

Revelation 3:14-19—The Church of Laodicea—The Lukewarm Church—Part 1

We are now in the second section of the Book of Revelation, which deals with “the things which are” (Revelation 1:19).

Revision—Overview

Revelation 1:19 NKJV

Write [Part 1] the things which you have seen, and [Part 2] the things which are, and [Part 3] the things which will take place after this.

Part 1 - “the things which you have seen”

Revelation 1 - Jesus reveals Himself to John

Part 2 - “the things which are”

Revelation 2-3 - Letters to the seven churches.

Part 3 - “After these things”

Revelation 4-5 - Rapture and Church in Heaven before the throne of God.

Revelation 6-18 - 7 Year tribulation period

Revelation 19 - Second Coming of Christ

Revelation 20 - 1,000 year rule and reign of Jesus Christ on earth then the Great White Throne Judgement.

Revelation 21-22 - New heavens and earth, eternity.

Revision—The Seven Churches

**Ephesus — The Loveless Church: Loyal but loveless
(A.D. 33 - A.D. 100) Revelation 2:1-7**

**Smyrna — The Persecuted Church: Persecuted but Pure
(A.D. 100 - A.D. 312) Revelation 2:8-11**

**Pergamos — The Compromising Church: Faithful but Flawed
(A.D. 313 - A.D. 600) Revelation 2:12-17**

**Thyatira — The Corrupt Church: Committed but Corrupt
(A.D. 601 - A.D. 1500 and to the rapture) Revelation 2:18-29**

**Sardis - The Dead Church - Dead and Dying
(A.D. 1500 to the rapture) Revelation 3:1-6**

**Philadelphia - The Faithful or missionary Church - Underdog yet Unstoppable
(A.D. 1800 to the rapture) Revelation 3:7-13**

**Laodicea - The Lukewarm Church - Crowded but Christless
(A.D. 1900 - The modern day apostate and compromising seeker friendly church)
Revelation 3:14-22**

The Church of Laodicea

Last week we finished going through the church of Philadelphia. This week we will be looking at the church of Laodicea, the lukewarm church of which Jesus had nothing good to say. This is in stark contrast to the church of Philadelphia, of which Jesus had nothing bad to say. I find it simply amazing how quickly the church has changed over the last 100 or so years, from the majority of churches being genuinely led by the Holy Spirit, with great evangelists and bible teachers being raised up, missionaries being sent all over the world and the true gospel being preached around the world, to what it is now, with the majority of churches generally so apostate and watered down that Jesus can find nothing good to say about them. This week we will look at some of these changes as we look at the final last days church, the church of Laodicea.

Here are a couple of quotes to put things into perspective:

We are settling for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.
(David Platt)

The early church was married to poverty, prisons and persecutions. Today, the church is married to prosperity, personality, and popularity. (Leonard Ravenhill)

Revelation 3:14-22 NKJV

¹⁴ “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ²² “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ’ ”

The church of Laodicea. Most bible scholars agree that this age started around the year 1900, and will continue till the time of the rapture. Apostasy and compromise will be the chief characteristic of the modern church age until the rapture. Again, it seems obvious that we are now in the last stage of church history, which will last until the rapture.

There will still be remnants of the Catholic church (church of Thyatira), the reformed church (church of Sardis), and the missionary church (church of Philadelphia), but the majority of churches will embrace compromise and apostasy, the characteristics of the Laodicean church. Unfortunately, as you look around, this is very true today. For example, the majority of churches around the world are embracing the prosperity gospel and the “word of faith teaching”, along with the acceptance of sin in the church, e.g. homosexuality and other false doctrines like evolution and the rejection of the verbal inspiration of Scripture. There are relatively few churches who actively proclaim the true gospel of grace and keep themselves untainted from these false doctrines.

Before we get into the text, I want to read you a quote from a pastor which really helps us to see where the church is headed today.

Quote from a pastor:

“Recently, I visited a family to share the gospel. When I told them I had a fever and could not stay long, they all exclaimed, “A man of God, sick?” A few weeks later, a woman asked me why I returned to Cameroon from the United States. I informed her that I came back to preach and teach the old and true gospel of Jesus because there were many false gospels being preached. She asked what gospels I had in mind. I immediately sensed that she was not comfortable, but carefully and clearly, I said that there are false gospels that promise riches, health, and well-being in this life and teach that Jesus is the means to those ends. To this, she made what for her was a solid argument. “Jesus became poor so that we might become rich. We are not meant to suffer. God has not destined us for anything but riches and health. Suffering, pain, and poverty are not the portion of a true believer because Jesus died to purchase those things for us.”

