

TESTIMONY
FOR
THE CHURCH.

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BY ELLEN G. WHITE.

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TESTIMONY FOR THE CHURCH.

The Laodicean Church.

THE message to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and True Witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

A PRACTICAL MESSAGE.

The Lord here shows us that the message to be borne to his people by ministers whom he has called to warn the people, is not a peace-and-safety message. It is not merely theoretical, but practical, in every particular. The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans in a position of carnal security. They are at ease, believing themselves in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments.

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know-

est not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

What greater deception can come upon human minds than a confidence that they are right, when they are all wrong. The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God. While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true situation of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake, for it is the True Witness who speaks, and his testimony must be correct.

It is difficult for those who feel secure in their attainments, who are believing themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace. The unsanctified heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

I was shown that many were flattering themselves that they were good Christians who have not a ray of light from Jesus. They have not a living experience for themselves in the divine life. They need a deep and thorough work of self-abasement before God, before they will feel their true need of earnest, persevering effort to secure the precious graces of the Spirit of God.

God leads his people on, step by step. The Christian life is a constant battle, and a march. There is no rest from the warfare. It is by con-

stant, unceasing effort that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. We are, as a people, triumphing in the clearness and strength of the truth. We are fully sustained in our positions by an overwhelming amount of plain scriptural testimony. But we are very much wanting in Bible humility, patience, faith, love, self-denial, watchfulness, and spirit of sacrifice. We need to cultivate Bible holiness. Sin prevails among the people of God. The plain message of rebuke to the Laodiceans is not received. Many cling to their doubts and their darling sins, while they are in so great a deception as to talk and feel that they are in need of nothing. They think the testimony of the Spirit of God in reproof is uncalled for, or that it does not mean them. Such are in the greatest need of the grace of God and spiritual discernment, that they may discover their deficiency in spiritual knowledge. They lack almost every essential qualification necessary to perfect Christian character. They have not a practical knowledge of Bible truth, which leads to lowliness of life, and a conformity of their will to the will of Christ. They are not living in obedience to all God's requirements.

It is not enough to merely profess to believe the truth. All the soldiers of the cross of Christ virtually obligate themselves to enter a crusade against the adversary of souls, to condemn wrong, and sustain righteousness. But the message of the True Witness reveals the fact that a terrible deception is upon our people, which makes it necessary to come to them with warnings, to break their spiritual slumber, and arouse them to decided action.

In my last vision, I was shown that even this decided message of the True Witness had not accomplished the design of God. The people slumber on in their sins. They continue to declare themselves "rich, and having need of nothing." Many inquire, Why are all these reproofs given? Why do the testimonies continually charge us with backsliding and grievous sins? We love the truth. We are prospering. We are in no need of these testimonies of warning and reproof. But let these murmurers see their hearts, and compare their lives with the practical teachings of the Bible; let them humble their souls before God; let the grace of God illuminate the darkness, and the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will sense their true spiritual poverty and wretchedness. They will feel the necessity of buying gold, which is pure faith and love; white raiment, which is a spotless character, made pure in the blood of their dear Redeemer, and eyesalve, which is the grace of God, which will give clear discernment of spiritual things, and detect sin. These attainments are more precious than the gold of Ophir.

THE PEOPLE UNWILLING TO RECEIVE
CORRECTION.

I have been shown that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness, is because they will not receive correction. Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them. The True Witness condemns the lukewarm condition of the people of God, which gives Satan great power over them in this waiting, watching time. The

selfish, and proud, and lovers of sin, are ever assailed with doubts. Satan has ability to suggest doubts and devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue and mark of intelligence in them to be unbelieving, and questioning, and quibbling. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind, and teachable spirit. All should decide from the weight of evidence.

Eternal life is of infinite value, and will cost us all that we have. I was shown that we do not place a proper estimate upon eternal things. Everything worth possessing, even in this world, must be secured by effort, and sometimes by most painful sacrifice. And this is merely for a perishable treasure. Shall we be less willing to endure conflict and toil, and to make earnest efforts and great sacrifices for the infinite treasure, which passes all estimate in value, and the duration of life which will measure with the Infinite? Can Heaven cost us too much?

Faith and love are golden treasures, elements that are greatly wanting among God's people. I have been shown that unbelief in the testimonies of warning, encouragement, and reproof, is shutting away the light from God's people. Unbelief is closing their eyes, so that they are ignorant of their true condition. The True Witness thus describes their blindness in these words: "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Faith in the soon coming of Christ is waning.

