

Revelation 3:15 (Walter Thomas Turpin) 141684

Practical Truths, "Lukewarm, and Neither Cold nor Hot"

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That we are passing through times full of moment, it were vain to deny; and to assert that this day is not one of sorrow and sadness to any heart that is true to Christ, and enters ever so feebly into that which now interests Him on earth, were insensibility to His sorrow. The key to our present position is His rejection. It is impossible to be in the path with Christ if this be not apprehended; and if it be, there is no truth more practical or solemn. Reader, pause and ponder this one fact—all eternity will not supply this little moment—this hour of Christ's rejection. But let me be no way understood to imply that external causes work together for our grief and perplexity at this juncture: doubtless it may be so to a very great extent, but I apprehend the real grief comes from within rather than from without. What more sad than the Lord's professed servants failing in personal whole-hearted devotedness to Himself?—failing in loyalty to Him?—failing in apprehension of what is due to Him? Ah, reader, the saints, rather than the world, make the path at this time one of sorrow and grief. They will not walk this road with you; and if you walk it and leave them, they count you an enemy, and they even hold you up to the gaze of the unconverted world outside—having first branded you as an extreme person. Those who so act are saints—members of the body of Christ—loved by Him; yet sadly Laodicean in character, neither cold nor hot—lukewarm. If for a moment the far deeper sorrow of which I have written permits us to look outside, what do we find? We find hostile associations, most assuredly contemplated in scripture, mustering their forces with energy and vigor. We find men's wills running. How surely we can see that Satan is master of the field—that the devil has the day. And we see almost everywhere, deserters—men "building again the things which they destroyed," abandoning (at least apparently) a position never truly taken up—principles never in reality adopted. And alongside all this we have a loud, pretentious, showy profession of attachment to the saints, which has no existence, save in the imaginations of those who are deceived, and who seem never to have thought over this word—"By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments"; and "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." It remained for the last days, our day, to caricature the love which most surely is of God. You will find now it consists, in most minds at least, in a selfishness that seeketh her own, along with unfaithfulness that barter God's glory and the interests of Christ and the church for what is called peace, union and harmony. It is an evident wile of Satan, and an attempt to render truth practically of no value, and as I have already said, to grossly pervert the word of the Lord Jesus, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

Nothing is more remarkable in this day than the striking contrast between the phraseology and the practical position and walk of saints. There is much of "in word and in tongue" very little of "in deed and in truth." What a solemn picture is presented before you when you place profession and practice side by side! Doubtless the tendency of the day is to adopt an advanced form of expression of the truth, but to walk as worldly as ever. There never was a time when unknown, and unfelt truth was more traded upon than now; for instance, you will hear such solemn subjects as death and resurrection, discipleship and the coming of the Lord, all maintained, as the saying is, and preached, even by those whose course is unaffected by them. The solemn sin of the day is, that men are not formed by that which comes so smoothly from their tongues; they are therefore eloquent in condemning themselves—"they say, and do not." Alas, alas! for the want of conscience and reality among the professed followers of a rejected Lord.

There are no doubt saints who, from their earliest infancy, have been fondled in the arms of systems which are nothing but a kind of repairing of the flesh, if not a cultivation of it; the object of all such being the best way to get on in this scene. We can see a melancholy consistency at least between their principles and practice; but the heart sickens to hear men talk of death and resurrection, the coming of the Lord, and so forth, who are keenly alive to the interest of earth, who speculate in the great money-grasping projects of the day, who are deepening their interests in the world, enlarging their borders—in one word, ministering to the first Adam.

