

Rev. 3:18. the Heavenly Merchant and His Goods

by Horatius Bonar

The heavenly merchant offers His divine wares, including gold, clothing, and eye-salve, to those who recognize their need and acknowledge His love and desire to bless them.

Scripture: Genesis 3:21, Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 5:3, Luke 12:15, John 14:13, John 16:23, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Ephesians 1:3, James 1:5, Revelation 3:18

Topics: "Christ's Compassion", "Spiritual Riches"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes Christ's profound love and compassion for sinners, particularly addressing the Laodicean church's self-sufficiency and ignorance of their spiritual poverty. He presents Christ as the heavenly merchant offering invaluable goods--gold, clothing, and eye-salve--symbolizing spiritual wealth, righteousness, and enlightenment, all available without cost. Bonar highlights the urgency of accepting Christ's counsel to 'buy' these treasures, which are essential for true richness and fulfillment. The sermon underscores the contrast between the divine merchant's desire to enrich the needy and the reluctance of the buyers to accept His offers. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a recognition of our need for Christ's gifts and the importance of inviting Him into our lives.

Transcript

"I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white clothing, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness may not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see."--Revelation 3:18.

Christ's love is here beyond all doubt--His profound compassion for the sinner; for the worse of sinners; for the sinner of Laodicea. Each word is full of meaning and of grace.

1. "I" It is the Master Himself who speaks; speaks the very truth of God; speaks in deep sincerity; speaks as the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. The words that followed are meant to embody and express all these attributes, these parts of His name, these features of His character.

2. I counsel. The word is a peculiar one, and resembles the prophets expression, 'Let us reason together' (Isaiah 1:18). I would unite with you regarding such counsel as the following. It is the invitation to joint

counsel that makes the expression so condescending and so touching. It is not, 'I command'--but 'I counsel'. What greatness of love is here! What a desire to disarm all opposition, to prevent irritation, and to win the heart! Oh that you would take my advice! He says to the self-sufficient Laodicean, whose estimate of himself was so widely different from that of God concerning him.

3. You. The lukewarm Church; the worse of the seven; just about to be rejected with loathing. God has ever spoken His most gracious words to His people in their worst estate, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem when she was about to reject and crucify Him. For His is love to the uttermost--love that many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown. The most loving words in all these seven epistles are spoken to the worst of the seven Churches. What sinner, what backslider, then shall say--There is not enough of love in Christ for me!

4. To buy. For Christ, as we shall see, speaks here as a merchant, offering His heavenly merchandise for sale. And yet not for sale--for all is free! He speaks of buying, that those who come might know that they get His goods in an honest and righteous way, and that they have them as securely as if they had paid the full price. 'Buy,' He said in the Old Testament (Isaiah 55:1,3), where He also publishes the advertisement of His goods. 'Buy,' He says to Laodicea. 'Buy,' He says to us still. Buy of me! Of me--in whom is all fullness.

The words of our text are the words of a merchant; yet not of a merchant 'seeking goodly pearls,' but offering His merchandise for sale in a wondrous market--and at a wondrous price. Yet He does not speak as one wishing to make gain by His goods--He speaks in sympathy and love. But He evidently has to do with men who care neither for Him nor for His goods--who have made choice of another merchant, and set their hearts on other merchandise. He has to press Himself and His goods upon unwilling buyers, who do not appreciate His wares. It is for their own profit, not His, that He is thus urgent. Unlike other dealers in the market, He wants to make His customers rich--not Himself.

Here, then, we have the seller and the buyer. Who are they? For they appear so unlike other buyers and sellers--the seller so anxious to make the buyer rich--and the buyer so reluctant to be enriched.

The seller or merchant is the Son of God, in whom are unsearchable riches. The buyer is a sinner of Adam's impoverished family; a Laodicean sinner; one of the poorest and emptiest of men; all the more poor and empty, because ignorant of his great necessities, and complacently fancying himself rich and full, increased in goods, and needing nothing. It is upon this needy one that the rich merchant presses His wares--spreading them out before his eyes, and proclaiming both their sufficiency and suitableness. It is not often that love and wealth are thus combined--but here we have them both in blessed fullness--wealth sufficient to supply the needs of the neediest--and love, unselfish, generous-hearted love, urging on the needy the acceptance of its boundless treasures. It is not often that poverty and pride are thus conjoined; but here we have the extreme of poverty accompanied with the resolution to remain poor rather than accept the merchant's offer.

This heavenly merchant no doubt speaks of a price; for He says, 'Buy of me.' May not then the rejection of His goods be on account of their being too high in price? That this is not the case is plain from the three following things--

(1) There is in these Laodiceans a manifest dislike of both the merchant and His goods, quite irrespective of the terms.

(2) The merchant means obviously to intimate to them that they did not need more to buy His articles with, than they were now buying the articles of others with, and that therefore price could be no stumbling block.

