

The Sifting and Shaking Arch Chater

Friends we are living in momentous times. The escalations of disasters around the world; the catastrophes of famine, pestilence and earthquakes tell us that God is withdrawing His spirit from the world and the time for the return of Jesus is very near for “when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door.” Matt 24: 33. Are you ready for His return; the return of the Saviour of the world? Are you aware that you are not your own, that you are the purchase of Christ’s own blood? And as the Israelites were called upon to look to the brazen serpent that they may live, so today we also are called to look to the cross of Christ and the sacrifice made by our Saviour that we also may live. The world has so many claims upon God’s people that they find little time to look to the cross of Calvary long enough to see its glory and feel its power. “... the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..” Rom1.16.

The gospel of Christ is the way that God exerts His power for the salvation of men. Wherever the gospel finds a believing heart, it is a divine power by which all the obstacles to man’s redemption and his salvation are removed and this is true, but only to those who willingly accept it and that willing acceptance is called faith. John 3.16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Salvation is a free gift, the sacrifice made on Calvary’s cross is a magnificent gift of the Saviour’s life for the sins of the whole world. He was numbered with the transgressors. The guilt of fallen humanity, He must bear; upon Him, the One Who knew no sin. Upon the cross of Calvary, He paid the infinite redemption price for a lost world. He paid the price for all to ransom them, the most erring, the most sinful were not passed by or forgotten. His labours were especially for those who most needed the salvation. His mission was to save sinners of every grade, of every tongue and nation; and each one of us falls into one category or another of those for whom He gave His life. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matt.11.28 were His words to all humanity.

The parable of the lost sheep represents the wonderful love of Christ for the erring, wandering ones. Friends we should set aside a time daily to contemplate the cross of Jesus, the price paid and the love of our Saviour for a lost world of which you and I form a part. Without Jesus, His life, one of perfected righteousness, His sacrifice on the cross for lost humanity, His resurrection, His mediation on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary, the gift of His holy spirit, there is no hope for mankind. Without Jesus and what He has done for mankind, life would have no meaning – no purpose. We owe so much and all that has been done and is being done for mankind has been given as a free gift to all who believe.

This wonderful gift, having been truly accepted will result in changes in the life of the believer that will testify to their faith (or lack of it), their acceptance of the gift. It will be seen that their faith has produced a life of good works and a faith without good works is dead (James 2:20). It is a dead faith, one that those who continue to practice will deny them a place in God's kingdom. As in the parable of the fig tree in Luke 13:9, the tree that did not produce and bear fruit, was cut down so God's professing people, who do not become trees of righteousness, bringing forth the fruit of righteousness, they shall also be cut down. The warning sounds down to us from that time to this generation and as the barren fruit tree in the parable was mercifully given extra time to bear fruit, so God's mercy and the close of probation lingers a little more, so all may become trees of righteousness, righteous living. The close of probation for mankind hastens on. There is little time remaining before Jesus leaves the heavenly sanctuary and the close of probation occurs and declares, "It is finished."

Friends, the counsel and admonitions of the Lord are given in love. The Lord said, "I have no joy in the death of the wicked." "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." "I go to prepare a place for you." But He also said in Matt 7:21 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." And Romans 12: 2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

Friends, we too often look to the wonderful promises and blessings of God, without considering the condition of obedience, uncompromising obedience to God's word. Anything less, will lull one into a false sense of security for their salvation and their everlasting life, for God is not mocked. He says, "I stand knocking at the door to your heart. Please open and let me in and buy of me my wares." Three things, gold tried in the fire, faith that works by love or works that result by faith; the white raiment, the imparted righteousness of Christ (righteous living) and the eye salve, the spiritual discernment, which enables one to detect sin in any guise and shun it at all costs. Christ says, "Please open the door of your heart. Open it fully, not just ajar that I may only get part entry, but that I may fill your heart, for with Me in your heart, there will be no room for the unwanted guests of sin that impedes and prevents the development and perfection of your character." Rev 3:18. There is no other way, friends.