I say, reader, the heart is saddened by such sights. One is reminded of the cause of it by that solemn word (2 Tim. 3:8), "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth." I need not say that it was by imitation the truth was resisted in the day of Moses; and even so is it now. It is Satan's policy at this time, and he knows well the power of it. By this means he attempts not only to bring into contempt the truth itself; but to cast a slight on real life testimony to its power; and here it may not be out of place to say that in this consists the real difficulty of souls at the present time. It is their condition that tells on their position. I do not for a moment mean to deny the fact that a soul may be in the right place or position, that is, Christ's place for every soul now on earth, and yet very seriously wanting in condition; but I do assert most decidedly, and observation and experience bear testimony with me, that the difficulties of saints at the present day about their position, arise, for the most part, from the condition or state of soul they are in at the time. For instance, how can we expect a saint who is ministering to self to have any conception of what is due to Christ—what His present mind is about the members of His body on earth? The more I read my Bible, the more I see this, that there is a state of soul which is capable of entering into God's mind and thoughts, and not only that, but a state or condition to which God will communicate His mind; as well as the contrary, namely, that there is a condition incapable of grasping the mind of God, and to which He does not communicate His thoughts. What means such a solemn word as Lev. 10:8-10: "And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations; and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean."

Does it not speak a solemn word to us now? and does it not tell us the secret of manifold incapacity to grasp God's mind and discern His path? Most surely it does. The Lord give us to ponder its weighty, solemn, soul-searching exhortation. Has the world nothing to say to the course and difficulties of saints at the present time? As far as my observation goes, I find that, without an exception almost, it is either those who wish to go back again into the world, or else those who have never been out of it and wish to remain in it that are unable to see what is

suited to God and what is not, and lower the standard of divine purity and holiness down to the level of man's miserable condition.

Has self-will nothing to say to the present perplexities of saints? You will hear them talk about their liberty, and the like. It really means liberty for self. If it were liberty of the Holy Ghost, another order of things would manifest it; but it is self-seeking and self-maintenance that is contended for. Now, that I may return from somewhat of a digression, though a needful one, let me say that the truth of God about which I have been writing is not what so many take it to be, namely, a divine creed, claiming subscription; no, what I write about is not a matter of subscription, experience, or attainments, but a solemn reality, a real condition, into which every soul that simply rests on redemption is brought. When the Lord Jesus went down into the judgment, He not only settled the question of my sins, but he terminated the history of man in the flesh before God. It was, in a word, the winding up of the history of the first Adam. Every link, therefore, with the old creation has been broken by His death, and if I have to do with Him, it must be outside this scene. Now again let me repeat, this is a fact; and it is intended to command me to form me. My state or condition determines my path. Is it true that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, was the judgment upon the first man? If so, then the first man is gone in judgment, and I stand in a new order of things, I am linked up in life by the Holy Ghost with the very One who went down and bore the judgment, and is risen out of it. To faith, then, the first Adam is gone in judgment, and a new order of things has taken its place. I again repeat, this is not attainment or feeling, it is fact; apprehended by faith; and the whole course of a Christian ought to be from this, and not towards it—that is, I am to walk down here in the non-recognition of myself; because I am now contented with Christ in the glory by the Holy Ghost, my old man having been judged and set aside in His cross. The Lord graciously set this so clear before the eye of the soul, that the power and joy of it may fill every heart.

Again, another subject which is traded upon at the present time is the Lord's second coming. It need not be remarked here how much more widespread this truth has been of late, compared with former years. You will find many now who tell you, to show how orthodox they are, they hold the second advent (as they coldly term it), but their condition tells how easy it is merely to profess truth in these times. It is not truth in power, it is not truth learned from God. We lay it down as indisputable, that this hope can never be a present living hope before any heart that does not now feel the absence of Christ.

And oh, reader, how little His absence is felt by Christians; how feebly have His own blessed words seized our affections! "For their sakes I sanctify myself"; that is, as if He said, "I go apart from this scene that I may detach you from it." It would be impossible to enter into this and be worldly: it would be impossible to be in the truth of Christ's absence from this scene and be worldly. How little, how feebly apprehended, or felt, His absence! Could the heart that was true to Him, and knew Himself as the one alone satisfying object, rest in anything in a scene where He was rejected, and out of which He has gone? Impossible! Where is that loyalty of heart to Christ which refuses a place where He was scorned and disowned?

Mark, it is not for a moment questioned that souls have got benefit from Christ: but this makes it all the more sad, that He should be known and used as the servant of necessity merely, and not for what He is in Himself.

