

Revelation - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

Words of Truth: Volume 5, To Him That Loves Us (1:5-7)

"To Him that loves us" —Ah those words!

And shall such words meet no reply?

The full heart swelleth, but its chords

Are silent; only through the eye

The rapt soul findeth utterance;

She bends in silent ecstasy her Lord and

Saviour to adore.

"To Him that loves us!" can we speak

When bowed beneath that weight of love?

The human tongue is all too weak;

And even in the choirs above,

Though angels hymn His everlasting praise,

They know not, cannot know, the love

Which He to us displays.

For He hath washed us in His blood!

Oh let us then His grace adore!

"And made us kings and priests to God,"

To Him be glory evermore,

"His God and Father" on the heavenly throne,

Our God and Father too, for we are one with

Him, His own.

Behold He cometh in the cloud,

And every eye shall see Him then,

And they which pierced Him, weep aloud,

And every tribe and race of men

"Shall wail because of Him" who sits in judgment then;

—Lord, this Thy righteousness requireth—

"Even so, Amen."

They spit upon Thee when on earth,

In mockery crowned Thee with the thorn,

They trampled on Thy lowly birth,

Thy "grace and truth" they laughed to scorn;

They cast them out, who still Thy holy name adored—

But Thy God hath exalted Thee, and they

Shall own that Thou art Lord.

Thou art the First—Thou art the Last,

Thou art the ever living One;

The Father's joy, in ages past,

His only, well beloved Son;

In Thee He hath been glorified—and now

He hath decree'd "that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow"

Words of Truth: Volume N1, Thyatira, On the Message to (2:18-29)

Looking at the messages to the churches as a picture of the successive conditions of the professing Church of God on earth, from the day when she left her first love till the day when she is spewed out of Christ's mouth, thus showing the final result of losing the first love; we have Ephesus, the church in her coldness; Smyrna, the church under persecution; Pergamos, the church in her worldliness; Thyatira, the church in her corruption, and a remnant separated; and Sardis appears to be the church in her deadness; Philadelphia, the church in weakness, but faithfulness; and Laodicea, the church in lukewarmness.

The whole gives a successive picture of the state of the professing church during the last 1800 years, from the day she left her first love till the day she is rejected by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Coldness is succeeded by persecution, persecution by worldliness; worldliness is followed by corruption—a state which runs on to the end, but which has running alongside it a condition of deadness, one of weakness, but faithfulness, and another of lukewarmness. These last four run on side by side to the end—that is, to the day the Lord deals with the Church in judgment.

Thyatira is the corrupt state. It is generally referred, and I believe justly, to Popery. It reminds us of the Popery of the present day, just as Sardis gives us Protestantism, and Philadelphia what we have at the present time; while Laodicea sets forth the state of lukewarmness which has crept over Christendom.

There may be something in the names of these churches. Ephesus means "Desirable;" Smyrna, "Myrrh," which may give us the thought that when the pressure of persecution comes there is a special fragrance to the Lord; and it is remarkable that there is not a word of complaint or rebuke addressed to the saints in that condition. Pergamos means "Elevation," and corresponds with the tree of Matt. 13. It gives the thought of the Church exalted by the world. Pergamos answers to the state of the Church in the days of Constantine, and his son, Constans, when Christianity became popular, and was patronized by the world.

Thus the term, "Elevation," seems a very suitable one.

Thyatira means "A sweet savor of labor," and it is interesting to remark that the Lord speaks so much of her works. There was a fragrance attaching to her labor in which the Lord could delight. Sardis means "That which remains," in keeping with the exhortation in the Epistle, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain." The connection, at any rate, is rather remarkable. Luther's preaching of justification by faith was such according to God. It is to that, probably, that the Lord refers when He says, "Remember what thou hast heard."

It is well known that Philadelphia means "Brotherly love," "The love of the brotherhood." When we are on the ground of the truth, brotherly love can be in the fullest exercise; there is no hindrance to it.

I suppose it is true that a vision appeared to Constantine or his son? It is stated so. It is only mentioned as the common report. The Church histories say so, and we will take the report at its value.

Laodicea is compounded of two words, "people" and "righteousness." The description seems very appropriate, for they were a very self-righteous people. "Thou sayest," says the Lord, "I am rich and increased with goods," &c. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire"—that is, "divine righteousness."

