

OUR LOW STATE

Is There A Remedy?

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Is there a remedy?

We hesitate and tremble in attempting this analysis and it hurts deeper than we can express. It is difficult to lift the pen, well knowing that it is not human energy that can warm our hearts but only the love of God effective in the power of the Holy Spirit. "Our coldness might fill us with grief and with shame." "Who is sufficient for these things?" "We are unfaithful, He abides faithful." "Having loved His own...He loved them unto the end." His love can never give us up, for He ever liveth on high to intercede, to restore and to encourage us. Besides this, we have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us to present Christ to our hearts. He fills heaven with His glory and He wants to fill us with Himself. He, His Word and His Spirit are ever faith's resource. — Hag. 2: 4-5.

C. H. M. wrote: "We can put our faces in the dust. The position is divine; but... A friend once said to me, 'Do you know that the Rev. Mr. is delivering a course of lectures against the Brethren?' 'Tell him,' I said, 'with my kind regards, that I am doing the very same just now,

...he is lecturing against their principles, while I am lecturing against their practices ...our spiritual tone is sorrowfully low. There is a sad lack of depth and power.' ”

Of course, talking about our coldness will not warm our hearts; neither will flattery help the situation, as it does not really edify or restore. It only pleases, coddles and spoils, but it is not faithfulness. Correct spiritual diagnosis is of vital importance as well as prescribing the correct moral remedy; but even this will accomplish nothing unless the remedy is acted upon.

“WHAT IS MAN?”

Man was God's crowning work in creation, (made in His image and likeness and for His glory, and given dominion over the earth, which was especially prepared for his good). Failure has marked man in every test that God has applied to him—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel under law, judges, priests, prophets, kings and then, especially, the restored remnant of Judah which finally became the crucifiers of their Messiah! Graphic is Stephen's review of their wicked history in Acts 7. “Man being in honor abideth not.” “At his best state is altogether vanity.” Given the brightest beginning, declension quickly follows.

This stands in absolute contrast to the "second Man out of heaven" 1 Cor. 15:47 the Lord Jesus Christ, Who alone could rightly say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth."

HOW ABOUT THE CHURCH?

It is only in sovereign purpose and by wondrous grace that Christ will present His redeemed without blemish to Himself, for "Christ...loved the Church and has given Himself for it." This is the true Church composed of all true believers on Him. With regard to the lukewarm mass of lifeless profession, He will spew it out of His mouth. This will be the solemn end of the false testimony of the professing Church on earth, and simultaneously the true Church will be translated to glory. Ample have been the warnings through Israel's lamentable failures, besides those expressly addressed to the Church.

Let us first recall the Church's lovely beginning (Acts 4:31-33) and the declension of that same Church as recorded in Rev. 2 and 3. After the Church's affections for Christ had waned (Ephesus), and persecutions for a season provoked faithfulness (Smyrna), Constantine provided relief, protection, promotion and ease for Christians in a world in which Satan has usurped the place and authority of the King

of kings and Lord of lords (Pergamos)! The Papal system then took over (Thyatira), obliterating the light until it became unbearable to the noble and courageous reformers. Sad it is but true that their followers organized sectarian systems, which in turn became "dead" and formal (Sardis).

But early in the last century God exercised some as to this unscriptural development. They became "discontented" (1 Sam. 22:2) and the Spirit of God led a few in various countries to come together in simple heart-searching of God's Word. The result was they discovered the truth as it is in Jesus and His sufficiency, and that "where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them." So they went "forth unto Him outside the camp bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13), which proved their subjection to such soul-searching appeals as are found in 2 Tim. 2:21 and Jer. 15:19. They believed that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," and recognizing this integral truth found the remembrance of their Lord in His death to be most precious—"for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." "The love of Christ constrained" them to "no more live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose." Such was Philadelphian.

