

## The Church God Desires – Part 3

Revelation 3:14-22

7/19/07

### Intro

In these verses Jesus is addressing the church in Laodicea, a city about 100 miles east of Ephesus in Asia Minor with three main roads passing directly through it. It was a city with a significant reputation as a center of banking and finance. There was also a large clothing industry based on the specialty of raising black sheep to create a highly sought after glossy black wool.

There was also a temple to Aesculapius there which was a medical cult claiming to have a healing salve for the eyes. This was 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, there was also a hot springs which brought water to Laodicea through an aqueduct. By the time the water arrived at Laodicea, it was lukewarm and unsuitable to the taste. For all their great wealth, the one thing they didn't have was refreshing water.

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 to speak to them about the church. He has no commendation for the church only words of correction. But He makes it clear that *He loves the church* and wants the church to change so He tells them what is wrong and what they need to do about it.

**These are lessons we need to learn  
from the church at Laodicea.**

## I. Become Spiritually Hot

- In verse 15 Jesus said that they were neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, so He was going to spew them out of His mouth.
- This is the famous 'vomit' verse that most people would rather avoid. We don't carve this verse in stone plaques and hang it on our walls.
- But it's one of the most important verses because it tells us the urgency that God places on our spiritual condition.

### A. Lukewarm is very 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 us think that everything is fine, when everything is not fine – that's the danger.
- There's a real deception is lukewarmness; if we think we're doing well when we're not, we won't change.

**App – Lukewarm is a condition of being in the middle. In other words, there is enough religious experience to avoid worldly extremes, and enough of the world that there is little spiritual power.**

- The greatest danger in it is that God is not pleased with it – it's not where God wants us.

**II Timothy 3:5, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.**

B. Spiritually lukewarm has several causes

- This condition is of such concern that we should really understand how people can get to be in this place ---
- *Spiritual compromise* -- we've already mentioned this as a dangerous condition, it's keeping close enough to world to keep us from being near to God.

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

**Isaiah 29:14-16 - When hearts are far from the Lord**

- *Religious ritual* – empty religion is offensive to the Lord because it claims God's name and denies His power.
- Empty religion seeks to appear religious to others, without concern for what God may think.

**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, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that 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.”**

C. The blessings of hot and cold

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

**II Corinthians 7:8-11 There is a sorrow that leads to repentance.**

- But there of course is a great blessing in being spiritually hot. The word in the Greek for hot is the same root for our English word ‘zeal.’
- Vs 19 – Those He loves, He reproves 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.

**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 is grieved and concerned for them.**

**Illus – I remember once when I as 13 or 14, my dad had asked me to hill the potatoes, but he was gone all day and 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 working. What was he supposed to do?**

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

**I Peter 3:12-14, “For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you 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. Know the True Condition of Your Soul**

- One of the greatest causes of their spiritual complacency was that they were fairly well off.
- The city was wealthy so many of the folks in the church were also wealthy and it cushioned them from seeing their true spiritual condition.
- They were poor, wretched, and blind, so Jesus points out their true spiritual condition.

## **A. God is the source of our greatest need**

- Jesus gives them the answer to their condition...
- “I advise you to buy from Me...”
- ***Gold refined by fire*** – that you may become rich.

**Illus – in contrast, the church in Smyrna thought they were poor, but God said they were rich. (Rev 2:9)**

**Illus – Jesus said it was more difficult for a rich man to go to heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The key is in understanding that without God, we are spiritually bankrupt.**

**Luke 12:15, Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”**

**I Peter 1:7-8, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him,**

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

**Galatians 6:3-4, For 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* – They were proud of the Phrygian powder that could be made into a paste and applied to the eyes. Though it soothed, it really 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 that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.**

B. Open every door of your heart

- Vs 20 – Here we see one of the most beautiful verses in all of scripture because here we see so clearly 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.

**John 1:12, But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,**

- But will you invite Him into the deepest places?

**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 us, he will clean the skeletons out of the closet.**

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

- Jesus wanted to come into a church that He loved...
- And Jesus wants to open every door in our lives now.