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1882,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”
Revelation 3:17-18.*

THESE words were spoken, not to the outside world, but to the church of Laodicea. They relate to persons who were in a church state, who had been baptized on confession of their faith in Christ, and who were thought to be in a fine spiritual condition. They had a singularly high opinion of themselves, and probably considered that of all the seven churches in Asia they were the first in power and influence.

The words before us are as sharp as they are true, and they demand the earnest attention of all professors of our holy faith, for to persons like ourselves they were addressed, and moreover we have the special note of attention—“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.” Here the axe is laid to the root, not of the oaks of the forest or the pines of the mountain side, but to the root of the trees of the vineyard, and the choice trees of the garden of the Lord. By this the Lord showed His love to the true ones in Laodicea, according as He says, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.”

While reading the text, I feel forced to cry, “O my threshing, and the corn of my floor!” Truly the flail must first be used upon the heap that is gathered in the garner. It is all in vain to preach to the outside world unless matters be true and right within. The kingdom cannot come nor the Lord's banner be lifted high if the soldiers of His own army prove false and turn back in the day of battle. The time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God. The word to the slaughter men in Ezekiel was, “Begin at my sanctuary.” The stout heart of the king of Assyria will not be punished till the Lord has performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem.

Behold, the Lord Himself comes to deal with His church, for His fire is Zion, and His furnace is in Jerusalem. “His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor.” As for them that are without, God will judge them in His own time, but now by His blessed Spirit He speaks to those of us who are within the church, and make profession of His name.

The solemn words which make up our text were also spoken by the Lord Jesus under a most special title, “These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness” (Rev 3:14), as much as to say that, though the Laodicean professors were false, mistaken, and deluded, He who now addressed them by His servant John was true and faithful. He is the Amen, the Verily, Verily of God, He judges not according to the outward appearance, but looks at the heart according to truth. He is “the faithful and true witness,” who does not flatter, nor keep back any of the terrible truth, but speaks out that which He perceives with His eyes of fire, and warns men of their condition with all sincerity.

Instead of crying peace, peace, where there is no peace, and letting them be like Moab at ease from their youth, and settled upon their lees because not emptied from vessel to vessel, He stirs them up that the sediment of their falsehood may be seen and their evil case be made manifest. Oh for grace to hear this word at this time as from the Lord Jesus, and as from Him under the weighty character of a witness faithful and true, speaking as the Amen of God.

It seems to me that my text accounts for the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans. They were lukewarm because they imagined themselves rich when they were poor. Two conditions will help us to escape lukewarmness. The one is to be really rich in grace, for they that have much grace will not be lukewarm. Grace is as a fire in the soul, and he that has much of it, so as to become an advanced Christian, cannot but have a heart boiling with earnestness.

The other way is to have but little grace, but to be painfully aware of it, to be deeply conscious of soul-poverty, to sigh and cry because you are not what you should be. There is no lukewarmness in a strong desire caused by a bitter sense of need. The poor man, poor in spirit, conscious of his imperfections and failures, is never a lukewarm man, but with sighs and cries coming out of a heart that is all on fire with a desire to escape out of such a sad condition, he besieges the throne of God that he may obtain more grace.

These Laodicean people were unhappily in such a state that you could not get at them. They were not so poor that they knew they were poor, and therefore when the poverty-stricken were addressed, they said, "These things are not for us: we are increased in goods." They were blind, but they thought they saw, they were naked, and yet they prided themselves in their princely apparel, and hence it was hard to reach them. Had they been outwardly worse, had they openly sinned, had they defiled their garments with overt transgression, then the Spirit might have pointed out the blot and convicted them there and then, but what was to be done when the mischief was hidden and internal?

Had they been utterly cold and frost-bitten, then He might have thawed them into living warmth, but such was their puffed-up notion of themselves that one could not convince them of sin, or awaken them to any sense of fear, and it seemed likely that after all the Lord must needs spue them out of His mouth as things He could not endure. How far this may be true of any one of us may God in His infinite mercy help us to judge each one for himself. Whether it be true or not, it will not matter as to the usefulness of the discourse if God the Holy Spirit will bless it to our souls in His own way.