As the bitterness of Paul's experience testifies too, "The good that I would, I do not and the evil that I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 7:25, 8:1)

There is no other way, friends. Any other way is doomed to failure.

Only with Jesus filling heart can the soul temple be cleansed from the thorns and weeds of sin that reside there as in the parable of the unclean spirit in Matthew 12:44. We are counselled to crowd out the evil tendencies in the life with Jesus fully residing in the heart, by the principle of displacement, replacing the evil tendencies by right tendencies and right practices. (Replacing the carnal traits of the house of his character with the spiritual traits of Christ's character). It is the only way, friends, if we are to walk the narrow way that leads to life eternal. We are entering a time when each one will find their faith severely tested, a time when nothing less than a resolute belief in Jesus Christ and faithful allegiance to Him will stand the test.

I draw your attention to the words of Jesus in Matt 7:13, where Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in there at." I believe that we all wanted to be numbered among those who are striving to enter through the strait gate, the narrow gate; the gate only reached and entered by persevering effort in the power of Jesus and righteous living. We are in the final stages of the great controversy between good and evil which will vindicate forever God's character and determine the number of God's kingdom.

We are to understand that the final movements will be rapid ones, during which time, every person will determine whether he will choose loyalty to God and obedience to Him with eternal life or loyalty and obedience to self, to the world and to its powers all of which equates with obedience to Satan resulting in eternal death. God and Satan both use people individually and corporately to win souls to their kingdom. Satan's followers who work for him and work against God, are referred to by Jesus as members of the synagogue of Satan. Rev.2.9. Christ calls them such, for their members are the children of sin who constantly are working to cast off the divine law and confuse the distinction between truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil. Because of its pluralism, because of its confusion of beliefs, its errors and practices, the synagogue of Satan is also called Babylon. Any and all who do not demonstrate their loyalty to God in both word and deed, eventually become members of Babylon and with her, meet her fate, eternal destruction in the lake of fire.

Let us consider the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matt 13:24-30, 36-43. Here we find Jesus saying that the field represents the world; the good seed - the children of Christ's kingdom; the tares - the children of Satan. "The developing plants from the good and the bad seed, will remain indistinguishable, unknown to human evaluation until separated by the angels at the end of the world." R&H. 3 January, 1893. All of the wheat and the tares will be fully ripened at this time, when Christ leaves the heavenly sanctuary and human probation closes for everyone.

Christ then declares, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. Rev 22:11.

God will make glaringly evident the contrast between deception and truth, between perfected evil and perfected goodness in the bringing of the wheat and the tares to full maturity. In the final struggle of the great controversy, the message given by Christ's end-time people, the message known as the 3 angel's message, will be given by the wheat, those that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The everlasting gospel calls all upon the earth to serve the Creator of all things and glorify Him by allowing and showing His character reproduced in them.

The message calls for all to come out of Babylon, the confusion and errors of Babylon in order to avoid receiving the mark of the beast and the destructive wrath of God. The 3rd angel's message ends with a description of the remnant's characteristics in Revelation 14:12. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Only those who exhibit patience – steadfast endurance and integrity - only those who obey all the commandments of God, only those who live and work with the same faith that Jesus had in His Father's divine leadership, are able to give the 3rd angel's message to come out of Babylon. Those who claim to follow Christ, who say the law cannot be kept, who compromise His commandments, who do not trust Him for power to overcome, will in the end become separate from Christ's end-time church and form part of Babylon and receive of her plagues and destruction in the lake of fire. The sinners in Zion WILL be sifted out.