“My Lord delayeth his coming” is said not only in the heart, but expressed in words, and most decidedly in works. Stupidity in this watching time is sealing the senses of God’s people as to the signs of the times.

The terrible iniquity abounding calls for the greatest diligence, and for the living testimony, to keep sin out of the church. Faith has been decreasing to a fearful degree. Faith can only increase by exercise.

WANT OF A SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE.

In the first rise of the third angel’s message, those who engaged in the work of God had something to venture. They had sacrifices to make. They started this work in poverty, and suffered the greatest deprivations and reproach. They met determined opposition, which drove them to God in their necessity, and kept their faith alive.

Our present plan of systematic benevolence amply sustains our ministers. And there is no want and no call for the exercise of faith as to a support. Those who start out now to preach the truth have nothing to venture. They have no risks to run, no especial sacrifices to make. The system of truth is made ready to the hand. Publications are provided for them, vindicating the truths they advance.

Some young men start out with no real sense of the exalted character of the work. They have not privations, and hardships, and severe conflicts, to meet, which call for the exercise of faith. They do not cultivate practical self-denial, and cherish a spirit of sacrifice. Some are becoming proud and lifted up, and have no real burden of the work

upon them. The True Witness speaks to these ministers, "Be zealous, therefore, and repent." These ministers are some of them so lifted up in pride, that they are really a hindrance and a curse to the precious cause of God. They do not exert an influence which is saving upon others. There is need of these men being thoroughly converted to God themselves, and sanctified by the truths they present to others.

Very many feel impatient and jealous because they are frequently disturbed with warnings and reproofs which keep their sins before them. Says the True Witness, "I know thy works." The motives, the purposes, and the unbelief, suspicions, and jealousies, may be hid from men, but not from Christ. The True Witness comes as a counsellor: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Those who are reprov'd by the Spirit of God should not rise up against the humble instrument. It is God, and not an erring mortal, that has spoken to save them from ruin. Those who despise the warning will be left in blindness to become self-deceived.

Those who heed the testimony of warning, and zealously go about the work of separating their sins from them, in order to have the needed graces, will be opening the door of their hearts that the dear Saviour may come in and dwell with them. This class you will ever find in perfect harmony with the testimony of the Spirit of God.

MINISTERS SHOULD PRESENT THIS WARNING.

Ministers who are preaching present truth should not neglect the solemn message to the Laodiceans. The testimony of the True Witness is not a smooth message. The Lord does not say to them, You are about right, you have borne chastisement and reproof that you never deserved, you have been discouraged unnecessarily by severity, you are not guilty of the wrongs and sins of which you have been reprovèd.

The True Witness declares that when you suppose you are really in a good condition of prosperity you are in need of everything. It is not enough for ministers to present theoretical subjects. They should present practical subjects. They need to study the practical lessons Christ gave his disciples, and make a close application of the same to their own souls and to the people. Because Christ bears this rebuking testimony, shall we suppose that he is destitute of tender love to his people? Oh, no! He who died to redeem man from death loves with a divine love. He rebukes those he loves. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." But many will not receive the message Heaven in mercy sends them. They cannot endure to be told of their wrongs, and of their neglect of duty, of their selfishness, their pride, and love of the world.

I was shown that God has laid upon my husband and myself a special work, to bear a plain testimony to his people, and to cry aloud and spare not, to show the people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins. But there is a class who will not receive the message of reproof, and they raise their hands to shield those whom God would reprove and correct. They will ever be found sympathizing with those whom God would make to feel their true poverty.

The word of the Lord, spoken through his servants, is received by many with questionings and fears. And many will defer their obedience to the warning and reproofs given, waiting till every shadow of uncertainty is removed from their minds. The unbelief that demands perfect knowledge will never yield to the evidence God is pleased to give. God requires of his people faith that rests upon the weight of evidence, not perfect knowledge. The followers of Jesus Christ, those who accept of the light God sends them, must obey the voice of God speaking to them, when there are many other voices crying out against it. It requires discernment to distinguish the voice of God.

Those who will not act when the Lord calls upon them, waiting for more certain evidence, and more favorable opportunities, will walk in darkness, for the light will be withdrawn. The evidence given one day, if rejected, may never be repeated.

MANY DOUBT OUR WORK.

