

## Heavenly Buying

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on  
Lord's Day Evening, August 3, 1846

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."  
Rev. 3:17, 18

These words, I need scarcely remark, are addressed to the church of Laodicea. The seven churches in Asia Minor are thought by some to represent so many distinct phases or appearances of the church from the Lord's ascension to his coming a second time in glory. But, whether it be so or not, one thing is certain, that the messages addressed to them are pregnant with the richest instruction; that they are adapted to the wants and exigencies of the church of God in all time; and that they form a part of the inspired word of truth, of that treasury out of which the Holy Ghost applies promises, precepts, and counsels, as the church of God from time to time needs. Of all these churches, that of Laodicea seems to have been most deeply sunk, to have departed most widely from the right ways of the Lord. But we are not to suppose that the church of Laodicea had drunk in erroneous principles. We have no charge brought against her that she had fallen into error or heresy. She, no doubt, maintained the truth; but how did she maintain it? In form, but not in power; in the letter, but not in the spirit. She had all the requisites of a church, as to external forms; but the life-giving Spirit of God was sadly wanting. Yet, with all her

declensions and all her decays, she was doubtless a church of God; for she is addressed as such. The Lord gives counsels, such as he gave her, to those only that are his. But she had departed from the state in which she was when first named in the New Testament, for we have her honourably mentioned about thirty years preceding this time in the Epistle to the Colossians (4:13-16.) Those thirty years had witnessed a great change in her. Many of her gracious members had been taken home; and circumstances had introduced into her communion those who appeared to be, but were not, partakers of the grace of God. Thus, though she maintained all the external appearance of a church of God, the eye of eternal Purity and Omniscience detected in her those symptoms which marked her decay, and probably were the prelude to her utter excision.

In considering these words, we may look:—

I.—*At the state of the Laodicean church.*

II.—*At the good and wise counsel that the Lord gives her.*

I.—With respect to *the state of the Laodicean church*, we may observe that there was her *real* state, and there was her *fancied* state. These did not agree. In her own opinion, she was "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing." But the Lord knew her to be in a very different state, actually and experimentally, from what she thought of herself, and the standing she maintained among her sister churches. He knew, that with all her pretensions, she was really "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Let us, then, take a glance at her *fancied* state, before we enter more minutely into her *real* state.

i. What she says of her *fancied* state, she no doubt uttered in

the honesty of her heart. Like a person in a consumption, she was unaware of the malady preying upon her vitals: she sincerely believed she was what she appeared to be. It was the language of sincerity, though it was the language of mistake. She had no eyes to see her spiritual condition, no tender conscience to feel it, no spirit of discernment to be aware of it. When therefore, she said she was "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing," she really believed that things were with her as she professed them to be. But the Lord's eye viewed her far, far differently.

I. This, then, was the language of her lips, "*I am rich.*" But what made her utter these words? Doubtless she had a sound knowledge of the doctrines of grace; and holding them firmly in her judgment, and knowing that the church was enriched with all heavenly treasures in Christ, she therefore laid claim to a personal interest in these riches. Thus merely because she held the doctrines of grace, she believed she was "rich" in God's favour, "rich" in the mercies that God bestows on his people in Christ Jesus. But she was completely ignorant all the time of her desperate bankruptcy. In this she resembled what often takes place naturally. How many a merchant or tradesman bears the character of possessing great wealth! Nay, he himself, from want of a knowledge of his affairs, of the state of his books, and of his outstanding engagements, may believe himself to be what he is generally thought—a man of property and substance. But a crash comes, and his name is in the Gazette. Such appears to have been the state of the church at Laodicea. Because she had a knowledge of the doctrines of grace; because she maintained the ordinances of God's house; because she had not fallen into open sin; because she had not drunk into error or heresy; because she maintained her standing among the churches; because they highly extolled her as a church which contended for the truth as it is in Jesus, she took all these

external appearances for inward divine realities; and therefore, in the language of honesty, though in the language of self-deception, she said, "I am rich." 'Look at me,' she boldly said, 'I maintain an exalted standing among the churches of God; I hold firmly the doctrines of grace; all the treasures of Christ are therefore mine.'