The names seem very appropriate to the condition of each. Surely there was in Ephesus that which was desirable in the sight of God, while there was surely a precious fragrance to the Lord when persecution was going on (Smyrna). And the condition set forth by Pergamos was certainly elevated in a new and extraordinary way. So in the period included under Thyatira there was a sweet savor of labor to a certain extent.

The angel is the representative of the assembly, the one standing before God in the assembly; as "I am the angel Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God." The word "angel" is not used merely for a heavenly being, but for a man also. When John sent messengers to Christ, they are called angels. In each assembly there was one person whom the Lord specially addresses, and who represented the whole, He was one whom God could trust to hear what He had to say to him, and to convey the message to others. He is one representing the whole, and who had an ear to hear what God had to say to him.

Do you think the angel must necessarily mean a single person?

Sometimes the word "angel" is used when there is not a person meant. We read about "their angels," referring to children.

When it says their angels, it means real angels.

I question if any particular angels are referred to at all.

What is the meaning of that passage, "Their angels do always behold"? &c. (Matt. 18:10) Do you not think that each little child has its special angel according to that passage?

It may have; very likely it has. But I have sometimes thought that it simply meant a representative, which might be addressed to an assembly when no particular person was referred to.

In the Epistles the saints are directly addressed; here the addresses are through an angel. There is a distance noticeable; things are not in their primary condition. Failure has set in, so God has to keep them at a distance. He retires into an atmosphere of reserve, and deals with them by means of the spiritual.

The angel is one to whom he could communicate his mind.

Probably: one representing the whole, and one calculated to understand and convey the message entrusted to him.

Do you think that this one had a prominence above the others?

Yes: from God's point of view. There was no appointment. There can be no question that God has His own special messengers for His own special service. I am sure one would repudiate the worldly system of Bishops; still the thought of one specially in prominence is not contrary to God's mind.

I suppose it is always the case that spiritual power will commend itself?

I suppose so. I think anyone would acknowledge Paul.

Christ is called here "the Son of God," which comes with wonderful power when we consider the state of things in the midst of which He is seen. He appears here as the Son of God, that is, in the fullness of divine glory, the One who is Son over His house, and the one who is the true foundation, though the superstructure is decaying rapidly. It is a comfort to see that, in the midst of all the corruption of Thyatira, Christ is still Son over His own house. Observe the use of the term in Heb. 3:6. In Matt. 16:15,16, we see that the foundation of the Church of God is the Son of the living God. Whatever corruption may set in, the Son of God is still the resource of the faithful.

Does "the Son over his own house" take in the thought of priesthood?

I do not think it does. It is an accessory glory there. He is Son, as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; and then comes an additional glory, He is Son over His own house. It is a distinct glory from the Apostleship and High Priesthood.

What is meant by the words, "His eyes like a flame of fire?"

The thought of fire is judgment, and the thought of the eye is intelligence. His intelligence as to the state of things results in an indignation suited to His glory. Then as to His feet being like fine brass. His feet, that upon which He stands, and by which He comes into connection with things, are characterized by righteousness dealing with man responsible.

It is judgment in connection with righteousness? Yes; intelligence resulting in unsparing judgment.

I suppose gold, being "divine righteousness," man has nothing to do with it?

Yes; it is imputed to him.

What is meant by "committing fornication, and eating things sacrificed to idols?"

Worldliness, and recognizing centers not of God. It is civil evil, as one may say, and religious evil. Fornication is the friendship of the world, which is enmity against God; and eating things sacrificed to idols, is turning away from God's center and identifying one's self with human centers. Observe: He takes the fullest notice of the condition of things. He first of all praises what He can, and then blames what He has to blame. It is blessed to see that the praise always comes first—a principle which you will find all through the word of God. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul, in the first chapter, praises what he can, and afterward shows them where they are wrong. It is the same in the Epistle to the Colossians. If you read only the first chapter, you would not think anything had gone wrong; but when you go on to the second, you find he shows them the error of their ways. In the nineteenth verse of this chapter the Lord recognizes all He can, and in the twentieth He says, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee," &c.; "the last more than the first"—that is, as evil increased, they had been doubly diligent.

What difference would it make if we read faith before service?