Many are tempted in regard to our work, and are calling it in question. Some, in their tempted

condition, charge the difficulties and perplexities of the people of God to the testimonies of reproof we have given to them. The trouble they think is with the ones who bear the message of warning, pointing out the sins and correcting the errors of the people. I was shown that many are deceived by the adversary of souls. They think that the labors of Bro. and Sister White would be acceptable if they would not be continually condemning wrong, and reproofing sin. I was shown that this work God had laid upon us. When we are hindered from meeting with the people of God, and bearing our testimony, and counteracting the surmisings and jealousies of the unconsecrated, then Satan presses in his temptations very strongly. Those who have been ever on the questioning, doubting side, feel at liberty to suggest their doubts, and will insinuate, their unbelief. Some have sanctimonious, apparently conscientious and very pious, doubts, which they will cautiously drop, which has tenfold more power to strengthen those who are wrong and to lessen our influence and weaken the confidence of God's people in our work, than if they came out more frankly. These poor souls, I saw, were deceived by Satan. They flatter themselves that they are all right, and in favor with God, rich in spiritual discernment, when they are blind, poor, and wretched. They are doing the work of Satan, and thinking they have a zeal for God.

Some will not receive the testimony God has given us to bear, flattering themselves we may be deceived, and they are right. They think the people of God are not in need of plain dealing and of reproof, and that God is with them.

These tempted ones, whose souls have ever been at war with the faithful reproof of sin, would cry, Speak unto us smooth things. What disposition will these make of the message of the True Witness to the Laodiceans? There can be no deception here. This message must be borne to a lukewarm church by God's servants. This message must arouse the people of God from their security and dangerous deception in regard to their real standing before God. This testimony, if received, will arouse to action, and lead to self-abasement, and confessions of sins. The True Witness says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." And again, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent." Then comes the promise, "Beloved, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

These wrongs and sins, which have brought the people of God in their state of wretchedness, blindness, and poverty, must be seen, and they arouse to zealous repentance, and a putting away of these sins which have brought them into such a deplorable condition of blindness and fearful deception.

I have been shown that the pointed testimony must live in the church. And this alone will answer to the message to the Laodiceans. Wrongs must be reproofed, sins must be called sins, and iniquity must be met promptly and decidedly, and put away from us as a people.

FIGHTING THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

Those who have a spirit of opposition to the work we have been pressed by the Spirit of God to do for twenty-six years, and who would break down our testimony, I saw, were not fighting against us, but God, who has laid upon us the burden of a work that he has not given to others. Those who would question and quibble, and think it a virtue to doubt, and who would discourage those who have been the means of making our work hard, and of weakening our hopes, faith, and courage, have been the ones to surmise evil, to insinuate suspicious charges, and watch with jealousy for occasion against us. They take it for granted that because we have human weaknesses it is a positive evidence we are wrong, and they are right. If they can find a semblance of anything that they can use to injure us, they do it with a spirit of triumph, and are ready to denounce our work of reproofing wrong and condemning sin, as a harsh, dictatorial spirit.

But while we do not accept of their version of our case as the reason of our afflictions; while we maintain that God has appointed us to a more trying work than any others; we acknowledge with humility of soul, and with repentance, that our faith and courage have been severely tried, and that we have failed sometimes in trusting wholly in God, who has appointed us our work. When we gather courage again, after sore disappointment and trials, we deeply regret that we ever distrusted God, and gave way to human weaknesses, and permitted discouragement to cloud our faith, and lessen our confidence in God.

I have been shown that God's ancient servants suffered disappointments and discouragements as well as we poor mortals have. We were in good company; nevertheless this did not excuse us.

As my husband has stood by my side to sustain me in my work, and as he has had a plain testimony to bear in unison with the work of the Spirit of God, many have felt that it was my husband who was injuring them personally, when it was the Lord that laid upon him the burden, and was, through his servant, reproofing them, to bring them where they would repent of their wrongs, and have the favor of God.

Those whom God has chosen for an important work have ever been received with distrust and suspicion. Anciently, when Elijah was sent with a message from God to the people, they did not heed the warning. They thought Elijah unnecessarily severe. He must, they thought, have lost his senses, that he would denounce them, the favored people of God, as sinners, and their crimes, so aggravating, that the judgments of God would awaken against them.

Satan and his host have ever been arrayed against those who bear the message of warning and reprove sins. The unconsecrated will be united with the adversary of souls, to make the work of God's faithful servants as hard as possible.