2. "*And increased with goods.*" Not only did she boast that she was rich, as not doubting her interest in God's everlasting love, and as being blessed with heavenly riches in Christ Jesus; but she went a step further—"I am increased with goods." She possessed a sound and clear judgment; she knew perfectly truth from error; who were the ministers of God, and who the ministers of Satan; who preached with power, and who preached in the letter; who were right in the things of God, and who were wrong. She had a keen eye to discover the first breakings out of heresy, and she had a clear knowledge in her judgment what were the operations of God in the soul. Outwardly too, she was in a flourishing condition. She could boast, perhaps, of 'a talented pastor;' had probably many wealthy members; had large accessions, and was spreading on the right hand and on the left. And having this carnal prosperity, she could boast, "I am increased with goods." Her members too had many spiritual gifts; some could pray, some exhort, some open up Scripture, some converse on the things of God. Thus all seemed prosperity, while there was rottenness at the very heart's core.

3. But besides all this, she could go even a step farther, and say, she stood in "*need of nothing.*" She was not sensible, as the people of God deeply are, of her poverty, want, and necessity. *She* had "need of nothing." *She* had that unwavering assurance, that undoubting confidence, that firm standing in the things of God, to which nothing could be

added. She wanted no more knowledge; for she had the perfection of knowledge in herself. She needed no communications of grace to her soul. As long as she maintained the *doctrine* of grace, she wanted nothing of the *power* of grace. She wanted no heavenly testimonies, no divine smiles, no sweet assurances from the Lord's own lips, no breakings in of the light of the Lord's countenance upon her soul, no gracious whisperings, "I have loved thee." She had no temptations to be delivered from, no snares to be broken, no idols to be purged out of her heart, no worldly spirit from which to be cleansed. She had "need of nothing." She was so firm in her own standing, so wise in her own conceit, so built up in pride, ignorance, and presumption, that she could look God in the face, and tell him that she had "need of nothing." Can we believe—could we believe, if it were not the express testimony of God—that ever a church of God could be in this self-deluded state? Yet, doubtless, there are hundreds of churches in this land on whom the Laodicean stamp is as deeply marked, and who are as completely eaten up with pride and wrapped up in delusion as ever the church of Laodicea was.

ii. But what was her *real* state? Her *fancied* state was one thing—her *real* state was another. She was like a patient who goes to a physician; and the physician's eye sees in a moment the real state of the case. He examines his chest, and listens attentively to those sounds that unpractised ears cannot discover; and he perceives the man is afflicted with some heart or lung disease, of which he himself and his family are completely ignorant. He thought perhaps it was some trifling ailment; that he should be well in a day or two, and would soon pursue his usual business. He was not aware of the real nature of the disease; he knew not the dangerous state of the case. So spiritually. The church of Laodicea was saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need

of nothing." 'I have everything that a church of God should have—I am everything that a church of God should be.' But O, how differently did the eyes of Omniscience see her from what she fancied herself to be! And what was the judgment which the voice of Omniscience pronounced upon her? "Thou knowest not"—*there* was the misery! She knew it not! It was hid from her eyes! She had not light to see it; she had not life to feel it. Had she but known it, there would have been some escape for her. Had she but mourned under it, then the Lord would have healed her disease. But this was the fatal symptom of the malady that was preying upon her vitals—she knew it not! She was not aware of her real state; the veil of ignorance, blindness, and self-delusion, was spread over her; and she knew not how she stood in the sight of him with whom she had to do.

1. "And knowest not, *that thou art wretched;*" that is, she was altogether destitute of everything in God's eyes that constitutes true riches. With all her pretended wealth, she was but a beggar, a "wretched" beggar, such as we meet in the streets, all filth, rags, and tatters. And yet, she said, she was "rich!" Spiritual insanity possessed her. She was like some maniac, enclosed in Bethlehem's walls, who fancies himself a king. He takes the straw spread for his couch, and plaits it into a crown, and from the wood laid for his fuel cuts a sceptre; and when he has put his straw diadem upon his head, he wields his wooden sceptre, and swells, and struts, and mimics the majesty of kings. Alas! alas! his deluded mind makes him fancy himself a monarch, when he is but the tenant of a madhouse. Who would not pity such an object? If we went within those gloomy walls, should we not pity him, and pity him the more, because he fancied himself a king, while he was but an imprisoned slave? So was it with the church of Laodicea. She said she was "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing;" and from labouring

under this delusion was a "wretched," pitiable object. Have you not sometimes visited the bed of a person dying of consumption? You have seen death stamped upon his brow, and you have been told by his physician that a few weeks or days will close the scene. Yet when you have spoken to him, he has told you all his plans; he has talked of returning health; and how soon he hoped to go abroad again as usual. Perhaps you wanted faithfulness to tell him what you knew; but did not your heart bleed all the more to see him wrapped up in such a delusion? And was it not sinking to your soul, when you knew that he was dying and that in a few weeks the grave would close over him, to hear him talk of returning health, and of his schemes never, never to be fulfilled? So with the Church of Laodicea. She was pluming herself upon her health, whilst disease was preying upon her vitals. She was "miserable" for that very reason—an object of compassion to be bewailed over, because she had so sunk from her first state, because she was deceiving and deluding herself, and believing she was what she was not.