Two things in the text call for our notice. The first is *their saying*, "You say, I am rich," and the second is *Christ's counsel*, "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."

I. First, let us think of the church in Laodicea and listen to THEIR SAYING, it may prevent us from reaching such a height of pride as to speak as they did.

The spirit of self-congratulation expressed itself in a manner *strikingly unanimous*. If all the members did not say so in words, yet, as a whole, they were so self-contented, that the great Amen spoke of them as one person, "Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Doubtless a few wept and sighed before God, but they were so inconsiderable that they did not mar the apparent unanimity of the church in its conscious self-respect, nor divide the united utterance of its open boasting. "You say, I am rich, and increased with goods."

It would seem that their minister was of the same opinion. Good easy man, he felt that his church was in a splendid state, for the Spirit of God here speaks to the "angel of the church," who is, no doubt, the minister of the church, and He says to him, "You say, I am rich, and increased with goods." The self-complacent man had probably gathered together a wealthy congregation, wealthy as compared with the general run of the people of God, who were usually the poorest of the poor. Among these were persons of considerable talent, and as a body they were intellectual and educated. They were so rich in all sorts of endowments that they had "need of nothing."

Perhaps they hardly needed a minister at all, but were able to become every man his own teacher, and so the timid man was quiet and smooth-tongued for fear they should dispense with him. They might perhaps prefer an open meeting, and then what would become of him? The proverb says, "Like priest, like people," and under the preacher's lukewarm addresses the church became lukewarm too. They were so rich in gifts that they did not need to economize, and send out their brethren to preach, one by one. They could afford to let a dozen attempt to do what one could have done a great deal better. They had

grown to be such a leading church that other churches looked up to them. They were noted and celebrated all over the country. A member of the church of Laodicea was recognized at once as a remarkable person, so that wherever he went the people would ask him to get up and speak, for coming down from Laodicea, that famous church which had “need of nothing,” surely he could not open his mouth without precious things dropping therefrom, for was he not one of those who were “rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing”?

It was a first-class church, and their prudent and kind minister thought so too, and he took occasion often to say as much. When he spoke to the good people of Philadelphia, at their anniversary meeting, he told them that he hoped they would do their best although they had but a little strength, and could not expect to equal his people who were so much richer and so much better educated. Of course, all churches could not be so strong as Laodicea, it was not likely that everywhere, in those little places, they could gather congregations such as he was proud to look on every Sabbath day in the Tabernacle at Laodicea. It was the general, unanimous feeling, from the minister down to the latest convert, that they were a most wonderful church. They were heartily at one in having a high estimate of themselves, and this helped to keep them together, and stirred them to attempt great things.

This saying of theirs was *exceedingly boastful*, for it divides itself into three parts. They were “rich,” that was their present state, and “increased with goods”—that is they could look back upon years of great prosperity and progress in their past history, and at that present time, if they were not absolutely perfect, they were getting close to the edge of it, for they had “need of nothing,” they did not know of anything which the church lacked, they had the best deacons, the best elders, the best members, always ready to do anything and everything that was proposed to them.

They were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing. The present was all right, the past was eminently satisfactory, and they had reached a point of all but absolute perfection, for they needed nothing, and when people have need of nothing they can go no further, they have ascended to the highest point, their sun has reached its zenith, their path has been like the path of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day.

Truly I do not know that they could have opened their mouths any wider. They gave forth about as fine a piece of brag as one is likely to meet with in any ancient record. Here is a church which is a city set on a hill that cannot be hid, is it not a candle that gives light unto all that are in the house? and the candle needs no snuffing, it is burning at its very best. Think of a church which has need of nothing!

Now, notice once more that they were *sincere in this glorying*. When they said it they were not consciously boasting, for the text says, “And you know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” They did not know the truth. They were not hypocrites, when they thus spoke with such self-conscious complacency they really thought it was so, and their minister thought so too. The angel of the church thought that it was an angelic church. There was no insincerity in what they said, in fact, I dare say they said to themselves, “We really speak below what we might say. We are a wonderful people! What we do could hardly be put in print or thoroughly described in words. Our existence is an extraordinary fact.” They did not know the real truth of the matter, but they sincerely believed the flattering tale which their ignorance told them. How readily do we believe a lie when it fosters in us a high opinion of ourselves.