I do now feel it more and more each day, that there has been so little presenting of Christ, that souls have lost the sense of the person, in the overwhelming importance which has been attached to the benefit derived from Him: in one word, modern evangelization consists in preaching salvation and not Christ. The necessary consequence is, feebleness in the heart and affections as to the person; low thoughts, if any at all, of what is due to Him; souls have got this—saved for earth, instead of connected with heaven.

It is yet more grievous to the heart to find how little reciprocated Christ's affections have been or are. When on the very eve of His departure, He spoke the precious words of John 14, He said one word, the only one, too, that would comfort a heart true in its love to Him—"I will come again." He counted on this at least, that nothing short of His presence—Himself—could fill in our hearts the blank His absence would create. As has been blessedly remarked by another, there are two "comes" in John 14, "I will come to you," and "I will come for you." The presence of the Holy Ghost is the accomplishment of the first, and the coming of the Lord Jesus, as in 1 Thess. 4, will be the accomplishment of the other. And this I will say, the second, that is His coming for me, is feeble before my soul if I am not in the truth of the first, namely, that He has come to me in the person of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. I never yet knew a soul in the apprehension and freshness of the first that was not fresh in the hope of the second. But, reader, how many other objects have taken Christ's place in the hearts of His saved people? Self-aggrandizement, money-making, earthly position, a worldly spirit, have all vied with each other, and succeeded to the exclusion, practically, of Christ Himself. His absence from this scene is not felt, and consequently His coming again is but a poor, cold doctrine, not a living reality in the heart. When you turn to the early history of the church, what a contrast. To the Thessalonians Paul writes, "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord"; "Ye were ensamples to all that believe"; "From you sounded out the word of the Lord"; "Your faith to Godward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything"; "Ye turned to God . . . to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1). What a picture this—what a contrast with the present! And then, again, we know that so full and present and immediate was the hope of the Lord's coming for them, before the hearts of these Thessalonian saints, that the apostle writes (ch. 4) to comfort hearts that were cast down because death, rather than the coming of the Lord, took away their loved ones. What a contrast with the present time!

Saints lay their dead in the grave and mourn their absence, not because the Lord has not come, but because ties to earth are broken thereby, which time too often heals; new links with the world are formed, and it becomes as bright before the heart as ever. The absence of Christ is forgotten, and the blank created by His absence is filled up by other objects. O for more of that simplicity and those unworldly ways which bespeak a sense of the absence of Christ, and is suited to those who announce every Lord's day at the Table that death by which not only sin is put away, but every link with this world is broken. I have written, reader, that which has deeply exercised my own heart; and I would say, in conclusion, that the remedy is simple for all this failure and sorrow. What is wanted in souls is a more whole-hearted surrender of everything to Christ, an appreciation for, and love to Him beyond all else—not only to strip ourselves for Christ, but to surrender ourselves to Him—to hold fast His word and not to deny His name.

The Lord preserve His people in these days from Laodiceanism. How blessed when the one object that fills the heart and occupies the soul and commands the affections is Jesus. Like Mephibosheth while David is away, nothing can fill in his heart the blank that David's absence creates, and therefore he deports himself in a manner that is consistent with real sorrow, and sense of loss; but when David returns, he and he alone fills the blank in Mephibosheth's heart—his affections have now an object to go out after. "Thou and Ziba divide the land" take all,

for as much as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.” He wants no more, but he can do with no less. As we have said, one object satisfies his heart, and commands his affections.

The Lord give His beloved people, in these last times, to be more whole hearted, uncompromising, and devoted to His blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord—Amen.

“O patient, spotless One! Our hearts in meekness train, To bear Thy yoke, and learn of Thee, That we may rest obtain. Jesus! thou art enough The mind and heart to fill; Thy life—to calm the anxious soul; Thy love its fear dispel. O fix our earnest gaze, So wholly, Lord, on Thee, That with Thy beauty occupied, We elsewhere none may see.”

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