2. But besides this, she was "*poor.*" And why was she poor? Because she wanted that which alone is true riches. What are true riches? The manifestations of God's mercy to the soul, the smiles of his countenance, and the whisperings of his love; the work of his grace, the operations of his Spirit; the power, savour, and unction that accompany divine blessings; the teachings, leadings, and guidings of the Lord the Comforter; the sweet bedewings that he drops upon humble, broken, and contrite hearts. The man who has these things is rich; not in himself, for he always will be poor and needy in himself; but he is rich, because the Lord is favouring his soul with that blessing which "maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it;" because the rain and dew of heaven drop upon his heart, and make him fruitful in every good word and work; because the Lord is enriching his soul with grace, and leading

him on to glory. These, and these things only constitute true riches. And what is it to be "poor?" To have all these things in profession, and none in possession; to have a sound creed, and know nothing by divine teaching; to hear experimental preaching, and be completely devoid of experimental religion; to love, or profess to love God's servants, and yet have no real knowledge of the things they bring forth; to attend the place where God's people meet, hear the truths that God's servants preach, speak of the things that the Lord's family know, and all the time be unacquainted with any one of them by divine manifestation—this is to be "poor." And such was the state of the church at Laodicea. She was poor—doubly poor, because she said she was rich, and yet inwardly devoid of those blessings in which alone true riches consist.

3. She was also "*blind*"—blind to her own state; blind to her sunken condition; blind to the majesty, holiness, and purity of God; blind to the grace and glory of Jesus; blind to see herself as he saw her, and to know herself as he knew her.

4. And "*naked*"—not clad in Christ's righteousness to cover her shame, not furnished with the ornaments and graces of the Spirit, not decked with jewels such as the bride adorns herself with when she is made fit for the bridegroom (Isa. 61:10); not clothed with humility and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, or any one of those fruits which the Holy Ghost brings forth in broken and contrite hearts.

II.—But this church of Laodicea had doubtless living members. She had doubtless those in her who knew and felt the malady, who could not run with the swift, who saw there was something deficient, who feared in their own conscience there was some lurking disease; and yet who might have drunk into a measure of the Laodicean spirit, and were



neither hot nor cold—neither cold enough for the world, nor hot enough for God. There might have been, and doubtless were, sincere, God-fearing, praying members among them. To these the Lord speaks, and to these alone, and he gives them this wise and salutary counsel. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

Three pieces of counsel does the Lord lay before her; and these three directions did the blessed Spirit doubtless whisper into some of their hearts.

i. The first was, "*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire.*" What is this "gold tried in the fire?" Is it not faith? or, rather, is it not *tried* faith? And this the Lord bids her buy; as though he would sell no other. Do we not read, that "the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ?" (1 Pet. 1:7.) The faith then that the Lord counsels her to buy is "*tried*" faith, compared by himself to "gold tried in the fire." But why should he compare this faith to gold?

1. First, *gold is the most precious of all metals*; and so faith is the most precious of all graces. It is that whereby the soul is saved, whereby it is justified, whereby it walks in the ways of the Lord, and triumphs over death, sin, hell, and the world. And therefore, well may the Lord compare faith to gold, seeing that living faith in the heart of a child of God is such a precious grace.

2. But there is another quality in gold that the Lord makes use of to compare faith unto—*gold is indestructible*. Put it in

the hottest furnace, submit it to the strongest flames, it loses nothing in the fire, it suffers no injury; it is still indestructible, unconsumable. And so faith, in the heart of a child of God, is a grace indestructible, unconsumable; the fire of temptation, the furnace of affliction, the flames of persecution, can never burn up living faith in the soul.

