

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isa. 40:3

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GOD'S ARRAIGNMENT OF THE PREACHER

By Rev. W. Edmund Smith

Text: Rev. III. :17—Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not—

The Apostle John was a martyr for the faith on the lone Isle of Patmos. Satan seemed to have hedged him in by circumstances that made it impossible for him to reach the ear of man with a message of warning or exhortation. But the devil could not cut off the upward vision and while in this condition of isolation John received his wonderful Revelation.

This is indeed a strange book. It abounds in mysterious imagery and striking symbolism. No other book of the entire Bible has provoked so much discussion or called forth so many commentaries, each declaring its author to be the true expositor of the book. I have never felt myself competent to give a series of lectures on Revelation. I leave that to the preacher in the early years of his ministry, who has swallowed all the details of the pre-millennial theory and knows a thousand times more about the last days, and the last things, than Paul, Peter, James and John have given us in all their writings; for imagination when allowed to run wild, easily provides the material that inspiration fails to supply.

But there are some things made plain in this book. In the first three chapters the message is directed to the churches, and more especially to the angeloi, or the messengers of the seven churches of Asia Minor. We call such pastors, ministers or preachers today. To those who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders, John directs his message, and his words seem tipped with fire, so pungent and penetrating are they. Concerning each of these preachers John says something commendatory, and puts that first. But the good words are always followed by the significant—"nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." And then he gives the particulars wherein the man called to exercise spiritual leadership in the church, has failed in his holy vocation.

Our text deals with the preacher at Laodicea, the man who played on both sides, was religious enough to please the saints and worldly enough to please the devil; the man that stood mildly for everything yet not positively strong for anything—the good Lord good devil kind of a preacher, who in that day as today, could make himself safe with the crowd, for he always played safe, and knew nothing of the true apostolic spirit of living dangerously.

He was the preacher who was eminently satisfied with himself and the standing of his church. He could write his report to the denominational organ and declare with em-

phasis, that his society was enjoying an unusual measure of prosperity; in fact had never seen better days than at the present time. We have just dedicated a magnificent church building, equipped with all modern improvements and conveniences, which include a dining room capable of seating a thousand people, a splendid gymnasium that meets the needs of the community in the matter of physical recreation. Our bowling club is one of the best in the city, and had the honor of capturing the banner in the inter-church contest last year and our men are enthusiastic in their determination to retain it this year.

We have abandoned the old method of emotional evangelism and are making wonderful progress in religious education. On Easter Sunday we sprinkled a hundred babes, and received into membership one hundred and fifty that had either gone through the course of catechetical instruction or came in by assenting to the carnal principles of our faith. Our mid-week service is well attended. We no longer emphasize the matter of personal testimony, but of our twenty-three hundred members more than a hundred attend this devotional service, in which we endeavor to make everyone feel at home. I have been giving talks on "With God in great open spaces," which takes in my vacation experiences. We have a social time after the meeting in which doughnuts and coffee are served. We are happy to report that there is no schism in our midst, but our people are perfectly united to make this church a grand success. In spite of hard times our finances are encouraging. Salary paid up to date, and every item on our budget being cared for. We hope to have our church property free from debt in less than two years.

Yours for the larger church service,

I. B. OPTIMIST, D.D.

Well, I. B. Optimist was pastor of the church at Laodicea and could make a big inventory of the things that from his standpoint of reckoning spelled success with a big S.

Yes, he was having a big time! Things were going fine till John came along and punctured the balloon. "I know thy works!" Their superficiality, their vanity and vainglory. They weigh big on your scales but on God's scales are lighter than chaff. And they cannot be any thing else with such a preacher as you at the head of the church. You think yourself a heavyweight but you are a lightweight. You are the most sickening thing God has ever had to put up with and he has put up with you about long enough. He is going to spew you out of his mouth. For you go about pleasing the people, building of wood, hay and stubble, supposing gain to godliness when the whole thing is too light for anything.

"For thou sayest I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing." Yes, I am

sitting pretty but thou knowest not that thou art poor and wretched and miserable and blind and naked."

If this does describe the modern popularly successful pastor I have no spiritual judgment. He is the man who can please everybody, almost, but the Lord. He is a cultured, amiable, ceremonially religious gentleman, with a modern vision and modern methods that can build up a religious organization without any real spirituality, by purely human manipulation and attraction. The so-called church becomes a hive of activity of the same sort as that of the fraternal lodge. The men's Bible class has its big inspiration in the bowling club; the good women work for their big church fair; the young people are interested in their amateur theatricals. There is no effort for a genuine revival or holding up the standard of spiritual regeneration. The pastor works hard. Mixes with the people. Is a jolly fellow; marries the living and buries the dead! Cultivates the spirit of being agreeable to all, and is called a great builder and a wonderful success. And this often in the church that once had the light on holiness brought by a faithful preacher who was turned down as a failure even when he saw the only spiritual progress that church ever knew.

"History repeats itself. Carnal nature is ever the same. It has not changed since the time of the Holy prophets, who rebuked the false prophets and the apostate people. God said, "The prophets prophesy for gain, and the people love to have it so." The prophets gave the people what they wanted and then the people gave them honors and rewards.

This is what they were doing even in the apostolic age that called forth the arraignment by John. In this day of materialism and rationalism the same thing is doubly so. Why? Because the unspiritual pastors and preachers have reckoned success on a materialistic basis; have called that a grand success when God marks it an abominable failure. And the responsibility is upon the pastor more than upon the people, for if every one who stands in the sacred desk were to get the real spiritual vision, and begin to put first things first, there would soon come to the church such a spiritual awakening that the material and the intellectual would be held subordinate to the spiritual, and God in all things would be glorified. Every genuine revival has begun with the ministry. God's call is not for nice, cultured, man-made essay writers, fine society mixers, who love the smile of the people more than the smile of God—God calls for and demands men who have known the full deliverance from sin that grace has wrought in their hearts, who have felt upon them the divine imperative, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," and preach the truth in love and power whether men will hear or forbear.

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