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“Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see,” Revelation 3:18c.

Diligent Service: Promotion

Aim: To note that advancement can only result from right promotion.

Covenant: We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit . . . to promote its prosperity and Spirituality.

Text: Revelation 3:14-22.

INTRODUCTION — Today, the study challenges members to promote their church. Our commitment in the church Covenant is to promote the prosperity and spirituality of our local church. The spiritual promotion of a church is in direct proportion to the spirituality of her members. The members are the church and one cannot be spiritually progressive without the other. Growth in the spirit is possible only by the use of the spiritual resources which God has made available. These include Bible study, prayer, worship, witnessing, and giving.

Closely aligned with the spiritual promotion of the church is her prosperity in the material realm. While it is true that the spirituality of a church cannot be determined by her financial record, it is also true that members who neglect the material welfare of their church are manifesting a spiritual immaturity. Church members may well be concerned that their church is interested in souls and seeking to serve the Lord Jesus. They may likewise be concerned that their buildings and grounds, their debts and payments, their reputation in general, is such as becomes a congregation of God. The Laodicean church's false prosperity and spiritual poverty is a fearful example to churches today. The Holy Spirit aids those who seek to promote their church in material and spiritual prosperity.

EXPOSITION

I. A Church's Real Condition, 3:14-15.

1. God does not judge His churches as men would judge them. *“For the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart,”* I Samuel 16:7. To men, a church with a beautiful building and impressive financial report may seem to be the greatest church in the community. To the Lord it may appear quite otherwise. There is a richness which cannot be measured in dollars. It is a wealth that comes by the accumulation of spiritual treasures. Who but God would have chosen humble fishermen to become mighty Apostles? Just so, the weak, seemingly insignificant, congregations of the earth may be the richest in spiritual treasures!

2. Christ is the only one qualified to judge His churches. This right has not been given to any man nor group of men. No denomination is authorized to do it. Christ alone is the Head of the church and in the final analysis each church is responsible to Him only. As Head of the church, Christ is faithful. He is identified as the “Amen.” (“Amen” is a word meaning, “It is true,” “So be it,” etc.) Christ is the most faithful among men or angels. He does not change, Hebrews 13:8. Moreover, His knowledge is perfect. He is, indeed, “the faithful and true witness.” Because of His unchangeableness from the truth and his perfect knowledge, He is qualified to judge His churches. The judgment He renders is accurate and true. God the Father has committed all judgment to Him, John 5:22. Each church must be careful to please Her Head, even Jesus Christ.

II. Christ's Appraisal of a Church, 3:15-17.

1. A church may become lukewarm—neither cold nor hot. This was the condition of the Laodicean church. When this happens a church loses her conviction. She no longer finds delight in the Word of God nor in teaching others these truths. She no longer has zeal to pursue the course of Christian obedience. This is the church without love for the brethren and without a holy compassion for the lost. It is a congregation where evangelism and mission's are of little concern. Naturally, this church is displeasing to Christ. He left His church here to carry on a program of service for men. When she becomes self-centered and satisfied, she defeats the purpose for which she was originally chosen. No wonder judgment is warned against such a congregation.

2. A church may enjoy false prosperity. The story has been told of a certain man finding a cache of several thousands of dollars in Confederate

money. At first, he thought himself rich, but soon discovered that as the Civil War had just ended the money was worthless. Just so, the church which delights itself in material prosperity alone will someday awake to the fact that she had been poor even while she prided herself in her riches. Such evaluation of material things to the neglect of spiritual things results from a deceived condition caused by worldliness. What advantage is there when a congregation boasts itself in its wealth — *“I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”* — if the Lord Jesus designates her as a pauper — *“thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,”* verse 17! This does not disparage faithful financial stewardship among church members. It rather points out that material stewardship is to be an expression of the loving dedication of a spiritually-minded people.

III. Christ's Remedy for a Failing Church, 3:18-19.

1. Christ offers remedy for a church in trouble. As the Head of the church He is qualified. He possesses all knowledge and thus knows the needs of each individual church. He is the judge of His churches and they are required to meet His approval in all things. Therefore, the wise church member (and all his church) will keep an eye and ear tuned to the voice of God that His directions may be followed. When a church (or individual) finds herself failing, the only recourse is to look to Christ for aid. The Lord loves His churches, having given Himself for them, Ephesians 5:25. Once they are instituted and built, He is concerned to keep them spiritually active and constantly serving. When one of His churches gets in trouble He is anxiously willing to aid them to return to spiritual health. He is always interested in His churches.

2. Christ offers counsel to guide a church in trouble. He urges repentance of sins and the abandonment of false standards. To repent means to turn from sin and to God. Thus from the importance placed upon material things, Christ urges His church to turn their supreme interest to spiritual things. Healing of the eyes are to be sought so that they may have true spiritual vision. Thus they will not be blinded by worldly attractions and will be able to properly evaluate their spiritual service. True wealth is in spiritual treasures, not in material values alone. Therefore, the church with a great compassion for souls and sincere love for Christ is rich even if they have no money in their treasury. Those who seek spiritual riches will find their material ability often increased likewise so that both areas of their church will be adequately cared for. True spiritual wealth will result in adequate material provision also, II Corinthians 8:1-5.

IV. Christ's Appeal to a Failing Church, 3:20-22.

1. He desires to commune with His people. Jesus pictures Himself standing outside the door of the Laodicean church and knocking for admittance. Perhaps He chooses this picture because the church had shut Him out of her actions. The very fact that He stands and knocks shows His desire to enter into them and fellowship with them. Those who are willing to open the door and admit Him will enjoy the reward He brings with Him. Feasting is promised, communion is enjoyed, promotion and exaltation are assured! How much better it is to be at peace with God and enjoy all the benefits which come thereby than to rebel against Him and live under His judgment! Oh, the joy of the overcoming Christian when he sits with the Lord Jesus in his throne!

2. The spiritual welfare of a church is dependent upon the membership's response to the appeals of Christ. Perhaps the reader has come thus far through this lesson applying it in his mind to some church he knows. If so, let him now pause and apply it to himself at his own church. The individual member who has material prosperity foremost in his mind is guilty of the same mistake which the church of Laodicea made. Moreover, as a member of his local church, he is contributing to a like spirit within it! It is not a personal matter alone, but must be considered in view of one's relationship to his church. When the Lord rebukes it is because of His desire to bless. He is anxious to bless His people—standing at the door and knocking. He wants to cultivate in them that which will make their lives a blessing to the church and to the world.

Before one can please Christ he must desire to do His will. Each Christian has the opportunity of being a member of the Lord's church and of serving Him. This is exactly what He expects of each Christian believer. Can anyone say he has done his best in Christian service unless he develops the kind of spiritual life which the Lord desires of him? Can anyone expect to hear His "Well done," unless his life measures up to the demands of the Lord? If the reader finds a yearning in his heart for a closer walk with God, it is the first step toward a greater spirituality. Follow up that desire with a resolve and the resolve with action. Thus will one become a Christian worthy of the name he bears. "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches,*" Revelation 3:21.

Questions

1. Read and explain the portion of the Church Covenant studied today.
2. What is the relation between spiritual and material prosperity in a church?
3. What is the difference between God's way of judging and man's way?
4. Explain why Christ is qualified to judge His churches.
5. What is a lukewarm church?
6. Tell of the false prosperity of the church of Laodicea.
7. What remedy did Christ offer that church?
8. How does Christ picture His desire to commune with His people?
9. What influence does an individual member have upon his church?
10. Tell how this lesson may apply to your own church.