

THE LAST KNOCK.

REV. III. 8, 16, 20, 21.

THE Lord's last words to His assembly on earth are singularly solemn and instructive. In the closing moments of her history, when things are hopelessly bad, He still stands at the door, and knocks. The witness of the bride and body of Christ on earth is about for ever to cease, and He reminds the faithful of it by saying, "Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Faithful ones surely are contemplated till He come, however few they may be, and the overcomer is encouraged to the last moment (*v.* 26).

It is clear that two things will be found here in the closing days of the history of God's assembly on earth—some true to the Lord, and many indifferent to His claims and honour. Though slighted, He knocks, and presents Himself in richest grace to every one who hears His voice and opens the door. We have the Lord's commendation, His threat, and His entreaty.

1. The faithful at the close are characterized by keeping His "word," and not denying His "name"; and these have always been the marks of vital Christianity. His word makes

Him known. Our faith is founded on it, and it is sufficient to guide us every step of our way. Without believing His word there is no faith, and consequently neither joy, nor peace, nor hope. It is to the written word the Spirit of God always directs us, as having final and conclusive authority; so that it is certain that none are walking by faith, walking in the Spirit, walking in the fear of God, in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, or for the glory of God, who do not in some measure surrender their thoughts, purposes, and ways to the divine authority of the word of the Lord which endures for ever. The test is simple, but very searching. Are we keeping His word; not merely *reading* it, or even *admiring* some of its striking features, but *using* it as a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path; being in heart and conscience subject to it; and finding guidance from it for every part of our way? Such, we judge, *keep* His word. They love it, hide it in their hearts, have the Lord Jesus Christ ministered to their souls through it by the Spirit, and are thus kept in communion with Him, living for His glory, and waiting for His return from heaven. In this way there is not only intercourse with the Lord, but such holy intimacy that they can count on His blessing being with them, who said, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). Happy are they who keep His word and have it dwelling in them *richly*, so that they "walk in the truth"!

Another mark of the faithful in the closing days of the church on earth is, they have not denied our precious Saviour's "name." We are persuaded there is a great deal more in this than many think. The way in which a person mentions the name of an absent friend often discloses the esteem or indifference in which the speaker holds him. And is it less true with regard to how we speak of the infinitely worthy name of our Lord Jesus Christ? We think not; and we hesitate not to say that nothing more manifests the state of the heart than the way in which His holy name is repeated by us. Quietly to take sides with the insolent who say, Who is this Son of man? or to maintain intimacy with the despisers who are wont to speak of Him as the carpenter's Son, or with scoffers who say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" betrays a heart that cares little for His name, or for His glory.

To the Spirit-taught soul, His name is as ointment poured forth. Nothing wounds him like dishonour to Christ. To such, no name on earth can ever equal His. In heaven, too, He has been found infinitely worthy of a name which is above every name. It is the name of our Lord Jesus Christ which is the only centre of gathering together on earth, or will be the centre of gathering us together when He comes; His name is the touchstone of holiness in the assembly, calling us to depart from what dishonours Him. And to His name every knee must yet bow, of beings in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and every

tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Oh, yes,

“ His name’s a rock, which winds above
And waves below can never move!”

It is the name when mentioned which sets forth the person, and at once claims our esteem or otherwise. We cannot ordinarily separate the name from the person. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ not only conveys to us true thoughts of His Person, but calls out our affections toward Him where He now is.

It is impossible, therefore, to say what may be involved in denying His name. That everything which dishonours Him, every word that is derogatory to Him, all insubjection to His authority should be judged, all irreverence reproved, and that every unholy association with His peerless name should be shunned, there can be no doubt. But these are of a profane kind. A more refined and covert way of denying His name is not giving Him His rightful place in the assembly as gathered to His name, who “is in the midst of them”; not according to Him His rightful place in our hearts, our houses, and touching all our affairs. Yet most would admit that Christianity is the continual surrender of ourselves and our all to Him, as not our own, but bought with a price by Him who is now “Lord of all,” and soon coming forth to reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