3. Again—gold is tried and made to shine forth in all its native purity and brightness by being *subjected to the furnace*. And thus faith in the heart of a child of God is separated from all the dross and impurity that attach to it, from the carnality and unbelief and infidelity that surround it, as the dross and tin surround the gold, by being subjected to the burning flame. And as there is no other way whereby the gold is made to shine forth in all its intrinsic splendour, but by the fire; so there is no other way by which faith is made to shine brightly forth out of the defilements that surround it, except by being put into the fire of affliction and the furnace of temptation.

Thus it is as if the Lord, giving this wise counsel to the Laodicean church, said to her, "I counsel thee to buy of me this precious gold tried in the fire. I give no other. It is that which I bestow upon my people; it is what I give to all my saints; it is that which comes down in answer to prayer—faith tried by the test of affliction, persecution, and distress; and made to shine more brightly in proportion to the furnace which tries it."

But some may say, 'Does not the Lord counsel the church of Laodicea to *buy* this gold? How can she buy it? Is she not poor, miserable, and wretched? What has she to buy this faith with? Shall she present her gifts? Shall she offer her graces? Shall she bring her knowledge? Shall she come with her consistency? Shall she offer her merits? What has she to

lay at the Lord's feet in exchange for this "gold tried in the fire?" Nothing—absolutely nothing; for she is poor, wretched, and miserable. What then has she to offer in exchange for this "gold tried in the fire?" for if she *buy*, she must have something to give in exchange. But still there is great beauty in the expression: it was not used in vain. The Lord does not say to her, 'I counsel thee to *ask* of me gold tried in the fire;' but he used the word "*buy*." And yet she has nothing to buy it with. How is this enigma to be solved? Thus: Does not the word "buy" imply some exchange? Where there is a buyer, there must be a seller, and there must be an exchange between the parties. How does this take place in spiritual traffic? Thus:—when the soul is deeply convinced of its helplessness, ignorance, blindness, wretchedness, and folly, and lays all these at the Lord's feet, he takes them, so to speak, upon his own shoulders; and then, in return, he deals out of his loving bounteous heart, out of the fulness that dwells in himself, his precious treasures.

There is one passage that seems to show what this spiritual buying is, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (1 Cor. 5:21.) That is, our sins, our iniquities, our defilements, our shortcomings, our imperfections, were all laid upon Jesus; as we read "He hath laid (or made to meet) upon him the iniquities of us all." (Isa. 53:6.) As one says in the Old Testament, "Let all thy wants lie upon me, only lodge not in the street." (Judges 19:20.) So, when the Lord draws a poor guilty sinner to his bosom, he says, 'Let all thy wants lie upon me. Lay at my footstool thy infirmities and thy backslidings; thy darkness, deadness, and coldness; thy doubts and fears, thy misgivings, thy troubles, thy exercises, thy temptations, and thy perplexities. Bear them not in thy own strength; carry them not in thy own arms; lay them not on thine own shoulders; thou canst not bear them; they

would sink thee to hell. Let them all lie upon me.' And as the Lord speaks, he draws the poor, needy, guilty sinner to his bosom, and enables him to lay at his feet all the exercises, temptations, and distresses of his soul. Thus the Holy Ghost dictates, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord; he will sustain thee; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Psa. 55:22.) And thus when the poor sinner is enabled to come, with all his helplessness, guilt, shame, sinfulness, and misery, and spread them before the Redeemer's feet, and by an act of faith casts his burden upon the Lord, there takes place in the court of conscience a spiritual exchange, set forth in the text under the word "buy." And this is the only buying—a buying "without money and without price." (Isa. 55:1.)

The Lord saw living members in the Laodicean church, and he therefore gave them this counsel: 'Be not like the rest; do not think that you are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" I know what you are, and honest conscience in your bosom tells you the same tale. Draw near to my throne of grace; open before me your sorrowful heart: confess to me how you have backslidden, into what a carnal state you have sunk, and how lukewarm in the things of God; tell me what temptations try, what snares entangle, what sins beset you. Come, buy of me gold tried in the fire.' Thus the Lord, when he draws the poor needy soul to his footstool, communicates the precious gift of faith to his heart—living faith, a faith that is exercised with burdens—a faith "that lives and labours under load"—a faith that struggles against the world, the flesh, and the devil—a "tried faith"—for he gives no other. And when the soul takes his counsel (and we only can take his counsel as he enables us), then there is this blessed exchange—our poverty and his riches, our shame and his glory, our sins and his pardon, our defilement and his righteousness. And therefore, he adds,