Perhaps that is the proper order. It is natural that faith should come before service. It is interesting to connect the nineteenth verse with the twenty-fifth. In the former we find faith and love, but we do not find the other cardinal virtue, hope. He gives them that which produces it in the twenty-fifth verse. In 1 Cor. 13 you have the three. So in Rom. 5 you have faith in the first verse, hope in the second and fourth, and love in the fifth. In 1 Thess. 1:3, you have the three combined. It would seem that the Thessalonians had not the true thought as to the hope, and

He gives it to them, as here. The first two chapters are Paul's recollections of them, and in the third chapter he begins a new date, "Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear," &c. If you notice, he does not say anything about hope. The first two chapters, in which we find faith, hope, and charity, refer to the condition in which he left them when he planted the gathering; he left them exhibiting the three graces in all their brightness. But during his absence the Judaizing teachers got among them, and when Timothy returns to him, bringing his report as to their state, he has nothing to say about their hope, but confines himself to their faith and love. He takes occasion, in chapter 4, to deal with the question of hope in the fullest way; and it is interesting to see how the assembly is looked at as recovered in the fifth chapter, where we have the three again spoken of.

We find the same in Ephesians, Colossians, and Galatians, as, for instance, in Gal. 5:5, "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith;" and 22nd verse, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." So in Eph. 1:15-18, Col. 1:4,5, Heb. 10:22-24 (where "profession of our faith" should read "confession of the hope,") and 1 Peter 1:22. It shows us that Christianity is not complete without the three; in its complete form it embraces faith, hope, and charity—i.e., love.

I suppose one could have two without the third?

Yes; but if so, one is not walking in the power of the Holy Ghost.

If one possesses faith, must he necessarily have some measure of love?

Yes. We read of faith working by love.

Will one have hope also?

Not necessarily. A soul walking in the Spirit will have the three. It is by the Spirit we cry— "Come, Lord Jesus." If we walk in the Spirit we will answer to the Spirit's cry.

"Every man," we read, "that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure." I suppose living in the power of the hope would have that effect?

Surely.

Faith may be in exercise apart from hope; but hope scarcely can apart from faith?

No: faith must come first.

I suppose many are exhibiting a considerable measure of faith, who have not hope at all!¹

Yes, who have never heard of it. But there will always be love if there is faith.

Is there any stress to be laid on the "now" in 1 Cor. 13:13. "And now abideth."?

Yes; it is a present thing. The force of the text is what we have now—not what will abide, but what abideth.

Can there be love apart from the truth?

I do not believe there can be true divine love.

I suppose there might be love in the measure of the truth we have?

"This is love, that we walk after his commandments."

We frequently hear persons say that they love every child of God, and yet they themselves may not be walking in the truth any more than those they profess to love. Is that divine love?

That love may be of the lower order. We are told by Peter to add to brotherly affection the love of God. Brotherly affection includes everyone, but the love God applies to those walking after His commandments, being a corrective of brotherly affection. In 1 John 4:20, we read, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar;" but it does not stop there. It tells you who to love. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments." Thus the circle that looks wide in the twentieth verse, narrows itself when we come into the next chapter. There can be no love apart from the truth.

Is it not true that we love every child of God, whether they walk in the ways of God or not? And do not we show our love to them, not by walking with them, but by walking with God

Quite true. It is an injury to our brother not to walk according to God's commandments. It is a stumbling-block to him, and tends to draw him aside.

We see many unconverted people exhibit amiability, kindheartedness, and all that. What kind of love is that?

It is natural character, natural affection.

Is it not of God?

Yes, it is, according to the first creation. The young man that came to Christ exhibited traits of natural character, which caused Christ to love him. We are right to recognize everything amiable and lovely in the first creation as of God.

Then natural affection is right?

Of course. It struck me as remarkable that, in 2 Timothy, where we are specially warned of the evil of the last days, and where the absence of natural affection is spoken of as one of their characteristics, that Paul specially refers to Timothy's tears of affection for him.

Had this remnant in Thyatira taken the place of separation?

No: I think they were godly within. Like the Hebrews, they had not gone without the camp. They were apart, but apart within. In verse 20, the word "few" ought to be omitted. The case of Thyatira is worse than that of Pergamos. In the latter it was Balaam, but in the former Jezebel. Things we had enough in the days of Balaam, but in the days of Jezebel evil had reached a climax.

In 1 Kings 16:29-34, you have a description of the state of things in Israel in that day In the very worst time of Israel's history Jezebel appears. So here we find the very darkest period of the Church's history is come. Balaam has been displaced by Jezebel. Balaam was the man that commenced the evil. In Jezebel we have the woman, as it were, that hid the leaven in the three measures of meal.

What is, or has Jezebel been in the Church?

A special evil influence, corrupting everything.

Was not disregard of God exhibited in the re-building of Jericho?