I have many more stories like this. There are more than I can recount because there is nowhere to hide in West Africa from the American idols of health and wealth. They have infiltrated even orthodox churches. Preachers who are faithfully teaching the gospel cannot reach into their members’ homes and shut off the televisions that constantly broadcast healing and miracle crusades.

My aim is to unmask the prosperity gospel, particularly in its distortion of Scripture, for the deceitful and hopeless message that it is, hoping that God might use these words to protect and guide some on the narrow path away from the cancerous teachings. Africa needs cleansing from the foreign deities from the West, the land where health, wealth, and might have become gods.”

So, do you see the problem here? Do you see just how wide spread this false gospel has spread in today’s Laodicean church age?

What was Laodicea like at the time?

Revelation 3:14a NKJV

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

Laodicea was an important, very wealthy banking city, with a significant Jewish population. Like other cities in the region, it was a centre for Caesar worship and the worship of the healing god Asklepios.

Laodicea was know for its prosperity, health and textile industry

Overall, Laodicea prided itself on three things: financial wealth, an extensive textile industry famous for making a black woollen fabric, and a popular and highly valued eye-salve, a medicine which was exported around the world.” Jesus will refer to all three of these things in His letter to them.

They were also known for their love for entertainment

They were rich and had a 30,000 seat amphitheatre, whose ruins still stand today. They were a pleasure seeking people.

They were also known for their self-reliance

After an earthquake devastated the region in a.d. 60 Laodicea refused help from Rome help to rebuild the city, successfully relying on their own resources. ***They didn't need outside help, they didn't ask for it, and they didn't want it.*** “Laodicea was too rich to accept help from anyone. Tacitus, the Roman historian, tells us: ‘Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources, and with no help from us.’ ”

The city of Laodicea was known for its compromise

One of their problems was a poor water supply that made Laodicea vulnerable to attack through siege. If an enemy army surrounded the city, they had insufficient water supplies in the city, and the supplies coming into the city could be easily cut off. Therefore, the leaders of Laodicea were always accommodating to any potential enemy, and always wanted to negotiate and compromise instead of fight.

The city of Laodicea was known for its lukewarm water

Geographically, Laodicea was located midway between the hot springs of Hierapolis and the cold melt water originating from mountains near Colossae. The Laodiceans, lacking a reliable water source of their own, built an aqueduct to most likely both, and as you can guess, the water from both sources was neither hot nor cold by the time it reached the city.

The church was ruled by people and not by God

Notice that the address is not to the church *at* Laodicea, but to the church *of* the Laodiceans. The Greek word *laos*, from which we get our word “laity,” means “people.” *Diece* means “decision” or “rule.” Thus, the church of the Laodiceans was directed by the people rather than guided by the Lord. It's the church run by democracy or mob rule or popular vote — in other words, the congregation effectively controls the church. The Laodicean mentality is very evident today with many churches having this form of church government, or, simply because the pastor is a people pleaser and the church is a seeker friendly church.

Revelation 3:14b NKJV

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

v 14 **the Amen:** Jesus starts by describing Himself as **the Amen**. What does it mean? We finish our prayer with “Amen.” So what does it mean? “I believe”, or, “so be it”, or “let it be.” Jesus is describing Himself as one who believes. He believes the whole revelation of God. And this is what the church of this age really needs to believe — the word revealed by God. Jesus is “the personification and the affirmation of the truth of God.”

Quote from Hal Lindsay:

“And so it's like He is saying, “Remember, I am the One. When I walked these dusty streets, when I stepped out of eternity into time and I voluntarily laid aside, temporally, the use of my divine powers and became a man, and when I walked on this earth as a man, I believed, every moment, the revelation of God. **And Jesus is saying, by contrast, that this church doesn't, and that's its greatest need.**”

v 14 **the Faithful and True Witness:** This is Jesus, and this was in contrast to the Laodiceans, who will be shown to be neither faithful nor true. This is a reminder that only those who are faithful to Christ and bear witness to the person of Christ, who He really is and His purpose, are truly part of God's family.

