

Revelation 3:18 (J. Wilson Smith) 140575

Laodicea: February 2010, Collyrium (3:18)

What is collyrium (some may prefer the spelling kollourion)? It is a transliteration of the Greek word for "eye salve."

It is hard to imagine a greater loss in the whole realm of nature than that of the eyesight. A blind person can no longer look on familiar scenes or on loved and cherished faces; he is in perpetual darkness. The exquisite organ which has played so prominent a part in his life and fortune is unavailing now, and he is necessarily dependent on the kindly guiding hand of another.

Now, much of Christendom has lost its spiritual eyesight. It has become blind! This was not always the case. It was not always "dull of hearing," nor spiritually insensible, but, alas, when, as a system, it is outwardly triumphant and can boast of learning, wealth and worldly position, He who walks among the seven golden candlesticks says to Laodicea, "Thou . . . knowest not that thou art . . . blind"! Solemn charge! And, just as we see in Ephesus the church in her first and fairest phase, so we find in Laodicea her final condition; while in the intervening histories of Revelation 23 we see her varied stages of spiritual decline, relieved, admittedly, by a bright remnant in the dark days of Smyrna, and a yet still brighter and fuller expression in Philadelphia. But the trend, the deep undercurrent, is ever steadily downward. The fatal lapse was in Ephesus leaving her first love. Nothing could be more serious than this. Labor and endurance, even for the name's sake of the Lord, could not compensate for the loss of first love.

The slow but sure result of such a loss is found in the absolute carelessness of Laodicea to Christ. His truth, His grace, His interests are all heartlessly ignored, while humanism fills their place.

How sad thus to report, and how humbling to feel, as we should, the dishonor and sorrow brought upon our blessed Lord, as we daily learn the true character of this closing Laodicean phase! Yet hearts that love Him cannot help but feel and mourn the dreadful corruption of the very best thing ever communicated to man. Such hearts are truly Philadelphian and will not cease to beat until the Lord shall come.

Two facts demonstrate the absoluteness of the ruin: First, Laodicea says, "I have need of nothing," and second, and as a consequence, Christ says, "I stand at the door and knock." Where there is no felt need, there can be no place for the Lord. Grace may knock forever while self-sufficiency reigns within.

Need of nothing is the boast of the day, and that which is desired least of all by Laodicea is the holy presence and operation of the Lord.

"Buy of Me," says the Lord, "eye salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18 JND). Yes, He who charged her with being blind bids her buy of Him eye salve, so that the blinded eye might be anointed and spiritual perception gained. Gold and white raiment, too, were equally required, and each was to be bought. The purchase might be costly. There would certainly be the humbling acknowledgment of poverty and nakedness, as well as blindness, but such was His counsel.

What is this eye salve? How can the film be removed from the eye? How is spiritual perception to be acquired?

The first part of the payment is to confess our need, our fall, our destitution, and to admit that the world and pride have dimmed and blurred the eye till, like Isaac of old, we mistake man for man and error for truth.

And may we expect even this first part of the price to be paid by Laodicea? I fear not! Too long has that patient and tender hand been knocking outside her firmly closed door; too long she has said, "I have no need of Thee"; too long has abundance filled her and pride blinded her eyes to make us expect from this fallen system any general humiliation. But He who knocks so patiently appeals at last individually, and generously adds, "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! Charming exception! To him who hears and opens shall this grace be given! What the proud mass shall lose, the lowly soul shall enjoy.

To such a one is this collyrium sold — this precious, heavenly eye salve which produces clearness of spiritual vision and a blessed appreciation of Christ as rejected and outside of His own house, but as unchanged as ever in His unspeakably patient love and grace.

The true perception of Christ, who He is, where He is actually and morally, and what He is in holiness and love, is the highest and most commanding privilege of the Christian in this day of ecclesiastical corruption and difficulty. But this perception has to be bought; it will surely cost something.

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