But now see what was their actual state, *they were altogether mistaken*. Their mistake was founded upon ignorance—“You know not.” These intelligent persons, these wealthy persons, these instructed persons did not know themselves, and that is the grossest kind of ignorance. A man may know all about Africa, and the sources of the Nile and the Congo, and yet he may not know what is going on in certain regions of the home department. He is ignorant indeed who does not know his own condition in reference to the most weighty matters.

In our church there are many members who know shamefully little about it, they go in and out among us, and they have not enough concern about the church to make its spiritual state a matter of inquiry. I grieve to say that there are members who, I fear, do not know their own spiritual state, who

take it for granted that everything is sound, and say, “No doubt it is all correct.” If their conscience is touched, and they are troubled, they call it unbelief, though it is quite another thing, and may be praised as godly fear. If they are driven into a corner by conviction, they say, “I must not get into this state, I must hope for the best.” They make the best of everything, and shut their eyes to all storm signals.

These Laodicean people were mistaken through ignorance, they had not searched, they had judged the surface of the matter, and never looked below the topsoil, but “the faithful and true witness” makes them see the naked truth. He says, “You know not that you are *wretched*,” that is to say, that they were in a sad and undesirable state, there was nothing about them that could please God, and nothing about them that would have pleased themselves if they had seen things in a true light. “You are wretched.”

Oh, what a change from the distorting glass of self-flattery to the clear mirror of truth! How these men that had need of nothing are shown up when Christ begins to describe them! They seem to need everything. The next word, “*miserable*,” conveys the same idea to us in the English, but the original had better, perhaps, been translated “pitiable.” There was nothing about them to admire, but everything to pity, for everything that seemed to be good was really false, everything that was apparently useful was a mere matter of display. As Jesus Christ looked at Laodicea He said of the church, “Pitiable! Pitiable!” He does not use fine expressions, does He, towards this respectable church, this church with so much wealth and so much strength? He does not flatter it, for He says of it, first, “Wretched!” and then, “Pitiable!”

Then He goes on to say, “*Poor!*”—poor in the choice things in which they thought they were rich, so much grace they thought they had, but He says they have exceedingly little, and calls them “poor.” Oh, but they had such riches of faith! “No,” He says, “poor!” Oh, but they had such abundance of energy. “No,” He says, “that is only a pretense. They are poor.” He searches the members through, and looks into their hearts, where their precious things are stored up, and He says of them all, “Poor.” There is a sense in which the Lord cries, “Blessed are you poor,” but these were poor in quite another sense. Think of it! Here are a people that were “rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing,” and yet the verdict of the Savior is, “They are poor!”

And then He goes on to say they are “*blind*.” Blind? Why, they had among them men of the greatest possible discernment, who could see as far into a millstone as any people, they were able to split hairs over points of doctrine, and they had discernment of spirits, so they thought, and could tell who was and who was not sincere. But Jesus Christ says—they have no discernment, they are “blind.” They are not merely shortsighted and weak about the eyes, but altogether blind. And mark you, this is no exaggeration, it is not a hard speech meant to sting them into repentance, but the “Amen, the faithful and true witness” says this calmly and deliberately, and says it about that admirable church of Laodicea concerning which we heard so much when we commenced our discourse, they were poor and blind.

And now He adds that they were “*naked*.” No, surely, not that! Will the Savior say as much of us that? Yes, He says so. They are not dressed in the righteousness of Christ, they are dressed in their own cobwebs of conceit, and therefore they are naked. They are not resting upon Christ, but relying upon their own strength and wealth, and therefore He says they are “naked.” Yes, these same people who “have need of nothing,” yet have need of a rag with which to cover the shame of their nakedness. They are “naked” before God.

Had a storm suddenly come upon them suddenly they would have found it out. We are such poor creatures that we need to be covered from the sun and from the wind, from the wet and from the drought, from the cold and from the heat. Such is our weakness that we have need of garments against all outward surroundings, and so it was with these Laodiceans, not only for the common decency of their appearance did they need to be robed in the righteousness of Christ, but they needed the most ordinary kind of covering. Though they did not know it, they were open to have been scattered and destroyed as a church had anything happened out of the ordinary way. Oh, this mistake! May the Lord of truth prevent us from making it about ourselves individually, and prevent every church from making such a mistake about itself, and being unanimous in it.