"buy of me gold tried in the fire, *that thou mayest be rich*,"—not in pretension, not in profession, but in reality; rich in the eyes of a heart-searching God; rich for eternity; rich by the possession and enjoyment of heavenly riches; rich in divine treasure; rich in that which the moth corrupts not, nor thieves break through and steal.

ii. But, he adds also, "*buy white raiment*, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." What did she need? "White raiment." And why? Because she was naked, defiled, polluted, and unclean. But did she not maintain the *doctrine* of Christ's imputed righteousness? Doubtless she did. It is never brought against her that she had departed from the truth; it is never thrown as a reproach against her that she had imbibed soul destroying error. She held the doctrines of grace as firmly as ever. Her ministers preached truth; her members held it; it was written in her church articles; it was her creed and boast. But she had not received it with power into her soul. It had not been communicated to her by the teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost. She had the *doctrine*, but not the *power*; she had the letter, but not the experimental reality. God the Spirit had never wrought with power in her soul to believe. He had never brought forth the garment of Christ's imputed righteousness, and put it on her, nor had she received it by the hand of living faith. She was indeed a very sound Calvinist; she held the doctrines firmly; but the sweet enjoyment and divine unction of them in her soul she had not experienced.

Now, the Lord speaks to her conscience. He saw there were members of the church at Laodicea who could not be satisfied with doctrines in their head. They wanted the life and power of God's teaching and God's testimony in their conscience. They could not be contented with being members

of a gospel church, submitting to the articles of a sound creed, hearing the truth preached Lord's day after Lord's day. They wanted something deeper, something more powerful, something more spiritual, something more experimental than this. They were at times full of guilt and fear; temptations and troubles exercised their mind. They felt they had a soul to be saved or lost; they felt they were standing upon the brink of eternity, and one plunge might hurl them into the dread gulf. These the Lord counsels, and says to them, 'Listen to me: I am the only wise Counsellor; it is I only who give true wisdom; I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.' As though he thus spoke to the heart, 'Thou thinkest in thine own mind thou hast need of nothing, that thou canst appear boldly before the throne of God, and canst lift up thy head without shame in that awful day; and that thou canst say, "Lord, Lord, have we not called upon thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works." 'But,' he says, 'this will not do. There is something more wanted than this; I counsel thee to buy of me, who alone am able to bestow it, white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear before men and angels, as it appears to my heart-searching eye.' But what are we to do to obtain it? To merit it? to work for it? to earn it? No; the Lord despises all such things as these. The only qualification is, a deep feeling of our necessity, our nakedness, and our shame; and a feeling that there is no other covering for a needy, naked, guilty soul, but the robe of the Redeemer's spotless righteousness. And when the soul is led to his divine feet, full of guilt, shame, and fear, abhorring, loathing, and mourning over itself, and comes in the actings of a living faith, in the sighs and cries of a broken heart, in hungerings, thirstings, and longings, desiring that the Lord would bestow upon him that rich robe; then the blessed exchange takes

place; then there is a buying; then the Lord brings out of his treasure-house, where it has been locked up, the best robe, puts it upon the prodigal, and clothes him with it from head to foot. What had the prodigal done to merit the best robe? Was it by his consistency? by his obedience to his father's precepts? by carefully keeping the portion bestowed upon him? No: he had "wasted his substance in riotous living," had gone into a far country, and there trampled under foot, lavished, and spent all that he had received. But was there nothing else? We read, "He came to himself:" guilt and sorrow worked in his bosom; repentance unto life was given unto him; he felt himself unworthy of the least of God's mercies; that he was not worthy to be called his son; and he said—"I will arise and go unto my father." He rose, and went to his father. (This was all of grace.) And when the father saw him at a great distance, he had compassion on him, ran, fell on his neck, and kissed him; and said to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." No other qualification (and this itself was the fruit of divine operation) was needed but a sense of his misery, nakedness, and guilt, and a cry unto his father to pardon, pity, and forgive. This is *buying*; sweet buying! blessed exchange! Our nakedness for Christ's justifying robe; our poverty for Christ's riches; our helplessness and insufficiency for Christ's power, grace, and love.

