

## **The Church God Desires – 2**

Revelation 3:14-22

September 16-17, 2017

John has been given a vision or prophecy of latter-day events. He tells us these things in advance so we might discern the signs of the times and see the events that are happening in the world through the lens of scriptural prophecy.

But before he reveals prophetic insights, Jesus speaks to the seven churches in Asia. He speaks to each church commending them for things that are right and good, but also speaks words of correction - so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Sometimes the corrections seem strong, but God wants to wake them up from spiritual slumber. He also says in verse 19, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline.”

Here in Revelation 3 Jesus is addressing the church in Laodicea, a city about 100 miles east of Ephesus in Asia Minor. Three main roads passed directly through it. It was a center of banking and finance in the Roman empire. There was also a large clothing industry based on the specialty of raising black sheep and creating a highly sought after glossy black wool.

A temple to Aesculapius was there. This was a medical cult claiming to have a healing salve for the eyes, commonly known as Phrygian Powder. Interestingly, the modern medical symbol of a staff with two serpents was the same symbol used by the followers of Aesculapius.

Six miles away at Hierapolis were famous hot springs, called, Pamukkale, which is modern Turkish for ‘cotton castle;’ named after the large limestone formations deposited over the centuries. The water from the Hot Springs was thought to have healing properties received from bathing and/or drinking the water.

Aqueducts were built to bring the hot water the six miles to Laodicea through an aqueduct, but by the time the water arrived at Laodicea, it was lukewarm and unsuitable to the taste.

Many who study the scriptures believe that the city of Laodicea most closely represents the condition of our modern age in the western world.

Jesus uses these aspects of the city of Laodicea when He speaks to them about the church. This is the one church for which He has no commendation; only words of correction. But He makes clear that *He loves the church* and wants the church to change.

## I. Become Spiritually Hot

- In verse 15 Jesus said they were neither cold nor hot, they were lukewarm, so He would spew them out of His mouth unless they changed.
- This is the famous ‘vomiting’ verse that most people would rather avoid. We don’t usually carve this verse on stone plaques or hang this verse on our walls.
- But it’s an important verse because it speaks of the urgency that God places on our spiritual condition. Urgency comes when something is important.

**Illus – I remember teaching my kids to drive.**

**Before we even start the engine, I say, “Let’s start with the most important rule of all rules. It’s the one rule that rules them all – you do exactly what I say.” My words must have urgency. God’s word must have urgency for us right now!**

A. Lukewarm is spiritually dangerous

- Lukewarm water doesn’t cook anything and it isn’t pleasant to drink.

- The lukewarm spiritual condition is a condition of complacency; it makes a person think everything is fine when everything is not fine – that’s the danger.
- There is deception in lukewarmness; if someone thinks they’re doing well when they’re not, they won’t change.

**App – Lukewarm is a condition of being in the miserable middle. In other words, they want to have it both ways. They want to be in God, but they also want to be in the world. They have enough of Jesus to be miserable in the world and they have enough of the world to not be truly satisfied in Christ.**

- The greatest danger of being lukewarm is that God is not pleased with it – it’s not where God wants us to be.

**2 Timothy 3:5, They are holding to a form of godliness, but they have denied its power. Avoid such men as these.**

**B. How to become spiritually lukewarm**

- This condition is such a concern that we should really understand how people get to this condition in this place ---

- *Spiritual compromise* -- keeping close enough to the world to keep you from being near to God.

**Illus – I read the story of a boy and his family that went to town together. He wandered into an alley and found a smoldering cigar butt, which he picked up. He was considering smoking it when his father came down the alley toward him...**

**Isaiah 29:15, Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the Lord, and whose deeds are done in a dark place, and they say, “Who sees us?” Or “Who knows us?”**

- *Religious ritual* – empty religion is offensive to the Lord because it claims God’s name, but there is no heart for God in it.
- Empty religion seeks to appear religious to others, without concern for what God thinks.

**Matthew 6:1, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.”**

**Matthew 6:5-6, “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”**

- *No spiritual fire* – lukewarm happens when you take away the source of heat.

**Illus – In the days of steam driven trains, if coal stopped being fed into the fire, the lack of power wouldn’t be noticed right away, it would continue for some time in the momentum of what it once had, but gradually the train slows until it has lost all power.**

### C. The blessings of hot and cold

- Jesus said, “I would that you were cold or hot.”
- He’s not saying that He actually wants people to be spiritually cold, but that if someone were cold, they could at least experience the blessing of brokenness.