These professors were poor and proud, they were conceited, and therefore they were not likely to be converted. They thought they were making progress, but they were going backward, and because they did not know their true condition it was hard work to help them. You remember the Tay Bridge disaster? There is no doubt whatever that the bridge was not fitted for its position, its ordinary strain was all it could bear, but nobody thought so. Undoubtedly the engineers reckoned it would stand any test to which it might be put, and therefore there was no attention given to it to make it any stronger and to provide against sudden disaster, and consequently when a specially fierce hurricane was out one night it swept it all away.

That is just the picture of many a church and many a man, because he is thought to be so pious, and the church is thought to be so correct and vigorous, therefore no attempt is made for improvement, no special prayer, no cries to heaven, no repentance because of backsliding, and so when there comes an unusual pressure, a night of terrible temptation, the whole fabric falls in ruin. How much better is the condition of the man who feels that he is weak, and therefore goes to the strong for strength! I know a railway bridge at this moment which is showing signs of danger, there are cracks in the brickwork and other mischief, in all probability it would soon have come down if let alone. But it has been noticed by the railway people, and they are as busy as possible trying to repair it and prevent an accident. Is not this much better than a delusive belief that all is safe?

If there is a crack in the substantial part of your religious structure, what a mercy to see it! If the supporting pillars begin to give way, what a blessing to perceive the fact! “Oh,” says one, “you make us feel uneasy.” Yes, it is often a great blessing to be uneasy, and that blessing I pray the Holy Spirit will confer upon you. It is infinitely better to be uneasy and to get right than to be perfectly serene and all the while to be wrong. How many a house is built upon sand, and only waits till the floods shall come and the winds shall beat upon it, and then the whole fair fabric will vanish like a vision of the night, will it not be well to let the tenant know his peril? I think so.

Now I leave this saying, may we never use it ourselves. We have looked underneath the surface, and we have seen the mud which lies at the bottom of what seemed a glassy pool.

II. Now we come to think of OUR LORD’S BLESSED COUNSEL.

“I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.” I call your attention first to the amazing grace which is here displayed. Ask a schoolmaster what kind of pupil is most objectionable, and I think he will reply that he cannot bear a youth who knows so much already that he will learn nothing correctly.

It is very difficult to deal with the conceited. We can instruct persons who are conscious of ignorance and willing to learn, but those who “have need of nothing,” what can you teach them? They are up to the mark in all points, they are models, they can teach you, and therefore what can you say to them? But here our blessed Lord seems to single out this puffed-up church, though pride is always obnoxious to Him, and He draws near to it and begins to speak to it in love.

He does not use a peremptory tone, but in words of great affection He tenders His advice. He does not say, “I command you,” but “I counsel you.” It is tantamount to that other blessed text, “Come now, and let us reason together.” He puts it so softly, as if He said, “I offer a little kindly advice to you, will you listen to Me? I might speak in harsher tones, I might condemn, I might command, but instead of that I stoop to you, and counsel you. See whether My counsel be not good. Am I not the Wonderful, the Counselor? Is not the wisdom of God in Me? Therefore I am come to speak to you,” says Christ, “and counsel you.”

Note how He begins—“*I counsel you to buy.*” Is not that singular advice indeed? Just now He said that they were “wretched” and “poor.” How can they buy? Surely it suggests to us at once those blessed free grace terms which are only to be met with in the market of divine love, “Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” The chapmen of Vanity Fair have great difficulty to bring people up to their price, but the Lord Jesus Christ’s difficulty is to bring people down to His, and so He

begins by counseling the poor to come and buy on such terms as this, “Without money and without price.” But why is it called buying? If you have nothing to give, why does He not say, “Come and take it”? No, it is buying, because God would have us make business of it. If any of you have backslidden, and yet dream that you have not declined, if there creeps over you the cold thought that perhaps it is so, then awaken yourselves and make a business of recovery. Come to Christ and buy, not merely act the beggar’s part, but come and act the purchaser’s part, with thoughtfulness, with desire, with judgment. Come now, and give an estimate, do as you would if you were buying a valued article. Estimate the value of Christ and see how richly He is worth having.