Yes. It is remarkable that the two things go together.

I suppose this is a woman taking the place of authority?

Yes. It is an exercise of authority contrary to the command in 1 Timothy, " I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man." Christ says — "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel to teach." In Timothy we have God's order when things were set up in the earth; here we see that order subverted.

He does not recognize her in the character she takes to herself?

She is responsible for the place she occupies. She was self-ordained.

God always binds the responsibility on those that take it upon themselves. I suppose that is a universal principle?

Yes; just as in the case of the servant in Matt. 24. Perhaps Lot might be taken as an instance. He took the place of one who had the heavenly calling.

We see it in all the systems. Men have taken upon themselves the responsibility of overlooking the flock of God. Well, God binds it upon them. So Christendom has been professedly Christianized in a wrong way.

I suppose you would say that Jezebel was akin to Popery? Yes. I suppose this refers to Popery before the Protestant element was introduced.

Do you not think that it goes on?

Yes, but here there is nothing but Thyatira.

Quite so. The time for Sardis has not come yet in the historic view.

In the case of Naboth, Jezebel seems the principal mover. So with the murder of the prophets. She usurped authority in these cases.

Yes. I think that "calling herself a prophetess" is a usurping a, place of authority to which she had no right. Besides this, she also teaches.

Do we not see here the worst elements of the world brought into the Church? Rome joined, for instance, the theater to the Church, and the Church was the patron of all sorts of amusements and pleasures. Would that be comprised in the teaching to commit fornication?

Well, it certainly is recognizing that friendship of the world which is enmity with God.

Yes; that may be in a modified form, but here it is in its worst Character.

I think in fornication you have the thought of that which God has forbidden. I should be a little sorry to have fornication limited to theaters and places of amusement. Do you not think the faintest letting down of the barrier between the Church and the world would be what is referred to here? It is the direct admixture with the world, bringing in what should be distinct and different. We have not only a contrast here, but more than a contrast. God's commandment was that a Christian woman should not teach, but here is a woman teaching, who is not even a Christian.

Why is the order of the words "fornication" and "eating things sacrificed to idols" different in the twentieth verse from that in the fourteenth? In the fourteenth verse perhaps the owning of centers that are not of God leads to improper commerce with the world?

It might be so.

What is the form of evil in “eating things sacrificed to idols?”

It is identifying yourself with altars not of God. In the twenty-first verse we have the patience of God beautifully brought out.

Who are meant by “my servants?” Has it a more limited application than teaching this to the children?

It is teaching these things to the saints of God.

It was not merely the professing people, but Christ’s? Yes.

Would you think that such a thing as bishops having honors offered to them was included in it?

I daresay, what we see at the present day. It is the eating and drinking with the drunken; it is friendship with the world, and indifference to God’s centers and the recognizing of other centers. In verse 14 we have passive evil tolerated, but in verse 20 active evil sanctioned. In verse 14 they had there them which held the doctrine of Balaam; here there was an active energy of Satan with regard to his wiles, and that with respect to the children of God. “Behold, I cast her into a bed”—that is, into a place of sleep and ease. “They that sleep, sleep in the night”—that is, the very thing she is caught in. That very thing becomes her doom.

It is the Christians who are reproached when leading God’s servants astray. They look up to ministers, and forget that they lead them astray. Peter was led astray through fear of the brethren. The tendency of the people under the systems is to cast all their responsibility on the minister, forgetting that they themselves are responsible—that God holds individual Christians responsible for leading His servants astray.

The whole assembly was guilty of suffering such an influence to be brought to bear on those that took the lead. The whole meeting is responsible for the way in which the ministers were influenced.

That is, getting into ease and worldliness?

Yes. Christ says in effect, “The thing you desire I will give you.” I will cast you into a bed, the place of ease and rest; you desire rest, and you shall have it. Then He says, “Those that commit adultery with her,” which is worse than fornication, “into great tribulation.” He says, “That great tribulation is coming upon the world; you have chosen the world, and if you are to have the ease, you must have the consequences of the ease—tribulation which is coming upon the world.”

Has it more the force of, “I do cast,” than “I will cast?” Yes; it is present action. “I gave her space,” He says, “to repent, and she had no will to repent.”

Is not that a very forcible expression, “I will kill her children with death?”

That is a contrast to Pergamos. The doctrines existed in Pergamos, but they had been so active in Thyatira that children were the result— “I will kill the children with death.” There is a contrast between “my servants” and “her children.” It is absolute death from the presence of the Lord.