Quote from Jon Courson: *"The Greek word translated "witness" is martus, from which we get our word "martyr." What is a witness? One who lives so much like Jesus Christ and is so in love with Jesus Christ that he ends up being crucified even as Jesus Christ was crucified. The Bible puts it this way: Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).*

But what do think the Laodicean would say? "Don't talk about suffering. We just want to be positive and happy." You'll never hear a message about suffering, persecution, or martyrdom in a Laodicean church. They don't want to think about those things. The truth, however, is that if we're living godly, we're going to get nailed. No question."

We have talked before about Antipas, who wasn't just a witness or martyr because he died for Christ, but more importantly because he lived for Christ.

v 14 **the Beginning of the creation of God:** In summary, it is saying that Jesus is the one who created everything. This reminds us of Jesus power and that He knows everything.

Cultists often use this verse to say that Jesus is created and therefore not coequal with the Father. But the Greek word translated "beginning" is *arche*, which actually means "the origin." I.e. it says, "the origin of the creation of God." You see, God the Father created all things through the Son (Colossians 1:16), by the power of the Spirit (Genesis 1:2).

As we have talked about before when talking about the term, "firstborn," it has the idea of *first in prominence* more than *first in sequence*.

Application

In the last days, the question is, and will continue to be, "Who is the Creator?" Evolution being part of the end-time deception, it is no surprise that in the church of the Laodiceans there will be questioning the biblical creation account.

There is also the false doctrine of Christians being "little gods", of being deity like Jesus, who some claim was also a "little god", and therefore we have the same power as Jesus to speak things into existence or to control our lives. This is the theology or teaching behind the *name it, claim it or word of faith* teaching. We'll come back to this next week.

Revelation 3:15-16 NKJV

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Jesus begins to analyse their behaviour. Firstly, do you notice anything wrong or different with the order that we have see in the other letters? Usually, after the description of Jesus there is a commendation to the church, where Jesus praises them for their areas of obedience. But here there is nothing. Jesus jumps straight into rebuke. *There is nothing to commend.*

v 15 **You are neither cold nor hot:** This picture of lukewarmness would immediately connect with the Christians of Laodicea because the water they drank every day was lukewarm. Jesus said, “Just as the water you drink is disgustingly lukewarm, **you are disgustingly lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot.**” In this spiritual sense, lukewarmness is a picture of *indifference, apathy* and *compromise*. It tries to play the middle, too hot to be cold and too cold to be hot. In trying to be both things, they end up being nothing—except to hear the words, “**I will vomit you out of My mouth.**”

v 15 **I could wish that you were cold or hot:** Guzik: “What Jesus wanted to change in them (and us) as much as anything is the deceptive playing of the middle, trying to please both the world and Jesus.”

v 15 **I could wish that you were cold or hot** also points to another aspect of lukewarmness, as a picture of *uselessness*. Lukewarm water is useless. “Hot water heals, cold water refreshes, but lukewarm water is useless for either purpose.” It was as if Jesus said, “If you were hot or cold I could do something with you. But because you are neither, I will do nothing.” ***The lukewarm false convert has enough of Jesus to satisfy a craving for religion, but not enough for eternal life.***

What did Jesus mean by hot and cold?

Example of Cold: The thief on the cross was cold towards Jesus and clearly saw his need. Because he clearly saw His need, he was able to respond by repenting of his sin.

Example of Hot: John the Apostle was hot towards Jesus and enjoyed a relationship of love.

Example of lukewarm: *Judas* was lukewarm, following Jesus enough to be considered a disciple, yet not giving his heart over to Jesus in fullness. The lukewarm false convert has enough of Jesus to satisfy a craving for religion, but not enough for eternal life. In saying that, it's also possible to be a true believer and still be lukewarm — a backslider. Like all churches, lukewarm churches are made up of true and false converts.

Did you know that, deep down, there is no one more miserable than the lukewarm Christian is. They have too much of the world to be happy in Jesus, but too much of Jesus to be happy in the world.

But how could Jesus say, “I could wish that you were cold?”

We know His deepest desire is that they be **hot**, with an on-fire love for Him (see Revelation 3:19, where the word *zealous* is associated with this same word **hot**).