**2 Corinthians 7:10, For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.**

- There is of course a great blessing in being spiritually hot. The word in the Greek for hot is the same root for our English word ‘zest.’
- Vs 19 – Those He loves, He reproveth and disciplines, be *zealous* therefore and repent.
- When we have a spiritual condition that pleases the Lord, blessing follows; if we have a spiritual condition that grieves the Lord, discipline follows – blessing will then flow out of the discipline.

**Illus - In the church at Sardis, they had a reputation that they were alive, but they were actually dead. How is God supposed to respond? He was grieved and concerned for them.**

**Illus – I remember once when I was 13 or 14, my dad had asked me to hill the potatoes, but he was gone all day and I procrastinated all day because I was having fun with my older**

**brother who had come for a visit. When I finally arrived home, it was dark and I could hear his angry voice from a distance, so I grabbed a hoe and a flashlight and started hilling the potatoes in the dark. That's when my dad came out. What was he supposed to do? I was the one who disobeyed.**

- When there is diligence and a right heart, God is pleased and thus we are blessed.

**Psalm 37:3-5, Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it.**

## **II. God is the Answer to Our Greatest Need**

- One of the greatest problems in Laodicea is that they were blind to their own spiritual need.
- They were fairly well-off physically and were quite comfortable in regard to material things.
- But that's what caused their spiritual blindness, they didn't recognize their



spiritual poverty, so Jesus points out their true spiritual condition.

### A. Purchase spiritual things from God

- Jesus gives the answer to their spiritual condition...
- “I advise you to buy from Me...”
- *Gold refined by fire* – that you may become rich. They thought they were rich, but they were poor.
- **In contrast, the church in Smyrna thought they were poor, but God said they were rich (Rev 2:9).**

**Illus – Someone once famously said, “The true worth of a man can be measured by what he pursues.”**

- We need to value spiritual things greater than material or worldly things. In other words, we need to become spiritually rich.

**Luke 12:21,31, “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God... Seek first His kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you.”**

**Isaiah 55:1-2, “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance.”**

- That’s the issue, worldly wealth is temporary; we need that which has eternal value.
- *White garments* – The city was well known for its glossy black wool and it was all the rage to be seen wearing it, but it made them think they were something when they weren’t.

**Illus – When I was growing up it was Converse sneakers. All the rich kids had them. Of course, I wore my old work shoes that had dirt inside that always made my socks dirty.**

**Galatians 6:3-4, If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work,**

- Everyone is morally naked before God, He sees everything; there is nothing hidden from His eyes, but He has an answer to our

greatest need, the robe of righteousness that is from Jesus Himself.

- *Eye salve* – The Laodiceans were proud of their Phrygian powder that could be made into a paste and applied to the eyes. It soothed and made them feel better, but it couldn't heal.

**Illus – In contrast, Jesus spit into the dirt and made mud which He applied to a blind man's eyes. It probably wasn't soothing, but it was truly healing.**

- Spiritual blindness is blindness of the worst kind.

**Ephesians 1:18-19, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so you will know the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.**

**B. Open every door of your heart**

- Vs 20 – This is one of the most beautiful verses in all of scripture because we see the desire of the Lord to come into our lives and to have relationship with us.

- He patiently waits as He stands at the door and knocks. But we must open the door. He will not force His way into our lives.
- But will you invite Him into the deepest places of your life?

**Illus – Some people want to invite Jesus to come only into the little square of tiles next to the door, but He wants to come in and look through the closets – even the smelly places. He will not only have a meal with you, he will clean the skeletons out of the closet.**

**Illus – We once had an unusual smell that started creeping into the house and we didn't know where it was coming from. But we had guests coming for dinner and we had to know...**

- Jesus was knocking because He wanted to come into a church that He loved...
- And Jesus wants to open every door in our lives right now.
- One of my favorite songs of Keith Green captured the right heart for revival...
- **"My eyes are dry, my prayers are cold, my heart is hard, my faith is old. Oh, I**

**know how I ought to be, alive to You  
and dead to me.**

- **What can be done for an old heart like mine? Soften it up with oil and wine. The oil is You, Your Spirit of love, please wash me anew in the wine of Your blood.”**