Are those that were to suffer tribulation the servants she had seduced?

No; the Lord removes the righteous from the judgment to come. No doubt they take warning by what is written. You see He does not say that they (the servants) commit adultery with her; they commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. That is a different thing from committing adultery with her. In chap. 17 there is a key to this. He says, “with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” There is the full form of the evil in chap. 18.

Who are her children?

Those that are the produce of her doctrines. Paul says, “I have begotten you through the gospel.” She has been so active in introducing her doctrines that children have been born to her-unconverted persons, of course.

“All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.” He takes that character in Jer. 17:10. That is what He was doing in the ruin of Israel, to give every man according to the fruit of his doing. In Rom. 8 we find, “He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to God.” Now Christ has come in and given us the Holy Ghost, and instead of searching the heart to give every man according to the fruit of his doings, He soon searches the heart to find out what is the mind of the Spirit.

When we reach this chapter in Revelation, we find evil and ruin have come in, and the Lord subsequently returns to the Jeremiah character, that is, as a Judge—a judicial Governor, and not as a Saviour. He “searches the reins and hearts, and will give unto every one of them according to their works.” The answer to the Christian character is in Psa. 139:23,24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” We respond to Him in that character.

Words of Truth: Volume 3, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia: Part 1 (3:1-13)

Thyatira. —Rev. 2:13-20.

These are the three addresses of those to the seven churches in which the Lord’s coming is mentioned. It is not referred to in the three first nor in the last, where we find His threat to spue the church out of His mouth in His judgment. In them we get the coming in three distinct

ways.

In Thyatira we have the substitution of the kingdom and heavenly blessedness for ecclesiastical or church position. "He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to Him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron,... and I will give him the morning star." "Hold fast till I come."

In Sardis we have the professing church treated like the world. "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Compare 1 Thess. 5:2,3.

In Philadelphia we have encouragement to those who keep Christ's word. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." "Behold I come quickly," &c.

In the three first churches judgment is not referred to, because He calls them to repent, and to return to first state. There are always two distinct grounds for God's judgment. First, the state we are in, not being that in which God set us. God cannot set up anything but what is perfect; but man is a sinner—he has departed from the state Adam was created in—he has lost his innocence. Another ground is, Are we ready to meet the Lord when He comes? Let us ask ourselves, can we stand before the Son of man? It is by our past blessing and our future blessing that God judges us. So here in these messages. The three first speak of what the church was: and He calls for return. When she did not repent, the coming of the Lord is introduced—was the church ready for that? You find the same principle in Isa. 5 and 6. In chap. 5 He recalls to what He had set up Israel at the first—a wholly right seed. In chap. 6 He introduces the coining of the Lord—were they fit for it? Properly speaking, we never get God's work in these churches, but the result, when man has had to say to what God had done. God cannot judge His own work; God's work is perfect always; He sows good seed, as to which there is no question of judgment; but He judges it when He finds tares have been sown with the wheat. Here you find there has been decline in the state of the church at Ephesus— "Thou hast left thy first love." In Smyrna persecution comes in, and in Pergamos false teaching; then in Thyatira you find Jezebel corruption. The history of what is called the Primitive Church in the middle ages was just the seduction of God's servants. Jezebel is not merely false, seducing prophetess, but a mother. There are children born to her. She had a time of repentance given to her, but she lost it—"I gave her space to repent, and she repented not;" therefore, there must be judgment executed upon her special judgment.