PHILADELPHIA IN REV. 3

Lovely in the sight of the Lord this unostentatious spiritual state of a feeble remnant whose hearts were aglow and lives devoted to Christ and His Church. He commends their having "a little power," their keeping His Word and not denying His holy and true Name. He also reminds them that He loves them, and that because they had kept His Word He would keep them out of the period "of trial which is about to come upon the whole habitable world." Furthermore, He encourages them by presenting His coming before them — "Behold, I come quickly." Surely the "little power" is of the Holy Spirit Who ever glorifies Christ.

In a former dispensation there were some who separated from the "camp" of Israel, so those saints mentioned in the preceding section had separated from the "camp" of Christendom (that is, they separated from all the multitudinous sectarian systems of man in it and met together exclusively to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, owning the propriety of all true believers to be with them, and recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit as alone competent to control their activity and lead them out to Christ, and present Christ to them — how blessed to be in the Divine Presence and under Divine control). They discovered His love, His finished work, His glorification and our full acceptance

in Him, also that we are members of His body, as well as being His heavenly bride for whom He is about to come. They devoted themselves, their possessions and their every opportunity to honor Him and to the spread of His truth. There was a sweet savor of Christ in all this. Now, dear ones, is this our character today?

Their written ministry, spiritual hymns and most faithful translation of God's word have given us rich provision for our souls if we have the heart and diligence to make it our own.

Most of all, they valued the nearness of being gathered to the blessed Lord Himself. See such Scriptures as "The Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him to serve Him, and that ye should minister unto Him, and burn incense," (2 Chron. 29:11). "They shall enter into My sanctuary, and they shall come near to My table, to minister unto Me," (Ezek. 44:16), surely the highest privilege on earth.

"Our calling, characteristically, is ecclesiastical rather than evangelical... What is due to Christ by His body is the greatest favor... Paul's doctrine... must first and foremost be guarded." J. N. D. Service in the gospel was by no means neglected, but was fragrant with Christ and His grace to lost sinners. (Some see that the growing tendency of our day is to neglect that which is of the greatest im-

portance, while laying increasing stress upon gospel activity.)

LAODICEA

The state of the Church in Laodicea shows heartlessness for Christ, having the light of Philadelphia but without the power. This portrays the last and lowest nauseous state of that which professes to be the Church of God. It is man's inflation over what he has acquired and accomplished for his own exaltation. Want of heart is the worst of all ills, and this on the very verge of the Lord's coming to judge!

It is like the insensibility in the days of Malachi. Oblivious to their own actual poverty and impending doom! Before our very eyes the ecumenical fusion is paving the way for "Babylon the Great" to take over. Then the Roman beast with its ten horns will arise, and as it were, say "I will carry it" — i. e. "the mother of harlots" (the lifeless religious societies of Christendom). Satan will be cast down to this earth and then the lifeless multitude will worship him and the Beast and his image for forty-two months, followed by their having their part in the lake of fire throughout unending eternity! Rev. 13 and 20.

Mr. Darby's chief burden was the ruin of the professing Church — "The flesh has

never concerned itself about the fall of the church," also as to Laodicea, "This ought to come home with more sorrow in our hearts than the judgment of the world."

WARNINGS ARE NOT LACKING

In 1875 Mr. Darby warned: "If there be not devotedness in brethren they become as mud." Again in 1877, "The brethren are in a critical moment... if their devotedness be made good according to Christ's heart, they will stand, if not, I do not see what good they are." He has also said "God could set them aside... Their place is to remain in obscurity and devotedness... Let them walk in love, in the truth, humble, lowly, unworldly, for Christ as little (content to be little) as when they began."

William Kelly warns, "Laodicea is the danger of this present moment, the special danger." "Suppose not that you have a lease in perpetuity." "The most solemn message, 'hold that fast which thou hast!'"

F. C. B. warns, "It is not enough to be 'on the ground' and to 'have the truth.' We repeat the sin of the Pharisees when we become content and complacent with externals. The truth must give us a state that comports and agrees with the place we are in."