iii. But the Lord adds a third counsel. "*Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*" What was the climax of wretchedness in the Laodicean church? She did not know her real state; did not see her true standing; was not acquainted with her own deceit and hypocrisy, and the delusions of Satan, wherewith he was blinding her eyes. Had she seen herself as God saw her, there would have been some hope for her; had she beheld herself in the light of God's countenance, and felt herself to be what the Lord knew she

was, it would have been her mercy. But this was the climax, the ultimatum, the crowning-point of her misery—that she was blind! She saw not how deeply sunk she was. She mistook evil for good, darkness for light, bitter for sweet, crooked for straight, the delusions of Satan for the teachings of God. Therefore, he says, "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see;" mayest have a view of thy real case; go no longer on in this awful state of self-deception; that the devil may no longer blind thine eyes to thy state before God; that thou mayest not go unto the very verge of, or into eternity, with the veil over thine heart. "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

How is this to be done? With eyesalve! Is it to be had in every street? O no. Where is the eyesalve, this wondrous eyesalve, which has such efficacy that when the least particle of it is spread over the eyelid, sight is given to see light in God's light? Who keeps in his bosom, who holds in his treasury, for the church of God, this marvellous, miraculous, supernatural eye-ointment? Is not this the teaching of the blessed Spirit? the "unction that teacheth all things, and is truth, and no lie," the "anointing which is from above?" In a word, is not this eyesalve *heavenly teaching*? And thus, when the Lord counselled the Laodicean church to anoint her eyes with eyesalve, he directed her to a throne of grace, that there she might apply to the Lord to bestow upon her that divine unction, that heavenly anointing, which "opens blind eyes." It does not mean that you and I have power, as creatures, to anoint our own eyes with heavenly unction. If we could do so, we should teach ourselves. But is not this the promise to the church, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord?" But this is the meaning of it, 'Come to my throne; plead with me in fervent prayer; pour out thy heart at my footstool; feeling thy blindness and ignorance, without special teaching, beg it of me; and, in answer to thy prayer, I



will anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, and then thou shalt see.'

But why are the blessed Spirit's teachings compared to eyesalve, or eye-ointment? Because her eyes had films over them; darkness had covered them; cataract had seized them; and her eyes becoming blinded in this way, she could not see her real standing. But the Lord says, 'If thou hast but the least particle of heavenly eyesalve, and that eyesalve is spread over thy eyelids; in other words, if the unction of the Holy Ghost touch thy conscience, and the anointing of the blessed Spirit come with power into thy soul, thou wilt see then (and this is the only sight worth having); and what wilt thou see? The first thing thou wilt see is, thy nakedness, thy shame, thy helplessness, thy misery, thy wretchedness.' And this is the prelude to receiving the blessing. Depend upon it, you and I shall never go to a throne of grace sincerely, earnestly, fervently, and perseveringly, unless we feel our need of those blessings which God alone has to bestow. If I can teach myself, do I need heavenly teaching? If I can see by my own unaided sight, do I want heavenly eyesalve spread over my eyelids? If I know God, and Jesus Christ, and myself—the workings of my fallen nature, and the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness of my evil heart—by my own knowledge, or my own understanding, I want not God to teach me. But when I see and feel I know nothing except by divine teaching, have nothing but by divine communication, and feel nothing but by divine inspiration—this leads me to a throne of grace to beg of the Lord to teach me and show me what I am, take the veil off my heart, discover to me my real state; not suffer me to be deceived and deluded by the devil; not permit me to call evil good and good evil, to put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, and think I am something while I am nothing. Divine light in a man's conscience will teach him what he is, and divine life in a

man's soul will make him feel what he is. When he has not God's light, he is dark; when he has not God's teachings, he is ignorant; when he has not God's wisdom, he is all folly; when he has not God's guidance, he goes astray; when he has not God's upholding, he falls; when he has not God's preserving, he turns aside into the paths of crookedness and error. So that we cannot see ourselves, we cannot see others; we cannot see the truth, we cannot see our interest in the truth; we cannot see the Person of Christ, his justifying righteousness, his atoning blood, his dying love, nor our participation in them, except so far as the blessed Spirit anoints our eyes with eyesalve that we may see.