Yet if they would not be **hot**, Jesus *preferred cold* rather than **lukewarm, because lukewarm is really a state of deception, where people are blind to their true spiritual condition, their true spiritual need.**

This is why the lukewarm church is so dangerous. It causes people think that they are saved, but often they are not. ***They have a genuine false conversion experience — an emotional experience that makes them feel good, but is not true salvation.***

Here are two quotes from Spurgeon concerning **Lukewarm**. The main point of it is that people who profess to believe in Jesus, but who are living lukewarm lives, actually turn people *away* from Jesus.

“Now, lukewarm professor of faith, what do unbelievers see in you? They see a man, who says he is going to heaven, but who is only travelling at a snail’s pace. He professes to believe that there is a hell, yet he has tearless eyes, and never seeks to snatch souls from going down into the pit. They see before them one who has to deal with eternal realities, yet he is but half awake; one who professes to have passed through a transformation so mysterious and wonderful that there must be, if it is true, a vast change in the outward life as the result of it; yet they see him as much like themselves as can be. He may be morally consistent in his general behaviour, but they see no energy in his religious character.”

Another quote from Spurgeon:

“The careless unbeliever is lulled to sleep by the lukewarm professor [of faith in Christ], who, in this respect, acts the part of the syren to the sinner, playing sweet music in his ears, and even helping to lure him to the rocks where he will be destroyed. This is a solemn matter, beloved. ***In this way, great damage is done to the cause of truth; and God’s name and God’s honour are compromised by inconsistent professors [of the faith].*** I pray you either to give up your profession, or to be true to it. If you really are God’s people, then serve him with all your might; but if Baal be your god, then serve him. If the flesh be worth pleasing, then serve the flesh; but if God be Lord paramount, then cleave to him.” (Spurgeon)

I think Spurgeon forgot to read the book, “how to make friends and influence people.”

Jesus continues to give His analysis of the modern church and the church of Laodicia at the time:

Revelation 3:17 NKJV

Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’— and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

To this Laodicean church, which wasn’t talking about the reality of sin, the need for repentance, or the Cross of Christ; which didn’t speak of witnessing, standing, and living for eternity, Jesus said, “You think you’re rich—but you’re impoverished. You think you’re happy, but you’re miserable.”

Basically, the church at Laodicea were blind to their spiritual poverty. They looked at their spiritual condition and said “**rich, wealthy and We have need of nothing.**” They were the opposite of *blessed are the poor in spirit* Jesus spoke of in Matthew 5:3.

Matthew 5:3 NLT

“God blesses those who are [*spiritually*] poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Application:

The Laodiceans put their trust in material prosperity, in outward luxury, and in physical health. They felt like they didn’t need anything.

Did you know that when you get really cold and start to experience acute hypothermia you stop shivering. You stop feeling cold. You are about to die, but you are not aware of it. Here is a quote from a medical site about hypothermia. Think about how well these symptoms match or line up with the lukewarm man:

“As hypothermia sets in, it becomes more challenging to think, move, and take preventive action [Basically your mind becomes foggy and unable to think logically]. *This is dangerous because it means that people who have hypothermia will not seek to keep themselves warm and safe.*

The body starts to slow down as the temperature drops. If the person stops shivering, it can be a sign that their condition is getting worse.

The individual is at risk of lying down, falling asleep, and dying. In some cases, people will paradoxically remove their clothes just before this occurs.”

This is happening spiritually to countless millions of professing Christians around the world today who hear teaching like, “God just wants you to feel good about yourself, and, come to Jesus and He will solve all your problems,” and many other lies.

Another application—Compromise destroys our witness for Christ

“The cause of Christ has been hurt more by Sunday-morning bench-warmers who pretend to love Christ, who call Him Lord but do not His commands, than by all the publicans and sinners.” (Havner)

Back to Revelation 3:17

v 17 **And do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked:** Think back to what we learned about the actual city of Laodicea:

The city of Laodicea was famous for its wealth, but the Christians of the city were spiritually **wretched, miserable, and poor**. Laodicea was famous for its healing eye salve, but the Christians of the city were spiritually **blind**. Laodicea was famous for its fine clothing, but the Christians of the city were spiritually **naked**.

The contrasts are shocking: (think about what they were blind to...)

- *The contrast between what they think they are and what they really are*
- *The contrast between what they see and what Jesus sees*
- *The contrast between the wealth and affluence of their city and their own spiritual bankruptcy*

Again, what Jesus saw in them was more important than how they saw themselves. The church in Smyrna thought they were poor when they were really rich (Revelation 2:9), but the church of the Laodiceans believe they are rich when they are really poor.