H. H. Snell faithfully warns, "The Laodicean element, so rife on every hand, is what we have most to dread, and most resolutely to overcome...the palsied state...spiritual slothfulness...one of the earliest outward marks of inward decline is the readiness to excuse oneself from devotedness and diligence in the Lord's service...a place of ease is readily found ... A drowsy state has taken hold on them ... 'The way of a slothful man is as an hedge of thorns.' A spiritual and earnest Christian finds something almost impenetrable in the endeavor to approach such ... they find communion in the things of the Lord to be out of the question...and conclude that God only can break through the 'hedge of thorns' (Prov. 15:19)... 'Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger,' (Prov. 19:15). Let it be noted that it is a deep sleep, alas! so deep, that ordinary means utterly fail to awaken them... 'I went by the field of the slothful... and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down;' 'Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come,' (Prov. 24:30-34).'' Such warnings are not given to discourage us but rather to awaken exercise to consider our ways.

HOW ABOUT OURSELVES AS GATHERED TO HIS NAME?

Is this contemplation not a most solemn one, and do we contribute to the present state which will end in utter rejection? This is the deeply serious subject we have before us, a subject the flesh cannot relish.

F. C. Blount felt the gravity of the case, "One's heart is saddened to see in those who profess to be His corporate testimony at this closing hour, the unmistakable marks of declension; heartlessness for Christ and His claims that is truly appalling... 'seek our own and not the things which are Jesus Christ's'... spirituality seems to be a thing of the past."

Also, J. B. Dunlop wrote, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, one of the greatest proofs being, alas, the general low, lukewarm state of things, among us, lukewarmness to Christ Himself, manifested in so many ways... most 'seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ,' i. e., He has not His proper place in our hearts. Our own things, being in His place... spiritual discernment is dimmed and spiritual power is almost gone... We are not left down here merely to live decent moral, and respectable lives, and attend to our business and families, and try to get on in the world, till the Lord comes, but to live unto Him, as witnesses for Him."

“...The modern Jesus allows you to be as like the world as you please—to spend as much on yourself as you like, to turn out as grand, and keep up as great a style, as the world. Such is the modern Jesus...with well-nigh everything that is hollow and worthless. Are we so unlike the world, that the world sees we are strangers here?...is there not reason to fear that, to keep ourselves from being thought peculiar, we are adopting the world’s ways—‘settling down’ here—keeping up our position here—making ourselves comfortable here...do you feel it hard to pass by ‘the world’s vanity fair,’ without a peep at it like all other worldly ones?...somehow they soon creep back to their old holes again, and you’ll see them now in the giddy crowd, and as like it as they can be...hankering after its pleasures...God doesn’t want an outward, heartless separation—a shell without a kernel. Do you find Christ as dear and the world as worthless as they were when you were newly converted?...what do the folks at home think about us? Is it clear to them that we are a heavenly people? A testimony believed there means power for testimony anywhere...Worldliness is eating its way into many a once bright testimony. Worldly conformity is the rule and not the exception...how closely can I conform to the world, and yet get to heaven after all?” From “The Believers Pathway in the Last Days.”

“The present moment is of so solemn a character that I feel constrained to address you this word of exhortation... one must speak plainly and decisively... Brethren and sisters, you are being infected with the spirit of the world. Your dress, your manner, your talk, betray it in every gathering... A form of godliness without power is beginning to be seen among you, as plainly as in Christendom generally... Oh, awake, from your lethargy, put away your idols... Lay aside your last bit of worldly dress; guard your speech, that it be of Christ and His affairs, and not, as you know it now often is of anything but Him.” “The Day of Apostasy”
J.N.D. (?)

One has well said: “To suppose that certain correct and scriptural regulations and order of meetings constitute a company of believers God’s testimony is to fall into the error of the Pharisees. They were wholly occupied with the correctness of external details. The Pharisees were not a testimony for God; in spite of their knowledge of the word they were the greatest dishonor to Him of all the people on the face of the earth.

“There is danger of being unexercised about the condition of the heart, and the practical manifestation of the love of God. How could God delight in us and our scriptural gatherings if in spite of our words our hearts are going after the world?

“It is only as the truth of the gospel is manifested in our lives by the fruit of the Spirit and heart devotion to Christ that we who hold the truth are a testimony for Him.”

“Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst.” Ezek. 9:4.

“The sin of the Church has brought it into desolation. Yet little real cry has gone up to the Lord; and wherefore? We are not aware of how far we have departed from our original standing. We have got so much of the world’s dignity, and influence and riches! These things, though they hide us not from God or from Satan, are hiding from ourselves our real poverty... The Church is so worldly, so divided... There has been of late an awakening to a good deal of busy activity in service... We are in danger of putting service in the place of the burnt-offering.”

“Not by J. N. D.” but in Col. Writings Vol. 19 pages 517-

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, was told to “go” to the most privileged Judah, gathered to God’s center, Jerusalem, and “tell them of their abominations... but they will not hear.” Also, “Pray not for this people!” for they had set their faces to go down to Egypt, 41:17-44:12.

Are his Lamentations depressive? There was a "needs be." So with the 88th Psalm, 2 Tim., Jude, Laodicea and Malachi.

It is all very nice to be told that we are free from false doctrine, that we have superior books and hymn book, the most faithful translation, refreshing conferences, that "Philadelphia will continue until the Lord comes," etc., but it is not so welcome to have our consciences and our hearts challenged, as to our deplorable low state. Instead of wanting to hear "smooth things" to gloss over our unlovely ways, may we desire the very truth that cuts and exposes our shame. Truth does not hurt unless it should. Such is God's route to restoration and overcoming so that Christ may fill our hearts.

FURTHER INDICATIONS OF OUR LOW STATE

What impoverishment is manifested when, in giving thanks for the memorials, we become only occupied with ourselves and our blessings (wondrous as these blessings are—yet not in keeping with the primary purpose of remembering our adorable Saviour). It is still more unbecoming to commend ourselves for keeping the feast. Is this obeying the Lord, to place ourselves before Him and in His infinite suffering? His glorious worth, His

matchless love and His atoning work, before our hearts, alone can make our cups run o'er. Such worship is acceptable to the Father.

Mr. Darby says, "The first sign of weakness is, the gathering itself becoming the object of attention; instead of... Christ ... The activity and zeal will be for the system." "Another mark is, that the spirit of the world is acquiesced in... the rich flattered... Calumny of the saints... the influence of females and of money... another mark... incapacity to see evil."

Where are we when the word of God is slighted in much of our practice? Should not this alarm us? How weak the heart and flimsy the excuses for absenting ourselves from the meetings due to disinclination or counter attractions. Will the "regulars" ever regret their having been regular? They miss the "seldom seen" saints, and they would be glad to see them. Heb. 10:25; 1 Sam. 20:18; John 20:24; and Song of S. 2:14.

IDOLS

Whatever captivates my heart eclipses Christ and becomes an idol. It may be secret lust or a hobby, but it becomes a snare and a robber of my time and my heart. Andrew Miller says, "If a Christian has not Christ before him as his all-governing object, he has an idol." The

prophet Ezekiel says: "They have set up their idols in their heart...they are all estranged from Me through their idols... multitude of idols." Ezek. 14. In pride they may be displayed, or for fear of being put to shame they may be kept hidden, as did Rachel when she hid the idols under the camel's saddle. But "Be sure your sin will find you out," "your secret sins," for "God is light."

"Have I an object, Lord below
Which would divide my heart with Thee?"

"Search me...and see" Psa. 139.

"Let us lay aside every weight, and sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the beginner and finisher of faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:1, 2.