There is never restoration from a fallen state in the public ways of God. You never get the first man restored, but the Second Man brought in, through whom individuals are brought into a far more blessed condition than they ever had under the first man: but they are not restored to that from which they have fallen. So it always is. You never get Israel restored under the old covenant, but God sets up a new thing both for Jew and Gentile, so that far better blessing is the result. If tares are sown among the wheat, the Lord says, "Let both grow together until the harvest." Have not tares been sown? Has not Satan sown false doctrine? There can be no restoration—"the mystery of iniquity doth already work." If I take the case of mystic Babylon, you find it will be destroyed, because God has in mind to give the kingdom to the beast—a power of still greater evil—violence instead of corruption. God judges the corruption by violence, and then puts down the beast; there is no restoration. The mystery of iniquity which began in the apostle's days goes on till the man of sin is revealed "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2 Thess. 2:7,8.) Judgment is reserved for Christ. Jezebel had time given her to repent, but she repented not, so He must execute judgment upon her—"I will kill her children with death, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Christ has received it as His title to rule the nations with a rod of iron. This is the substitution of the kingdom and heavenly blessedness—the millennial state referred to in Psa. 2—"and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father, and I will give him the morning star." The morning star is the heavenly Christ and blessing with Him. You get the kingdom, and besides that, you get Christ looked for as the one waited for by those that watch for the morning. "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say more than they that watch for the morning." (Psa. 130:6.) In Malachi you see what the Sun of Righteousness is—"Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings,... and ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet." (Mal. 4:2,3.) He will be the Sun of Righteousness to the world when He appears, but then there will be judgment; but in Rev. 1 get the Morning Star. When the sun is up no one sees the morning star; it must be seen before the day comes in. When we have Christ as the Sun of Righteousness, the day will have come—the day that will burn as an oven—to the righteous that is a glorious expectation; but I want the Morning Star—the hope of Christ's coming before the day—to cheer my soul through the long and dreary night. When we read (Rev. 22:16), "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." The moment that comes the church says "Come."—"The Spirit and the bride say come." Christ is known before He appears, and is possessed fully. This is the blessed expectancy of a soul that knows the Lord, and waits to see Him and to be with Him.

Words of Truth: Volume 3, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia: Part 2 (3:1-13)

In Sardis you get another character—it is a very striking thing when you come to this. The character given to Christ when walking among the candlesticks, in chapter 1, is all ecclesiastical. You see Him both in His divine and human character,— "One like unto the Son of man... his head and his hairs white like wool, and his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass." All this is a person judging—fire is ever the sign of judgment; "And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;"—judgment again. We find none of these ecclesiastical characters here except the seven stars. He never gives up His authority at any time, and never will, still the ecclesiastical characteristics are passed over. In Sardis we get His divine character in connection with the coming of the Lord,— "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars:"—none of those spoken of at first, but the seven stars. This fullness of the power of the Spirit is His; no lack of authority. "The seven spirits of God," His intrinsic moral character, all that the Spirit is, in wisdom and power. "I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead." There is no Jezebel corruption here in Sardis; there is death. "Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God." That is the way He is dealing with Sardis. This is a solemn truth.

What a strange thing when the Lord speaks of their being dead, and yet expects perfect works! But God never expects anything else, and never will. He will never go back from His proper claim; He will never expect more than has been given; but He will expect conduct fully up to what has been received, "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent; if therefore thou shalt not watch I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." What is this? It is mere profession—not corrupt systems; it is that which has a name to live and is dead. He will treat it like the world. Why? Because it is the world. People complain of our calling it so, but it is called so; and it is treated as the world; as you see in 1 Thess. 5:2. It is the very distinction the apostle makes where you get taste Christians contrasted with professors. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, for when they shall say peace and safety then sudden destruction cometh upon them; but ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that clay should overtake you as a thief." Nothing could be more solemn than His testimony, "I will come on thee as a thief;" but it will overtake Sardis; and if you, my reader, have a name to live and are dead, it will overtake you. If you do not "watch"—if you are not acting up to this—I will treat you like the world. That is the exceedingly solemn testimony as to those who have a name to live but are dead—where there is profession, but the works are not perfect according to what has been received. If you are not acting up to that, if you say "My lord delayeth his coming," I will treat you like the world, and will appoint you a portion with unbelievers. (Luke 12:46.) I get this solemn testimony here as to those who have a name to live and are dead to God.

Words of Truth: Volume 8, Man of Sorrows; the Man of Patience; the Man of Joy, The (3:7-22)

I DESIRE to bring before you some remarks connected with the peculiar character of this Scripture. This presents itself the more strikingly to my own mind, in reading the titles of our Lord in verse 7. In it is seen how marvelously the divine glory and the servant character of Christ is maintained throughout. Nowhere is it more strikingly brought out than in the power of the expression, "He that is holy," as belonging exclusively to one alone. The consciousness the Lord had in Himself of His divine glory in all His course down here—"The holy, harmless, and undefiled,"—enabled Him to take this title. Only as divine could He introduce Himself as the "Holy and the tree." He the center of all the glory of God. Not kept inside the heavenly glory; but planted at a distance, and outside of heaven as OUR Redeemer: made the sun and center of redemption glory, and whether in the Church, on the cross, or in the grave, divine glory shone through everything. In the grave He could not see corruption. He was always the One of whom it could be said that He was essentially the Holy One.

With reference to the next title—"He that is true," of Him only could that be said. This title brings out divine glory in a form that tested everything.