Personal Application

This is the danger of spiritual blindness. If you are blind, you can't look at yourself and see that you are spiritually **wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked**. So who is it that causes this blindness?

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NLT

³ If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. ⁴ **Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News.** They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Why is it that they can't see or understand the true gospel of grace? Because they are being deceived by a false gospel. And what takes away the blindness? The good news, the glorious light of the gospel, where we use the law to wake people up to their sinful nature and their eternal damnation.

2 Timothy 1:10 NLT

And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News.

So, how do we apply these words, **wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**, to our spiritual condition?

v 17 **wretched** (Greek: miserable, wretched or distressed): What does Jesus mean when He says to the church of Laodicea, "you are wretched?" It reminds me of:

Isaiah 64:6 NLT

We are all infected and impure with sin.
When we display our righteous deeds,
they are nothing but filthy rags.

What could make us more wretched, miserable and distressed than our separation from God caused by our sin?

v 17 **miserable** (Greek: in such a sad and miserable state that you are to be pitied, sympathetic sorrow.) The Greek word translated here as "**miserable**" is also used in 1 Corinthians 15:19 where it is translated pitiable or pitied. It gives us a good idea of what Jesus meant when He called them "miserable or pitiable":

1 Corinthians 15:17-19 NLT

And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. ¹⁸ In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! ¹⁹ And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be **pitied** than anyone in the world.

It's like Jesus sees this church who thinks that things are going so well, who think that they have it so together, who think that they have it all worked out, and He thinks, oh dear, those poor suffering people, how sad it is to be in their deceived, wretched condition, I really pity them.

v 17 **poor**: The last days church thinks that it's rich, but in God's eyes they are poor. Why? Because what man produces is poor. Wealth in God's sight is not money, the beautiful building, or any other resources. *Rather, a church that is not producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (love, truth, righteousness and obedience) is poor, while a church that is producing the fruit of the Spirit is rich. This is true wealth.*

v 17 **blind**: A good example of this is when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus in:

John 3:3, 10 NKJV

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"

Why was Nicodemus spiritually blind... because he had not been born again. He only had human or intellectual wisdom, not the wisdom that comes from God. The only way to understand the things of the Spirit is to have the Spirit living inside of you.

So Jesus is saying that the church of the last days would be basically spiritually blind and would not be able to understand the things of God. How true is this as you look around.

v17 **naked**: What does God mean by “naked?” Well, *self-righteousness does not clothe a person before God. Only the righteousness that comes from Him.* We need to be clothed in Christ’s righteousness, which only happens when a man is born again. Think about what God did for Adam and Eve after they sinned. He sacrificed an animal to replace their own coverings made from leaves. The picture of the substitutionary atonement, of Jesus dying in my and your place, has been around since almost the beginning of time. The only way to be clothed is to put on Christ and receive Jesus perfect life.

Another application: what do people think when they hear the word church today?

For most people it’s a building with a steeple on it, because that’s what most people think the church is. But that’s not the church. That’s where the church meets. Remember the illustration that I used before, with the upset old lady standing raising her hand during the bible study and saying, “Pastor, did you know that some of these young people are desecrating this sanctuary because they are chewing gum?” The pastor replied and said, “Madam, the churches are chewing the gum.”

Never forget that the sanctuary or church is you. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit if you are born again, if you have received the gift of pardon that Jesus died to give us. But that has been lost in our culture. It’s a characteristic of this age.

To most people the church is now buildings and organisations. You have the Catholic church, the Baptist church, the Uniting Church etc. To most people, the greater and more ornate the building, then the better the church is, true? And the bigger the organisation is, well that must be a greater and more powerful church, right? Do you really think that God sees things that way? Absolutely not.

Now there’s nothing wrong with having a nice church building, but the problem in many churches is that the focus is on building bigger and better and more fancy churches. I’ve been to some where they have a screen that is about two stories high and there are twinkling stars on the roof, and coloured stage lights everywhere, then the service begins with a countdown on the screen and then the band starts to play. It’s nothing short of a production or concert.