In a purchase, there is consent on both sides, the one consents to sell, and the other to receive by purchase, hence the word “buy” is used, for God does not force the gifts of His grace upon any man, but He first teaches him his need of those gifts, and then He bids him come and buy, though it be without price, by exercising thought, making an estimate, having a strong desire, being willing to give anything if he had anything to give, and then taking the blessing with joyful willingness. Christ gives them counsel to buy.

But next, what does He say? “*I counsel you to buy of me.*” Ah, they had been dealing with one another, they had been chaffering and bartering amongst themselves. One brother had brought this talent, another, another, and they had grown rich, as they thought, by a mutual commerce. “Now,” says Christ, “compare yourselves with yourselves no longer, give up seeking of man, and buy of *me.*” It is the very foundation of grace—to be willing to buy of Christ.

Have you a religion which you received of me? It is not worth a pin. Have you in possession a religion which you received of your mother, and father, and Sunday school teacher, and neighbors, and friends? It is worth nothing. All true grace must be bought of Christ on free grace terms, “*I counsel you to buy of me.*” Do you not know that Jesus is a great monopolist? Nobody else has anything to sell of this kind. The articles He speaks of are entire monopolies in His hands, no one else can sell you the gold tried by fire, or white raiment that you may be clothed, or eye salve that you may see, but the whole stock of grace is vested in the person and offices of Jesus Christ, and therefore He says, “*I counsel you to buy of me.*”

Do you wear a spiritual vesture which you bought elsewhere? Do you use an eye salve which you purchased of another physician? Do you hoard up gold which you procured of some pretended goldsmith? Throw the imaginary boons away, for there is no genuine article in the market except that which comes of the Lord Jesus Christ and of Him alone. “*I counsel you to buy of me.*” Oh, that every Christian here would lay hold upon this advice and say, “*I will go and buy of Christ again.*” Have I been living on past experience? Have I been living on a profession which I have maintained these last twenty years? I will do so no longer, I will buy of Jesus anew. I will get my manna fresh from heaven, I will seek all my provisions day by day from the person of my blessed Lord and Master, for He counsels me to buy of Him.

Now see the goods which He describes. “*I counsel you to buy of me*”—*what? Everything.* It is true that only three wants of these people are here mentioned, but they are inclusive of all needs. First, the Lord says, “Buy gold.” The man who can buy gold has bought everything, for money answers all things. He who has gold has the medium with which he can procure whatsoever he needs. In Christ there is a fullness of all good things, and in the gold of His grace there is an adaptation to every need. You cannot have a necessity, nor even think of a necessity which is a real one, but the grace of God, which is like fine gold, will be sure to meet it. Your free will, your unaided efforts, your wisdom, your knowledge, your strength—all this you can get something for in such and such a market, but in God’s market there is nothing current but this precious gold, and if you get the gold of grace, then you can get whatsoever your soul needs. “*I counsel you,*” says He “*to buy of me gold.*”

Then next He brings forth raiment rich and rare, perfect coverings such as do really clothe a man so that the shame of his nakedness will never appear. I like that expression. It is very plain, but what suggestions there are in it! for our sin is our shame, and it is well that the Lord has found a complete

covering for it. Sin brought nakedness upon us, and shame is the result, but He who has Christ has lost both sin and shame, for the blood of Jesus removes guilt from the soul and terror from the conscience. Man was naked, and is still naked apart from Christ, but in Christ he is covered, and has become comely before the Lord. Even those eyes of God which see everything cannot see that which does not exist, and God has said of His people's iniquities, "They shall not be." God has cast the sins of His people behind His back, therefore He cannot see them. "If they are searched for, they shall not be found; yea, they shall not be, says the LORD," and if they shall not "be" or exist, then are they gone from His sight.