RIVALRY

Am I free from "prejudice," "Partiality" (1 Tim. 5:21; James 3:17) and faction, — free to unfeignedly love all the saints without one exception? Most dishonoring to the Lord, although kept somewhat hidden, is jealousy. "Jealousy is

cruel.” Vying with one another, eying one’s fancied rival with malice in the heart, belittling a fellow member of the body of Christ, sewing discord, blackening; all this under cover, yet two-faced! Listen to the voice of solemn inditement. “He speaketh peaceably. . .with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.” “When he speaketh fair, believe him not; for there are seven abominations in his heart. Whose hatred is covered,” Prov. 26:25, 26. The word “implacable” (Rom. 1:31) simply means not wanting reconciliation. How unamiable are “The works of the flesh. . . hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, parties, envyings.” Oh! brethren, may we “first cast out the beam”—“first be reconciled.” Mr. Darby says, “If I am looking at the people ‘from the top of the rock’ I shall see them as God sees them, and that is clothed with all the comeliness of Christ—complete in Him, accepted in the beloved. This is what will enable me to get on with them, to walk with them, to have fellowship with them, to rise above their points and angles, blots and blemishes, failures and infirmities.” “For we all often offend,” says James (3:2 J. N. D. trans.)

Then there is that tendency of some influential leaders to band together and crystalize an hierarchy. Surely this invites God’s governmental rod. “Hear ye now what the Lord saith. . .What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and

to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?..Hear ye the rod, and Who hath appointed it," Micah 6:1, 8, 9. To take the low place is after the pattern of Christ.

DIVISIONS

The apostle wrote to the carnal Corinthians that "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Since that time how much havoc has been wrought among the saints through Satan's work in dividing, and many "tables" established as the consequence!

How few become exercised sufficiently to obtain the Lord's mind in His word to depart from their self-chosen party in order "to keep the unity of the Spirit" by being gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If thus gathered by the Holy Spirit it is outside of all divisions.

"But want of principles by loose brethren will always make them more popular, and they, I presume, will increase in numbers; while those who seek to carry out the mind of the Lord, as revealed in His word, will become fewer and fewer." Capt. Trigge.

Does not the prevailing apathy amongst ourselves alarm us as being a possible precursor to another division? "O Lord

to us belongeth confusion of face." Would it not be wiser to avert it by deeply judging ourselves?

Satan, knowing that what would most glorify Christ would be the manifesting the unity of all believers on earth, has wrought great havoc to the "one flock" and, alas, to those who have been gathered to Himself outside the camp. Satan's latest device and snare would have us resort to reunion. Is this not a witness to carnality? Divisions ever have arisen because of our low state.

NEGLECT OF CHILD TRAINING

Glaring is the modern neglect of parents to train their children; instead the children rule their parents—this is a clear departure from the scripture, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." So often they are allowed to run wild without restraint. Play-guns are provided, they are fed on the "funnies," exciting novels, T. V., and radio fill their ears and eyes and mould their minds; besides "Christmassing" which involves deceit, selfishness and mockery. Beautiful those families which are the exceptions. The word of the Lord says, "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it; but thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing" Deut. 7:26.

What would our heart's answer be to these questions: "What has thou in thine house?" "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." Jeremiah says, "Mine eyes affecteth mine heart." Isn't that searching? "Thou hast dove's eyes." Why put raven's trash before them? "Foolishness is sin." For the good of our children may our hearts take up the language of the psalmist - "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." Psalm 119:37.

Nature to the mind attentive
Teaches oft a hidden truth,
Even by a tinny insect,
Speaking to our heart's reproof.

Many a different plant will furnish
Daily food the insect needs
But it always takes the color
From the leaf on which it feeds.

Christians from the bread of heaven
Oft-times turn to earthly fare,
But a tell-tale change of color,
To their shame they always wear.

If on Christ, the Lamb, we're feeding
We'll present a heavenly blue,
But the taste of earthly follies
Changeth to another hue.

E. J. C.

This lack of child-training is primarily due to our own poor example which they surely see. Then our not standing together

in training them weakens our discipline. Our failure to prayerfully enlist the Lord's help and wisdom to train them, enfeebles us. Allowing our child to get the victory over us, only cultivates rebellion. Tantrums at our table will reappear in public.

The bitter end result is always from allowing apparently innocent beginnings. May we all be more exercised to discern the subtle insinuations of Satan. Let us take heed to the scripture "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

Obviously forgotten in many cases are such scriptures as—

"Withhold not training from the child"
Prov. 23:13.

"Train up a child in the way" Prov. 22:6.

"The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame"
Prov. 29:15.