(3) He is manifestly, by His mode of speech, referring them to another of His advertisements or announcements, in which His terms are explicitly given, 'Without money and without price' (Isaiah 55:1). It cannot then be the price of His goods that is frightening away buyers. He knows this, and He continues to press His merchandise upon their acceptance, as something which they truly needed, more--something without which they would be absolutely and utterly poor. It is love, divine love, love to the needy, that makes Him so importunate; for He knows the extent of their poverty, their total inability to help themselves, and His own boundless treasures--the least fragment of which would enrich a world for eternity!

What then are the wares of this divine merchant? They are manifold, more--unsearchable. But there are three which He singles out as specially suited to the case of those Laodiceans--

(1.) Gold

(2.) Clothing

(3.) Eye-salve.

These were the articles which they thought they needed least--but which He knew they needed most. The possession of these would be to them the abundance of blessing. Without them they would be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

I. Gold. He offers gold for sale--gold not only of the finest kind, but which had passed through the fire, and been purged from all its dross. It is better than gold of Ophir, than temple-gold, than palace-gold--it is gold the like of which earth does not contain anywhere--the very gold of heaven! As gold is the chief medium of currency, by means of which men obtain in the market all they need--so we may say that the name of Christ is that by which we obtain all we require, in the heavenly market. His name avails the sinner for the purchase of everything. Making use of that name, he may demand anything and everything. Is he not then rich? What gold, in value and in efficacy, is equal to the name of Jesus? For thus it is written, 'Whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do' (John 14:13); and again, 'Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, He will give to you' (John 16:23). With gold such as this, it seems impossible to be poor. All Christ's unsearchable riches pass over to us--and we use them as if they were our own! They are our 'currency,' our 'circulating medium,' in the heavenly market. Nor is there anything which by means of them we may not obtain. Thus are we 'rich toward God,' and though having nothing in ourselves--yet we possess all things!

II. Clothing. Clothing was the first thing which man felt his need of, after he had sinned. Before he sinned, he was naked, yet needed no covering. After he sinned, he felt his nakedness, and blushed. He tried the fig leaves, but they would not do. He was still ashamed. He tried the thick trees, but neither would they do--he was both afraid and ashamed. At last God covered him. He took the skins of the sacrifices, and clothed him. That sufficed. The shame of his nakedness no longer appeared.

It is thus that God deals with the sinner still. It is from the slain Lamb that the true clothing comes. Nothing else will do. This does. The Laodicean sinner is so vain and so ignorant, that he feels as Adam did before he fell. He is naked, yet not ashamed. Hence the sharp words of the Lord, 'You know not that you are naked!' A sinner, yet ignorant of his sin! Naked, yet unconscious of his shame! To many a sinner now, may

the Lord's words be pointed--'you are naked, and know it not!' But whether conscious or unconscious of your shame, here is clothing, fine clothing, that you may be clothed. 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him,' are the words of paternal grace. It is the best robe; for it is divine. It is fine clothing; for it is the very clothing of the Son of God. It is His righteousness that is to cover you. Then shall you be no more ashamed. You shall be able to stand before men and angels, more, before God--without a blush!

III. Eye-salve. 'Blindness,' not in part, but in whole, is the sinner's lot. He is blind from his mother's womb--'born blind.' Yet he thinks he sees! Strange delusion! 'Are we blind also?' he says with the Pharisees. Ignorant blindness! What a calamity! 'You know not that you are blind.' But whether you know or not, here is eye-salve--heavenly eye-salve--better eye-salve than that with which Christ anointed the blind eyes of the body. Here it is--in Christ's own hand. Here it is, all ready for you. Let Him anoint you with it, and immediately you shall see. Consent to take His eye-salve, and your vision is restored. With that restoration, what a world of glory opens upon your eye!

Here then are the merchant's three articles--gold, clothing, eye-salve--riches, clothing, knowledge! He presents them all to you. And though He says 'Buy,' He asks no exorbitant price for His divine wares. His terms are wonderful--'without money and without price!'

Every day comes the heavenly merchant to our earthly market, with His goodly but despised merchandise. Patiently, lovingly He carries them about, presenting them to all He meets; seeking not to enrich Himself, but us; not to amass a fortune for Himself, but to provide one for us. Ah, this is love! Love that seeks another's welfare, not its own. 'I counsel you to buy,' he says. Yet who takes His counsel? Who buys?

After having gone through the market-place, amid the crowds of earth, and found but little custom for His precious wares, He goes to the houses of those who have been refusing all His offers. He knocks and knocks, presenting not only His goods--but Himself also, as the blessed guest! There He stands, knocking and knocking! Not because He needs shelter or food, but because they need His company. The house and the table will be poor without Him. He knows this--though they know it not. Therefore He asks admission, that He may come in and bless them with His divine fellowship and love!

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