What is God's remnant church known as? - Laodicea. A people judged. And what does Christ described her condition as? Spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked of righteousness and right doing. Her spiritual sickness incapacitates her to effectively give the 3 angels' messages. How can she share a message of full obedience to Christ, the head of the church and share it with the world, when she herself is disobedient to him, and attaches herself to the world? "Come out of her my people," includes His Laodicean church of which we form a part. I quote from 2SM 378, 381. "Let the churches who claim to believe the truth who are advocating the law of God, keep that law and depart from all iniquity. Let the individual members of the church, resist the temptations to practice evils and indulge in sin.... God will work with us and for us, if the sins which brought His wrath upon the old world, upon Sodom and Gomorrah and upon ancient Jerusalem do not become our crime. God help us to render to Him, all that His law requires. We can not do this, without that faith that brings Christ's righteousness into daily practice."

Is there not a simple imbalanced equation in evidence here, one that needs to be put in balance before the latter rain will fall in abundance and the power of God given for the loud cry of the 3rd angel to be proclaimed in its fullness? To transform His lukewarm disobedient, unsanctified Laodicean church, into obedient, sanctified givers of the 3rd angel's message, Christ sets out to purify His church by initially, shaking and sifting. The equation needs to come into balance.

The wheat and the tares in Christ's church are first ripened, then probation closes and the wheat are sealed. The chaff are counted with Babylon left behind in darkness. The wheat in the church then gives the 3rd angel's message under the loud cry to the world causing the immature wheat and the tares of the world to come to maturity, to finally ripen under the latter rain. Early Writings, p 271.

Friends, the shaking and sifting of the world will climax, only after God's true church are shaken and sifted and sealed and received the latter rain, empowering them to give the loud cry (Faith I Live By, 287).

And what causes the shaking and the sifting? I quote 5T 707, "God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat. The Lord calls upon all who believe His word to awake out of sleep. Precious light has come, appropriate for this time. It is Bible truth, showing the perils that are right upon us. This light should lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures and a most critical examination of the positions, which we hold. God would have all the bearings and positions of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting. Believers are not to rest in suppositions and ill-defined ideas of what constitutes truth." Mixed are the beliefs within our midst on the nature of Christ, the sanctuary truth, righteousness by faith, justification and sanctification and the nature of the Godhead.

1T181 "I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God's people."

Friends, the prophet of the Lord predicted heresies would enter the church and they have entered the church and the acceptance of these heresies is in evidence by those who have not a love for the truth and by those who will not perseveringly search God's word, like the Bereans of old to confirm what is truth, what is error and what is tradition and live the truth in the power of God. We are to be a peculiar people; separate, not complying in any way with the beliefs and practices of the mainstream churches of Babylonian teaching.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” 2Tim 2.15. Friends there are instruments at work within and without the church, endeavouring to prevent purification of God’s church. The heresies, the compromising of the commandments of God, a steering away from the narrow way into the broad way of the world and a lackadaisical attitude to the things of God are in evidence in the lives of many in God’s remnant church. We all need to be watchmen on the walls, giving the trumpet a certain sound. We need to be living the truth and sounding the trumpet to others. Jesus said to His followers in Matt 16:24, “If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me.”

The allurements of the world would make the bearing of the cross seem hard for those attempting to follow Jesus. I quote from 6BC 1102, “The world is the instrument that sifts the church, and tests the genuineness of its members. The world holds out inducements, that, when accepted, place the believer where his life is not in harmony with his profession. If you go forward toward heaven, the world will rub hard against you. At every step you will have to urge your way against Satan and his evil angels and against all who transgress God’s law. Earthly authorities will interpose. You will meet tribulation, bruising of the spirit, hard speeches, ridicule and persecution. Man will require your conformity and customs that would render disloyal to God. Here is where God’s people find the cross in the way of life.”

Are we as God’s people assuming the full responsibility of discipleship? I quote from 4T 87 “The only hope for the Laodiceans is a clear view of their standing before God, a knowledge of the nature of their disease.” If God’s church, His people are to be prepared for the violent shaking, for the outpouring of the latter rain in abundance for the loud cry, for translation, they would need to heed the counsel of the True Witness, Jesus Christ, to the Laodicean church, acknowledging their true condition and accepting the remedy for their disease. And what is the remedy? Acknowledgment of their condition followed by repentance and agonising prayer which will lead to exalting the standard in their lives and a pouring forth of the straight truth, the straight testimony.