Are there any here whose conscience tells a tale not to be mistaken, with a voice not to be silenced, that you are very dead in your souls, very cold in your affections, very dark in your mind, very worldly in your spirit? that you have very few or no smiles of God's countenance; few or no whisperings of God's love to your soul; that you have few or no intimations of your interest in the love and blood of the Lamb? Is there something that tells you all this? In prayer you are very cold, very short, and very formal. The word of God is to you a neglected book. When you go to hear preaching, your thoughts and affections are at the ends of the earth. Instead of being what most think you, a flourishing Christian, poverty, emptiness, and want are stamped upon your inward soul. Do you feel it? Then there is some hope for you. There is some hope for a man whose conscience is made honest and tender in God's fear. It is a good sign for him: and the Lord speaks to him, and gives him this good advice. May it not be thrown away! May we have ears to hear it! May the Lord himself speak it home to us!—"I counsel thee,"—(and what the Lord speaks will be attended to by the Lord's people,) "I counsel thee to buy of me gold." 'Come to my bosom! Come out of the world! Come to my feet!' How

the Lord speaks to the soul! 'Come sincerely, come honestly, come boldly, come tenderly.' "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." 'Ask me for it, plead with me to bestow it on thee, tell me that nothing else will satisfy thee except that living faith that justifies the soul; saves it, and takes it home to glory.'

Are there here those who feel they have not enjoyed the clear manifestations of God's love to their soul, and are trembling to think how they will stand at the great day? The Lord counsels them (may he give them an ear to hear) to buy of him also "white raiment," his righteousness, that spotless robe that covers the needy and naked soul; "that they may be clothed, and the shame of their nakedness do not appear," that they may stand at the last day in that robe of righteousness in which there is neither spot nor blemish.

"Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve." 'Beg of me to teach thee; call upon me—I will show thee things that thou hast not known; plead with me for the internal teachings and sure testimonies of the blessed Spirit and then thou wilt see thyself in thy true colours, as a poor, blind, naked, filthy, helpless wretch; and thou wilt see the glorious Person of Christ, the riches of his atoning blood, the sympathy of his merciful bosom, the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of sin.' If you be thus highly favoured, you will also see others; you will not be deceived by pretensions then. It will not be mere profession of the truth that will satisfy you then; no mere outward consistency will do for you then; you will want to see something more than this in others, as well as in yourself; you will want to see the mind of Christ in them, to see the image of a suffering Jesus, and the likeness of Christ stamped upon their hearts, lips, and lives. And if you cannot find this in the church to which you belong; if you cannot find this in the congregation with which

you worship; if you cannot find this among those who profess the same doctrines with yourself, then you will be a separate person. You will not associate with those who have not the life of godliness; but you will walk with the Lord, that he himself may teach and bless you; and you will come out of every thing that you find by experience defiles your conscience, that you may have the inward testimony and witness of the Lord himself in your soul.

Did the church of Laodicea listen to these counsels? Not as a *church*. There might be, and doubtless were, *individuals*, who did listen to this counsel; they got the blessing, for the blessing was designed for them. The blessing was not designed for the church at large. She was in due time to be spued out of Christ's mouth, for she was "neither hot nor cold." But the members, the spiritual members, were saved, though as by fire. There were doubtless in the Laodicean church (as there are at the present day) living members, gracious people; and these were, for the most part, mourning and sighing over their lukewarmness, deadness, and barrenness in the things of God. The Lord speaks to such, and gives them wise counsel; and they only will hear it. Dead professors resent all this. It is like going to a tradesman who is thought highly of in the city, and asking him if he can pay twenty shillings in the pound. He resents it as an insult, though his conscience tells him he cannot. So these professors want no such counsel. They would rather be plastered over with untempered mortar, and have their vain minds pleased by being thought highly of, than have the point of the trowel pick out all their putty. God keep me from going about with lime and a brush to whitewash dead professors, and sepulchres filled with rotten bones! God enable me (he only can) to speak to the living souls of sensible sinners, and hold up before them a Saviour's blood and righteousness! But God keep me from bolstering up dead

professors, who have but a name to live; and from sewing pillows to the armholes of those who are not taught of God, and have nothing but an outward profession, without the inward reality! I believe all God's ministers will be faithful according to the measure of faithfulness that is bestowed upon them. They are not to be bribed or frightened into silence. They will speak out of the fulness of an exercised heart what they have known, felt, and experienced. So I desire ever to speak in this pulpit or any other. Not to come here to deceive souls, and foster delusion by uttering smooth words; but to detect hypocrisy in hypocritical hearts, to unmask empty profession in empty professors; and at the same time, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; and thus to say to them that are of a fearful heart, 'Fear not, the Lord is with you: and in his own time and way will abundantly comfort and bless you.'