What a covering this must be. What a purchase this is for a man to buy white raiment of Christ! Imputed and inherent righteousness make up the double garment of righteousness, wrought out for us by the Lord Jesus, and in us by the Holy Ghost. This is a fair garment in which to stand among men, and it will fit us to appear at the judgment seat of God. Jesus says, "I counsel you, buy this of me," no one else has this sacred apparel to dispose of. The fig leaves of earth are a mockery, and the cobwebs of conceit are soon blown aside, but the covering which adorns and comforts is with Christ alone, whose name is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Next, our Lord recommends them to buy an eye salve of Him. That is a very curious recommendation, is it not? For they were blind, and can an eye salve give blind men eyes? Many salves are useful for eyes when they are weak or inflamed, but what salve is of any good to a blind man? He says they are blind, and yet recommends them to buy eye salve of Him. Strange counsel! But there is no setting forth gospel principles by human similes without endowing the emblems with something above nature. We must strain that which is human to set forth by it that which is divine.

O you that have no heavenly discernment, that have no eyeballs upon which the light might fall, Christ Jesus counsels you to come and buy of Him the true *collyrium*, that ancient salve of high renown, or something more marvelous still, which will open your eyes so that you shall see that which is invisible, and shall behold the face of God. This is glorious. No other physician has such eye salve. None else can pretend thereto. The Savior has the whole stock of this sovereign remedy, He is the sole dispenser of it, no one can make the like, go, then, to Him who sells, and buy for yourselves.

The counsel of the Lord is not only that we buy of Him everything, but *that we buy the best of everything of Him*. Laodicea had made the mistake of buying second-quality articles, which turned out to be good for nothing. Our Lord says, "I counsel you to buy of me gold." Gold is the most precious metal, but He would have them buy the best of it, "gold tried in the fire," gold that has just passed through the assay and has the mint mark upon it, gold that will endure all further tests, having survived that of fire.

O brothers and sisters, our wisdom is to buy what we do buy from Christ, for from Him comes grace which will endure to the end. I have lately been looking through some of the sufferings of the Waldenses for Christ, and the sad spectacle has produced a most painful effect upon my mind, but I trust also a beneficial one. When I read of the horrible cruelties worked upon them by the Papists, and of the firmness of feeble women and children, as well as men, I asked myself, Could I endure such torments? I did not dare believe that I could, for they suffered agonies which scarcely even the devils of hell could have invented.

Suppose that you and I should possess a sort of grace which would not endure such tests, will it be the right sort of grace? If we are never dragged at the heels of horses, or set up as targets, or dismembered, or burned at a slow fire, yet we ought to have that same kind of grace which made these gracious ones more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. It is true we may never have to suffer martyrdom, but a man must be prepared to give up house, and lands, and wife, and children, yea, and his own life also, sooner than forsake Christ.

Look at the saints in the first days, the young, brave church of Christ, when the world sought to stamp out our holy faith. They defied the world, and Pliny writes to Trajan to know what to do, for the Christians come crowding to the judgment seat to avow their faith. Instead of shunning the conflict they seemed to court it, knowing that to avow themselves Christians was speedy death. They were yet eager

to do it, knowing that unutterable torments awaited them, they offered themselves willingly to bear anything for their dear Savior. Could we act in this fashion, think you? Yes, if we have bought the true “gold tried in the fire,” but not else. Is our gold of this sort?

Do not begin talking about how you could endure martyrdom, how do you endure the ordinary trials of life? In those lesser pains that come upon your body—are you patient? Those little disquietudes in the domestic circle—do you keep your temper over them? Those words that sometimes drop carelessly, not meant to be unkind, but which grate on your feelings—can you forgive them for Christ’s sake, and think no more of them? If not, what kind of gold is this which cannot bear the touch of the acid? Such metal would hardly do to lie on the hob, much less to be put in the flame, if it begins to melt in such mild heat it would utterly vanish in the furnace.

Oh to have gold which has been tested in the center of the flame, such as God Himself will own in the last great day, when He shall come to separate between the precious and the vile. Christ counsels us to buy the best, and we can only get it by buying it of Him, “without money and without price.”

Remember the raiment too, for that is of the best, our Lord calls it “white raiment.” That is a pure color, a holy color, a royal color. We put on the Lord Jesus as our joy, our glory, our righteousness. To walk with Him in white is real honor, and sure acceptance, it marks us out as victors through Him that has loved us. This robe is the true wedding dress, a holiday robe, and yet a serviceable garment arraying a man from head to foot. Are you wearing it? Is your sin hidden? Does it not at times appear? Does it not come before your own conscience? “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, but if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.”