If my husband has been pressed beyond measure, and has become discouraged and desponding; if we have at times seen nothing desirable in life that we should choose it, this is nothing strange or new. Elijah, one of God's great and mighty

prophets, as he fled for his life from the rage of Jezebel, an infuriated woman, a fugitive, weary and travel worn, desired to die rather than to live. His bitter disappointment in regard to Israel's faithfulness crushed his spirits, and he felt that he could no longer put confidence in man. In the day of Job's affliction and darkness, he utters these words: "Let the day perish wherein I was born."

Those who are not accustomed to feel to the very depths; who have not stood under burdens as a cart beneath the sheaves; who have never had their interest identified so closely with the cause and work of God that it seems to be a part of their very being, and dearer to them than life, cannot appreciate the feelings of my husband, any more than Israel could appreciate the feelings of Elijah. We deeply regret being disheartened, whatever the circumstances might be.

AHAB'S CASE A WARNING.

When Ahab ruled Israel, the people departed from God and corrupted their ways before him under his perverted rule. "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all of the kings that were before him."

Ahab was weak in moral power. He did not have a high sense of sacred things. He was selfish and unprincipled. His union by marriage with a woman of decided character, and positive temperament, devoted to idolatry, made them both special agents of Satan to lead the people of God into idolatry and terrible apostasy. The determined spirit of Jezebel molded the character of Ahab. His selfish nature was incapable of appreciating the mercies of God to his people, his obligation to God, as the guardian and leader of Israel. The fear of God was daily growing less in Israel. The blasphemous tokens of their blind idolatry were to be seen among the Israel of God. There were none who dared to expose their lives by openly standing forth in opposition to the prevailing blasphemous idolatry. The altars of Baal, and the priests of Baal who sacrificed to the sun, moon, and stars, were conspicuous everywhere. They had consecrated temples, and groves, wherein was placed the work of men's hands to worship. The benefits which God gave to this people called forth from them no gratitude to the Giver. For all the bounties of Heaven, the running brooks, and streams of living waters, the gentle dew, and showers of rain to refresh the earth, and to cause their fields to bring forth abundantly, they ascribed to the favor of their gods.

EXAMPLE OF ELIJAH.

Elijah's faithful soul was grieved. His indignation was aroused, and he was jealous for the glory of God. He saw that Israel was plunged into fearful apostasy. He was overwhelmed with amazement and grief at the apostasy of the

people when he called to mind the great things that God had wrought for them. But all this was forgotten by the majority of the people. He went before God, and with his soul wrung with anguish, plead for him to save his people if it must be by judgments. He plead with God to withhold from his ungrateful people dew and rain, the treasures of heaven, that apostate Israel might look in vain to their idols of gold, wood, and stone, the sun, moon, and stars, their gods, to water the earth and enrich it, and cause it to bring forth plentifully. God told Elijah he had heard his prayer. He would withhold from his people dew and rain, until they should turn unto him with repentance.

God had especially guarded his people from mingling with the idolatrous nations around them, lest their hearts should be deceived by their attractive groves and shrines, temples and altars, all of which were arranged in the most expensive, alluring manner, to pervert the senses, so that God would be supplanted in their minds.

Jericho was a city devoted to the most extravagant idolatry. The inhabitants were very wealthy. All the riches that God had given them they accredited to the gifts of their gods. Gold and silver were in abundance. Like the people before the flood, they were corrupt and blasphemous. They insulted and provoked the God of Heaven by their wicked works. God's judgments awakened against Jericho. It was a stronghold. But the Captain of the Lord's host came himself from Heaven to lead the armies of Heaven in the attack upon the city. Angels of God laid hold of the massive walls and brought them to

the ground. God had said that the city of Jericho should be accursed, and that all should perish except Rahab and her household. They should be saved because of the favor that Rahab showed the messengers of the Lord. The word of the Lord to the people was, "And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." "And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." Josh. 6 : 18, 26.

God was very particular in regard to Jericho, lest the people should be charmed with the things that the inhabitants had worshiped, and their hearts be diverted from God. He guards his people by most positive commands. Notwithstanding the solemn injunction from God by the mouth of Joshua, Achan ventured to transgress. His covetousness led him to take the treasures God had forbidden him to touch, because his curse was upon it. And because of this man's sin, the Israel of God was as weak as water before their enemies.

ACHAN'S CASE SHOWS HOW GOD REGARDS SIN.

Joshua and the elders of Israel were in great affliction. They lay before the ark of God in most abject humility, because the Lord was wroth with his people. Joshua and the elders of Israel prayed and wept before God. The Lord spoke to Joshua, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they