Then, in the third place, we find Him in the servant character—"He that hath the key of David." Not only having in His hand the key of David, and pledged to open the kingdom of David to Israel: not only a key to open all the glory of the world to come; but He has power to open and close all and everything. He opened John's sphere of service, and closed it when He permitted him to be sent to Patmos. He will open the kingdom to Israel; but this is more in application to Him in the servant character as the One who opens and closes everything according to His own purpose and will.

We see here how different is the estimate Christ's mind forms of things from that which ours forms. Looking at Philadelphia there is nothing very brilliant to the mind of man; but there was something peculiarly so to Christ's mind. He saw something very peculiar in connection with that state. You and I—if we had been there, should have bemoaned ourselves because of having but little strength and honor. But Christ's thoughts and God's thoughts are very unlike our thoughts: God sees not as man. "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." They had borne testimony to His name upon the earth. The works here are very different from those of the Ephesians (chapter 2:1-7). They had labor and patience and intelligence of evil; very different in contrast with these is the "little strength," and the "not denying" Christ's name.

I cannot help thinking that there was, to His mind when He said this, a recalling of what He went through Himself whilst He was down here. He had kept the word of God, and never denied His name.

At Philadelphia it was a time of straitness, and difficulties were there. Seine said they were Jews who were not so at all. But they were kept in quietness of soul. They had got a place for Christ, and did not deny His name. It was not a time for brilliant works. Many who would make a fair show in the flesh, would admire an apostle's work more than Christ's; because there was the display of power. (Christ suppressed the display of power.) Looking at v. 10, there is something very remarkable in that word "because thou past kept the word of my patience"—in connection with a time of difficulty and temptation. Christ may have locked the door (very possibly, on account of unfaithfulness), but if the door is shut, who has closed it? If only ajar, who closed it? Surely that One who has a right to challenge our hearts: that One who did all for God.

Ah, Christ is above all discipline, and His love nearer than all sorrow, when the heart is fresh, even if it lead to Patmos. Was He not near John in Patmos—and to Paul when bound as a prisoner on his way to Rome? Ah, yes; Christ was nearer to him than his chains: they only made him remark the more, Christ being there with that love. What were the soldiers and the chains when he heard Christ say "Be of good cheer, Paul" ... for "I am with thee?" To God's eye the chains were no such wonderful things! For such a man as Paul, what were they? Paul had been the slave of Satan; bound in Satan's chains; he was the Lord's freeman now; and he must have a little log put to keep him steady. As if the Lord had said—'You have not known how to carry the cup with a steady hand, and I must come in, in discipline, and give a check to you, but that only shows out my love more brilliantly!'

Remark the difference between the babe and the young man in Christ. In the babe there is the flow of affection; in the young man the walk of self-judgment and subjectiveness, which you will not find in the babe—the young believer. But it is that subjection that is needed; we must learn to obey! The flow of affection is sweet, but it does not come up to the steadiness of—"Lo! I come to do thy will." Whether a happy path or not, it was ever obedience walking only in the path traced out by God, without a waver or turn.

What are all the mistakes of the church—all put together, if they but give occasion for the bringing out the sweetness of Christ's love and the declaring of those names—“Holy and true?” “He that openeth, and no man shutteth; He that shutteth, and no man openeth” “giving them too in connection with the word of His patience.” Behold I come quickly.”

Referring to v. 12; what a blessed thought it is, as one difficulty presses upon another—making us feed upon the word of God more diligently, that it may be treasured up in our hearts; what a thing it is, that God should make known to us of that city! Here, where everything is driving its sharp edge upon us, and if you have any good thing at all, it is by faith; that in the midst of all that tries our hearts, we can speak of this good Word of God and of Christ. I am in trying circumstances; but that is nothing. I am pressed down with trouble, but there is the City of God; and its name is—‘He will provide peace!’ This is its blessed name, and marks the fact that there will be no warfare there. I shall have to recount all His love when I get there, but I have it as a place in His presence now; He tells me it is the place where His eye has been looking ever since the day of Abraham. Will there be anything to bear there? Any of the sorrow which comes when the door is almost shut by reason of failure? No, none! How sweet that “new name” is to one's heart, in connection with Christ—“I will write upon him my new name.” The name of that Christ who is now the Man of patience; once the Man of sorrows, and hereafter to be the Man of joy.