Have you this covering so that you will not be afraid to die in it, nor afraid to stand before the blazing judgment seat in it? Are you sure, certain, positive that your sin is put away in Christ Jesus? This is what you need, and you must not be content with less. If you must play at haphazard do it with your estates, do it with your lives, but never leave your soul affairs to be a matter of chance. Make sure work for eternity. A man likes to be quite positive about the title deeds if he buys a farm, but what is that? If I wish for heaven, I want to be sure that I have it, sure that I have Christ who is the glory of it, sure that I am pardoned and renewed, which is my fitness for it. One single note of question upon that matter will banish all peace and joy out of your heart. God grant us grace to buy the white raiment through which nothing of sin can be seen, for all guilt is gone.

And as to the eye salve, it is the best possible one, for Jesus says, “Anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see.” Eye salve that can make a blind man see stands in the front rank of all the medicaments that ever can be sold. Oh, for grace to get it, so that we may see and know spiritual things. Can you say, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see”? Are you the pure in heart who see God? Is God about you wherever you are? Can you see your own sin and hate it? Can you see the power of Christ’s blood and delight to be washed in it? Can you see the spiritual kingdom, or do you only see the things of your trade and business, the things which blind worldlings can perceive? O God, give us real sight that we may see heaven and delight in it, see hell and flee the sin that will bring us there, that we may see Christ and rejoice in Him evermore. He counsels us to do this.

So I must come to a close by noticing that *all this is the counsel of Christ*, and the counsel of Christ to a people that were proud and self-conceited. He gave those counsel who thought they needed none. Does not this reveal infinite grace, that He should come to such and sit down by them and say, “Come now, put your case into My hand, it is a very bad one, and I advise you to come to Me for help”? Oh, how tenderly I would try to speak this morning in imitation of the soft tones of Jesus.

O you who have thought of yourself other than the truth, I do not counsel you to despair. At the sight of the truth I do not counsel you to say, “I will give it all up, there is no hope.” “No,” Christ says, “be advised, take counsel, I counsel you to come to Me now, and get in very truth all that which you only had in fancy. All things are ready for you. You have not to search for the gold and dig it up from the mine, here it is, come and buy it.” “Lord, I have not a penny to buy it with.” That does not matter. Buy it without money and without price. These are the easy terms of the gracious Savior. Believe, and be rich.

When Satan tells me, or conscience tells me, that I am not a Christian, that I am not saved, then I find it wise to say, “I will begin now. If I have made a mistake, if I have been presumptuous, if I have not truly believed, then I will believe at once, and lay hold upon Jesus at this good hour.”

I recommend you who are not puffed up to take Christ’s counsel, for when He counsels these proud ones to come I am sure His advice is good for you too. It is always wise to get gold when you can buy it for nothing. I warrant you if the Bank of England put up a notification that they would sell any quantity of pure bullion for nothing tomorrow morning, our Stock Exchange men, instead of turning into Capel Court, would take the other side of the street, and dispose at once of the Bank’s surplus. There is a ready market for pure gold at this extraordinary minimum.

Come, then, and accept the gold of free grace. It is sure to be useful, therefore come along, you that love Christ and you that are afraid you do not love Him. Come along, all of you, come and buy this “gold tried in the fire.” You have never made a better investment in all your lives. May the good Master sweetly lead you so to do.

But what a rebuke this is to all boasting. The Lord does not say to us, “You have been very foolish in talking about your riches,” but He convicts us by saying, “I counsel you to buy gold.” He does not say, “You are stupid to glory in your dress,” but He convicts us by saying, “Buy raiment.” He does not condemn us for pretending to be able to see when we are blind, but He cries, “Anoint your eyes with eye salve.” Is not this a sweet way of making us feel our error? Perhaps you would turn away from stern rebuke, but you cannot turn from love.

Come now, members of this church and members of no church, come, buy these three precious things, “without money and without price.” You cannot take better counsel than that of the Son of God, therefore, do as He bids you, and buy at once.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—REVELATION 3

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—178, 620, 646

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