"No chastening...seemeth joyous... it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness"
Heb. 12:11.

LACK OF CONSCIENCE AS TO MODESTY

The worldly minded cannot bear such clear cut statements from the Word of God as: "There shall not be a man's apparel on a woman," and "Be not conformed to this world," and "If a woman

have long hair, it is a glory to her," but "It is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut," (Berkeley version). It is likewise disgraceful for our young men to have their hair long and to conform to the garish fashions of the world, (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 11:14). Now ponder these statements: "Jezebel...painted her face, and tired her head," "Paintest thy eyes, and deckest thyself with ornaments," Ezek. 23:40. "Clothest thyself with crimson," Jer. 4:30. "Nails like bird's claws," Dan. 4:33. Yes, such lack of conscience as to modesty! What shocking immodesty and exposure, inviting "eyes" 2 Pet. 2:14. How disgraceful and dishonoring to the Lord. Are the mothers mute? "If the delicate sensibilities of the guilty are shocked, let them be shocked." J. R. G. But how beautiful is the opposite, 1 Tim. 2:9 and 1 Pet. 3:3,4. These are jewels rare.

MILITARY COMBAT

Another sad evidence of declension is the heartlessness to not take a definite stand for Christ because of "the fear of man," against military conscription and then go along with the popular patriotic, current-of-the-world into the military conflict and carnage.

Mr. Darby said in 1870, "It is clear to me that a Christian, could never be a

soldier...to be carried away by what is called patriotism. We are not of this world, we are representatives of Christ." Mr. W. Kelly said, "If a Christian fight in and with the world, he is out of his place...the name of the Lord would be thus compromised by brethren on opposite sides, each bound to imbrue their hands in one another's blood, each instruments of hurrying to perdition souls ripening in sins...will anyone dare to call human butchery, at the command of the 'powers that be,' Christ's service? The true reason why people fail to see this is, either a fleshly mind or an unworthy shrinking from the consequences. They prefer to kill another to please the world, rather than be killed themselves to please Christ."

Mr. C. H. Mackintosh said, "It is thoroughly wrong for the Church of God to go to war." Such men of God did not shun to declare the whole truth of God boldly, Acts 20:27. Their hearts were set to avoid every unequal yoke with the world. "Them that honor Me I will honor."

DELIBERATELY ENTERING THE UNEQUAL MARRIAGE YOKE

Sad indeed are the cases of those who have deliberately ignored the warnings of 2 Cor. 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers". Amos 3:3,

“Can two walk together except they be agreed?” Deut. 22:10, “Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.” Life-time regrets follow this lightly esteeming God’s holy word. “The way of the transgressor is hard.” “It is better to obey.”

IS THERE A REMEDY?

If there is, will we avail ourselves of it? The flesh will never, never, relish God’s remedy, which will now occupy us in closing. Humiliation, self-judgment and confession, we fear are becoming extinct, yet must be revived in our souls if we will but hearken to God’s Holy Word. “He that hath an ear let him hear.” “Our faces in the dust is the place of blessing.” Does this embarrass our wretched hearts? Of some it was said “They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush,” Jer. 6:15.

“For the Lord hath a controversy with His people.” Like it was in the days of Haggai, the most privileged returned-remnant of Judah neglected the Lord’s house while they were diligent about their own “ceiled houses.” “Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew... I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labor of your hands; yet ye turned not to Me, saith the Lord.” In like strain God’s prophet Amos laments,

"I have given you cleanness of teeth...
yet ye have not returned unto Me... also I
 have withholden the rain from you...
yet have ye not returned unto Me... I have
 smitten you with blasting and mildew...
 the palmer-worm devoured them: yet
have ye not returned unto Me... I have
 sent you the pestilence... yet have ye not
returned unto Me... I have overturned
 some of you... Yet have ye not returned
unto Me." "Therefore also now, saith
 the Lord, turn ye to Me with all your heart,
 and with fasting, and with weeping, and
 with mourning and rend your heart, and
 not your garments, and turn unto the Lord
your God: for He is gracious and merciful"
 Joel 2:12,13. "Come, and let us return
 unto the Lord."