We get three very different displays of Christ. In Christ down here, a babe in a manger—despised, rejected, and acquainted with grief; you see the Man of sorrows. Yet, nowhere do I find such divine glory as at His cross. But when I think of what I have been taken out of by Him, through that cross, and where I have been brought by Him, the next thought comes—‘Where is the Christ, whose death has done all this, now?’ and the answer is, He is at the right hand of God; whereas the Man of patience, He has been quietly waiting for two thousand years, for the glory and the people—His glory and His people, as the meal of such service as His!

If you and I have served, we are ready for our reward. But this Blessed One has been going on for nigh two thousand years of patience—not claiming it. But what has He been doing? Why, turning to us and saying ‘I am occupied with you in the glory (not the glory I have won)—I have an entrance into all your sorrows turn your eyes upward; open your hearts to Me; let Me see everything. As a shepherd, I am occupied with each sheep, binding up each wound; making right each rent in the fleece.’ He is now the Man of Patience, but soon to be the Man of Joy. “Anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above (His) fellows.” Most blessed to think of seeing the One who was emphatically the Man of Sorrows, anointed with the oil of joy! But it is well often to think of Him as the Man of Sorrows in connection with what we are passing through down here. Heap up—fill up all your till they reach so high that you can heap up no more; then turn and see Him whose heart broke in woe! Oh, talk of your sorrows if you can in the presence of His Tack of all you have had of sorrow by the way, that has worn you down, and what will you say in the presence of One who says to you—“Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?” And He—the Man of Sorrows, is now at the right hand of God, sitting there as the Man of Patience for nigh two thousand years, and saying to each, ‘You and I have to do together—one with the other. Rob me not of my service, of my glory. Let me be occupied with you; let me serve you this little while?’ He will soon be the Man of Joy, as He was the Man of Sorrows and of Patience.

Is the thought of Christ's joy sweet to your hearts? The new name, that in which He will be anointed with the oil of joy? Do you love to think there will be no face so beautiful, no face so bright as Christ's? No heart so happy and so perfect in its joy, as the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ? All the glory then will be but the setting of that gem, and that new name of Christ will be upon you! Surely that ought to give you a little patience now, as you pass along the wilderness! Are your loins weary? Are you tired by the roughness of the way? Is all around tending to distract you? Christ says, “Be of good cheer.” What are all those troubles? What are all your sorrows in the presence of my cross? Nothing! Your patience. What is it compared with mine, waiting for the glory, and stooping down to interest myself with all that interests you?

Only “a little while” and you will soon be with Me, and I will write on you My new name—My name of joy. Christ's heart is not fed with the externals of glory, but it is fed with the joy of serving God. When all the children God has given Him are brought home, and the new name written on them, that will be Christ's joy.

Do you want comfort? I am sure you do; you want something to give you a little bit of courage; something to set you on the other side of the street? (The world has one side, and we ought to have the other.) Well, nothing can do it as much as the thought of His coming. There will then be joy enough in the morning, though there be sorrow now in the night. There will be fullness of joy in that morning when we see Him as He is, in fullness of joy for evermore.

I cannot see Him as the Man of Joy without the servant character coming out. He is the Seed of the woman (as God, all glory is His), but there is something else which nothing can fill save having the answer to the perfect affections of a perfect human heart! “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” This divine glory and the perfect servant character, are maintained unto the end.

Collected Writings, Tribe of Dan Not in Revelation 7 (7:4-8)

Q. verse J. A. How is it that Dan is not included in the tribes mentioned in Revelation 7?

A. God here draws back the curtain, so to say, and shows us that in the midst of these courses of judgment He remembers mercy, and thinks of His ancient people—sealing a perfect number, that is, $12 \times 12 \times 1000 = 144,000$ for preservation for the millennial earth. But judgment being then in course He is silent about Dan. He was the first tribe that went into idolatry (see Judg. 18 passim). It was a son of a Danite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, who blasphemed the name of Jehovah, and cursed, and who was stoned. (Lev. 24:10-16). This apostate is said to be typical of the Antichrist in the end. Of Dan, Jacob a-dying said, “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward” (Gen. 49:17). The deceit of the serpent and the treachery of the adder characterized his history.

How sweet to find that when grace restores these long scattered people after judgment has been satisfied under the government of God, that Dan has his portion and his ordered place in the land amongst the tribes. Ezek. 48 prophesies of this, and even counts him first in the order given. Jacob prophetically touched on his future blessing, even before he spoke of his apostasy (Gen. 49:16), in the words, “Dan shall judge

his people as one of the tribes of Israel."

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