

Do not reject God's Voice!

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We are living in very exciting yet dangerous times. Those in the Church who stay close to God and closely observe events in the Church and on the World scene (Luke 21:36), know that we are on the threshold of being born into the family of God!

In this Laodicean era many of God's people are in danger of not finishing the race the way they know they should (Rev 3:16). In most cases, brethren have become spiritually lax and have fallen into a state of deep sleep (Matt. 25:1-5) while others have become blind (Rev 3:17; 2 Thess. 2:11). It is evident that the Laodiceans are increasingly clinging onto the coattails of their physical leaders which has led them to dangerously exercise *blind faith* in the mistaken belief that they will end the race just as God would have it. In reality, these are running the race without knowing *how* they will finish it (1 Cor. 9:26)! All of God's people are admonished throughout the pages of our Bibles to acknowledge personal weaknesses so that we can know our own areas which need special attention.

If we are to *qualify* and *finish* the race, we must discipline ourselves and build *Godly character* so as to be able to stand *on our own*. 1 Cor. 9:27 tells us that we must '*keep our body*' and '*bring it into subjection*'. The original Greek for the phrase '*bring it into subjection*' means that we must *slave-drive* our own selves out of our spiritual and physical comfort zones and into total *submission* and *obedience* to God and His ways, clearly indicating that we must not allow ourselves any room to succumb to the least bit of temptation. This is never easy and requires that we constantly apply *optimum vigilance* and exert *maximum effort* in our spiritual calling; otherwise we run the fatal risk of slowly letting up!

The Bible tells us that the Ephesus Church faltered and slowed down in the middle of the race by 'leaving their first love' (Rev. 2:4). This essentially means that they stopped testing their leaders, began to rely on those same leaders, and as a result failed to prove all things as scripture admonishes. What they needed to do was heed the admonition to resist carelessness and *recapture their original zeal*. Sadly they didn't, and God removed their candlestick! This trend seems to have repeated itself in one form or another over the different eras of God's Church! Today, in this final era, we see an equally disturbing situation having developed in the Laodicean Church.

When running a race, the temptation is to slow down in the middle of it and not finish it with the same 'gusto' as was registered in the beginning. Similarly, when involved in a project, the temptation is to rely on others when things seem to get complicated or tedious. Sadly, God's people in Laodicea have allowed this most subtle temptation to appease their human nature. Instead of applying 'optimum vigilance' with their leaders and exerting 'maximum effort' in their Bible study by proving all things at this most crucial stage of the race, they have opted to apply blind faith and rely on their physical leadership (Rev. 3:17-18), oblivious to the fact that their leadership has run off the track and is leading them to an undesirable end (Rev 3:16).

What a shame that the lesson of Church history hasn't been learnt! What is worse is that these brethren are resisting Christ's knock and as a result cannot even recognize His Voice (Rev. 3:20). They have been programmed to respond solely to the voice and command of their *physical* leader which has led them to forget the Voice of their true Master! This is history repeating itself! By their actions, the Laodiceans demonstrate that they love God less! Christ is knocking and watching which Laodiceans will hear and respond to His voice. He is examining us (Mal. 3:3), seeing who will recognize the New Truth He is giving to His people through the Faithful Church of God in Laodicea.

Not responding to Christ's Voice is tantamount to not coming under His authority and reaping the disastrous consequences (Rev 3:16). This is a serious offense to God! To understand this, let us take a close look at Christ's reaction when Peter briefly *refused* and *rejected* New Truth directly given by Christ to His disciples:

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16:21). Christ was here giving His disciples New Truth! He was being intimate with them, privately explaining events that were to come to pass. Verse 22 is interesting in that it gives details about Peter's reaction: "Then Peter *took* Him and began to *rebuke* Him saying, 'Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you.'" One other Bible translation indicates that Peter actually 'took Him in hand'. Whether this happened or not, it is clearly evident that Peter *protested, refuted and rejected* this New Truth which came right out of the mouth of Christ! We need to all extract a deep lesson from this exchange between Christ and Peter. Shouldn't the Laodiceans meditate on these scriptures more than ever and glean the intent of what is being said?

It is important to carefully note Christ's reaction to Peter, when he refuted New Truth. This will help us begin to understand Christ's view of those who today fight against 'special revelation' given to them by God. In Matthew 16:23 we see Christ's response to Peter: "But Christ turned, and said unto Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*". Read these words again and understand what Christ is saying. It is clear that at that moment, Peter had a disbelieving mind which greatly offended Christ. Christ said that Peter 'savored the things of the world' rather than which was coming directly from Him! "Get thee behind me, Satan" was Christ's immediate reaction to Peter's disbelief. Shouldn't the Laodiceans be so careful and fearful of rejecting Christ's voice as they seem to be *passionately* doing today? The Laodiceans today focus on the things of this world, building projects and such (Rev 3:17). This is leading them to spiritual blindness (2 Thess. 2:11; Rev. 3:17), and a lukewarm state (Rev 3:16). As a result, Christ's spews them out of His mouth and into the Great Tribulation.

Peter, of course, was *always* quick to realize the error of rejecting what Christ told him and immediately changed attitude. (We can even see this in John 13:9). Christ loved Peter for this. Evidently, he learnt this deep lesson which led Christ to later tell him: "Blessed are you Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). Peter learnt to hear God's voice instantly which led him to great things (verse 18, 19). It is this attitude and character trait that brings great joy to God, yet this is in stark contrast to the attitude of many of the Laodiceans today. Their stubbornness in resisting and rejecting God's voice and truth means that only the fires of the Great Tribulation will bring them to repentance.

Having already looked at 1 Cor. 9:26-27, we must be reminded of the importance of keeping our "bodies in subjection". That means we must continue *doing* through *resistance* and *endurance*. We must *strain* to reach our goal and do everything possible to finish the race so that we can reach out for the prize. Our best help would be to always listen out for God's voice!

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, if any man will come after me [*listen to His voice*], let him deny himself [*bring it into subjection*], and take up his cross, and follow me [*by submission and obedience*]" (Matt. 16:24).

We have been given a very high calling with eternal life at stake. God is pleading with the Laodiceans for them to listen to Him as He continues to 'knock' on their door through the Faithful Church of God in Laodicea (Rev 3:19). All of God's people must remember the

lessons of recent Church history, and be diligent in 'proving all things' (1 Thess. 5:21) and 'testing their leaders' (Rev 2:2) so that they can rightfully 'keep their bodies in subjection'. God is curiously seeing which individuals love Him and His truth as opposed to those who blatantly reject Him and rely on the edicts of a man. Time is fast running out for the Laodiceans to recapture their original zeal, hear His voice and positively respond to Christ's knock.