What does it mean to accept the counsel of the True Witness Jesus Christ? 1T 187 “Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation.” It is only those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome that will exalt the standard in their lives, who will be enabled to pour forth the straight truth. The straight truth, the straight testimony boldly declared that would cause a mighty shaking within God’s church. EW 270. It is high time for this to happen.

For some hundred years or more now, the counsel of the True Witness contained in the Laodicean message has been given to the church with only spasmodic minor shakings within the church over this period.

This message has never been fully received by God's people, for if it had, the mighty shaking of God's church would have occurred.

The standard in the lives of God's people in the main has not been exalted and the straight testimony, the straight truth has not been poured forth. These things will only happen when the counsel of the True Witness has its effect on the heart of the receiver and this will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth.

Yes, some will rise up against it and this will cause a mighty shaking amongst God's people EW 270. It is only those who receive the counsel of the True Witness who receive the latter rain and be fitted for translation 1T 187. “

Those that will not endure the refining process that brings testing, trial, affliction and standing to obedience to God's word, will be blown away among the multitudes that will be blown away like dry leaves (4T 89).

Adversity purges them out of the church as a class. Their spirits are not steadfast with God. They go out from us because they are not of us, for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word; many are offended (4T 89). “

“It is the wheat that Satan attempts to destroy, to draw them out of God's army. “Satan will not sift the chaff because he gains nothing from this endeavour. He sifts the wheat. The devil will not try to tempt and persecute those whom he is sure of because they are living in known transgression of the law of God. Those who have enlisted in the army of the Lord, under the bloodstained banner of Prince Emmanuel, Satan will seek to harass and destroy. Christians will meet and have many conflicts with the wily foe, who is merciless. He will bring them into the most difficult places and then exalt in their distress.” (The Upward Look, p 222).

Great persecution is lying ahead for those who would resist Satan and his purposes of bringing world acceptance of his rulership by leading mankind into keeping Sunday holy, the day he has substituted for the 7th day; God's holy Sabbath day. This day is God's memorial of His creation and Satan intends to coerce and force all mankind to violate the 4th commandment of God.

Friends the preaching of the hard message of the Laodicean state of God's people; the state of complacency that exists and the counsel of admonition to God's people by the prophet of the Lord, does not sit easily with many of God's professing people. Some consider it negative preaching. The counsel from God's word and the prophet of the Lord to the church make some feel uncomfortable.

It is God's way to have His people take stock of their lives. As it did in the days of Isaiah when the Lord gave a message for the people of that time, when He said in Isaiah 30: 9, 10 "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." And that condition in a good measure exists today.

And to those who would desire smooth things and deceits spoken to them, the prophet of the Lord has this to say:

5T 678 "To defy the words of the Lord, spoken through His chosen instruments, will only provoke His anger and eventually bring certain ruin upon the offender."

Southern Watchman, 5 December 1899 p 12 "One little disregard of a 'Thus saith the Lord' is sufficient to stop the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit. By disobedience the light once so precious becomes obscure. Satan takes charge of mind and soul, and God is greatly dishonoured."

EGW Biography, Vol 1, p 441 "We expect fierce conflicts with the powers of darkness. We believe the shaking time has come. My cry is, "Stay not thy hand O God. Let everything be shaken that can be. Let us know who is upon the sure foundation and who is on the Lord's side."

How do you stand before God today? The question is not, "how will you stand in the day of trouble or at some future time, but how is it with your soul today?" – for we are coming to a crisis and it is today that we want Christ abiding in us.

In Isaiah 41:10 the Lord says to His people, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Friends we have nothing to fear. Let us each one place ourselves 100% on the Lord's side. Let the shaking develop in intensity that the Latter Rain may fall in abundance on those who will stand for truth and usher in the return of Jesus.