2. Besides our Lord’s last commendation of some, His last threatening of others is most

solemn. "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (v. 16). Their state and ways were so nauseous to our Lord as to be intolerable; professing to love Him their hearts were indifferent to His honour and His claims, so that they could only be rejected by Him who is emphatically "holy" and "true." Plenty of Bible knowledge there may be, and zeal for religious activities; such too may be prosperous in the eyes of the religious world, and have abundance of fancied competency and self-satisfaction, and yet Christ be outside it all. How appalling is the possibility of such a state! but, alas! it is too true. Is it Christ that is before the soul—His word, His ways, His interests, His people, His service, His honour, His glory? Is the love of Christ the motive power which constrains us? Have we personal intercourse with the glorified Son of God, who is our life, our righteousness and peace? Is it communion with Him that we seek and enjoy? Is Christ known, welcomed, and revered as "in the midst" of the assembly when gathered in His name? Alas! how can anything short of this be acceptable to Him? Those who desire not His glory, who do not love His word, do not seek to obey His voice, and to honour Him at some personal inconvenience and loss in this world, are, we may be sure, among those who are "neither cold nor hot," and must be rejected by Him.

3. It is blessed though to turn away from the indifference of man in his utter failure to

maintain the truth and honour of our Lord on earth, and gather up the thoughts suggested by the gracious way in which our Lord presents Himself, and hearken to His loving entreaty, though He finds Himself outside the door and knocking. And what does He say? Does He thunder on them the immediate expectation of devouring judgment? Does He lead them to expect fire and brimstone to rain upon them because of their most inexcusable forgetfulness of Him? Oh, no! The last words to His ruined church on earth, which follow His last knock, abound with tenderest accents of richest grace. Let us seek to catch them, as it were, from His own lips. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Wondrous mercy! The highest blessing that can be known on earth, can be enjoyed by the feeblest soul who opens the door to Him.

Let us not fail to notice here, first, the Lord's place, as rejected even by His professed people on earth, is outside the door. His name, it may be, is often on their lips, but the rightful place is not accorded to Him as Head over all to His assembly. So indifferent are they to Him—His presence, His interests, and His glory—that they can get on and "have need of nothing," though Christ is outside, instead of being known in their midst because they are gathered together in His name. Oh, how solemn! Can it be possible that Christianity has sunk so low that any can

speak of prosperity apart from enjoyment of Himself?

The next thing is the Lord's attitude. He cannot give up the professing church to its expected judgment as the great whore, as long as any will open the door to Him. This they know. This knock is loud enough to arouse the one who is true-hearted among the mass, and he hears the voice. There is no mistaking it. It is the voice of the Beloved, the Shepherd's voice, that still small voice which goes down deep into the heart and conscience, and rouses every true and proper affection of the soul of the one who knows that "Christ is all."

This is enough. The voice being heard, the slumbering faculties are roused, the heart bounds to open the door, to remove every hindrance to being near Him, and to abide in Him and with Him. All must give way to Christ's voice.

The door once opened to Him, He comes in to the feeble one who has lifted the latch—removed every impediment to being face to face with Him. Precious moment! And then—oh, wondrous grace!—He sups with such. His heart must be gratified in having personal communion with the one that has joyfully let Him in, and the humble, self-distrusting believer sups with Him. Can anything exceed these riches of divine grace? and are we not told to be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"? This scene is mercy indeed; for while the mass of Christendom's people are to be spued out of His

mouth, a solitary one here and there is even now supping with our Lord Jesus, having personal communion with Him. And let it never be forgotten that the Lord's "counsel" was to have *personal intercourse* with Him, and get from Himself the pure gold of divine righteousness, which had been tried in the fire. He offers even on earth the consciousness of *personal communion* with Him, that is, in our small measure, the same thoughts, the same joys, the same affections as Himself. How marvellous it is that we are not more roused in heart and conscience, so as to have more enjoyed fellowship with Himself; for we are, through infinite grace, "called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

May the Lord's last knock, and His last words to His assembly on earth, duly affect our hearts at this time.

H. H. S.