HUMBLING OURSELVES OUR ONLY HOPE

As to the low state of most privileged
 Judah, Jeremiah laments, "How is the
 gold become dim!...Her Nazarites were
 purer than snow...they were whiter than
 milk...their visage is blacker than coal
 ...for this our hearts faint; for these
 things our eyes are dim...Let us search
 and try our ways, and turn again to the
 Lord...Remembering mine affliction and
 my misery, the wormwood and the gall.
 My soul hath them still in remembrance
 and is humbled in me. This I recall to my
 mind, therefore have I hope... great is

Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him... he putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." Lam. of Jer.

THIS THEN, IS THE DIVINE REMEDY

Will we take it? Let us take it.

The loveliest heart, "meek and lowly in heart;" the loveliest mind, "He humbled Himself." It is ever the sin-confessing ones that God approves. "Ye sorrowed after a godly sort...approved yourselves" 2 Cor. 7:11. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful." We see it in Ezra 9, Neh. 9 and Dan. 9. "For thus sayeth the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "Roll thyself in the dust." Micah 1:10. Ezra was a noble example of this when he "confessed, weeping and casting himself down...for the people wept very sore." Confession followed, "We have trespassed... yet there is hope."

O pardon us Lord! that our love
to Thy name
Is so faint with so much our
affections to move,
Our coldness might fill us with
grief and with shame:
So much to be loved, and so little
to love.

O kindle within us a holy desire,
Like that which was found in Thy
people of old,
Who tasted Thy love, and whose
hearts were on fire,
While they waited in patience
Thy face to behold.

“Love to Christ is produced in the very same ratio that I know His love to me.”
W. K. “To know the love of Christ” more and more so that He fills and warms our hearts. J. B. Dunlop writes in the same strain, “We are the object of His heart, His treasure. May God enable our poor, dull hearts to take in Christ’s great, and wonderful, and unceasing, unchanging love to us, as being really His treasure. This is what draws our spiritual affection towards Him. We fail in not really believing how much He loves us.”

CONCLUSION

There are then at this present moment, three grave dangers before us, namely, a heartless condition (about which we have been principally occupied), pride as to correct position, and lastly, the danger of giving it up! It is indeed a "day of small things," lamentable failure, bewildering confusion and divisions. Yet, "He who encourages those that are brought low," (2 Cor. 7:6. J.N.D. transl.) ever encourages us to return unto Himself in humble self-judgment, confessing everything. Then He would have us cleave unto Himself with purpose of heart, and continue in the things which we have learned, holding fast "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." Brethren, are we going to "Buy the truth and sell it not?"

May we each one follow the word of Peter, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." So that, together, we may have "boldness for entering the holy of Holies" and "approach with true hearts" Heb. 10.

“In a day of closing darkness
When the outlook is so black,
When the hearts of men are failing,
And the feet of saints turn back,
When corruption spreads her mantle
O'er the minds and ways of all,
When the violent doth prosper,
And men's passions rise and fall.

Then amid the gloom and darkness;
Shines one feeble ray of light,
Some who feel and own the ruin,
Seek by faith to walk aright;
Some, who fear the Lord of glory,
And who think upon His name;
Some, who often speak together
Of His glory and His shame.

Some, who often round Him gather,
To exhort and sing and pray,
Some, who prove amid the darkness,
They are children of the day;
Some, who wait a coming Saviour,
And who long His face to see,
Some, who wait their hope's fruition
Till conformed to Him they be.

God who dwells in heavenly glory,
He beholds this feeble few,
He records in His remembrance
All the sorrows they pass through;
He discerns each true affection,
And declares, “They shall be mine,
When I gather up My jewels,
In My presence they shall shine.”

“Lift up a prayer for the remnant that is left” Isa. 37:4. “For yet a very little while, He that shall come will come.” “Come Lord Jesus.” We are persuaded that the low state and the wide spread affliction are harbingers of His near return.

A. C. B.

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