That’s just one example of what I think Jesus means here when He says to the church, “you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.’” ***It’s represents a focus on the external, an often emotion experience in place of a true move of the Spirit.***

One final application

Before we move on, remember that wealth is not an evidence of faith. Here's an example. There was a preacher who faithfully taught verse by verse through the bible, (expository teaching). He was a really good bible teacher. But then the prosperity gospel people got a hold of him, and the positive confession people got a hold of him. And now he gets up and says, "you know, if you believed God like I do, you would have several Rolls Royces like I do." This is the curse of the Laodicean age. No wonder God pities this church. They are so deceived.

Revelation 3:18 NKJV

18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Again, Jesus goes back to the main attributes of the city of Laodicea — their wealth, textile industry and their eye salve.

v 18 **I counsel you to buy from Me:** The change in the Laodiceans had to begin with understanding their spiritual poverty. This is humility. As long as we are proud and believe we can meet the need for wealth, clothing, or sight ourselves, we can never receive them from Jesus. We must seek these things from Jesus *instead* of relying on them ourselves. It's like we are holding onto a box full of rubbish, representing all our human achievements, self-righteousness and self-effort, with Jesus standing in front of us holding out a box full of real treasure and precious promises, things that He wants to do for us and give to us freely. The only way we can receive the box Jesus Has to give us is to put down the box of rubbish that we are holding. *But it's hard, because we don't like to see our own efforts as worthless.* Consider what Paul said in:

Philippians 3:3-9 NLT

We put no confidence in human effort, ⁴ though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

⁵ I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶ I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

⁷ I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. **For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ ⁹ and become one with Him.** I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with Himself depends on faith.

v 18 **gold refined in the fire:** If they received from Jesus His riches, His **gold**—beautifully **refined in the fire**—then they **may be rich**.

v 18 **White garments, that you may be clothed:** If they received from Jesus the pure, righteous covering He gives, then they would **be clothed**, and no longer would **the shame of your nakedness** (self-righteousness) ... **be revealed**.

The merchants of Laodicea were famous for a glossy black wool they used to make beautiful garments. Jesus says, "I know the beautiful black that the world can clothe you in, which represents self-righteousness. But I have **white garments, that you may be clothed** with Christ's perfect righteousness." We need to take off our self-righteousness (stop trusting in our own goodness) and put on or trust in or receive Jesus perfect righteousness, the perfect life Jesus lived here on earth that is credited to our account when we first believed.

v 18 **Anoint your eyes with eye salve:** If they received from Jesus the healing of their spiritual sight, they would then be able to **see**. How does this happen? The reality is that there must be an awareness of the problems in our hearts and the trouble in our souls before we can see.

"Search me, O God," cried David, "and see if there be any wicked way in me" (see Psalm 139:23, 24). Listen, if you're feeling Laodicean, if you feel lukewarm, you need to ask the Great Physician to search you, for that will be the eye salve that will allow you to see clearly. How long has it been, dear saint, since you've been on your face before the Lord saying, "Search me concerning the words on my lips, the bitterness in my heart, and the thoughts on my mind"? Truly, confession precedes vision..." (Jon Courson).

v 18 **Buy from Me:** How can we **buy** these things from Jesus? We don't earn them through our good works. Isaiah 55:1-2 gives us the answer.

Isaiah 55:1-2 NKJV

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts,

Come to the waters;

And you who have no money,

Come, buy and eat.

Yes, come, buy wine and milk

Without money and without price.

² 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 let your soul delight itself in abundance.

Revelation 3:19 NKJV

As many as I love (*phileo*), I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous (*hot*) and repent.

With such a sharp rebuke, had Jesus lost His love, His affection, for this very wayward church? No, not at all. Why? God only disciplines those He loves. I'm so glad that this verse is in the bible. I'm so often Laodacian in my attitude towards God, so lukewarm, apathetic and half-hearted, just going through the motions, not really putting God first. Just listen to what God says next...

v 19 **As many as I love (*Phileo*):** Did you know that the word for **love** in **as many as I love** is not *agape* (unconditional love), but *phileo*, the word for brotherly love? Jesus' heart to this church is, "Even though I **rebuke** you and **chasten** you, I am still your friend. I love you deeply as My friend."

Let me explain. Jesus doesn't just love (agape) us, that is always do what is best for us no matter how we treat Him, but He also desires fellowship with us. **He loves us and He likes us.** He enjoys being around us. How gracious is our God.

v 19 **Therefore be zealous and repent:** He commanded them to make a decision to repent, and to continue in *zeal*. "Turn around," Jesus said. "Don't look to your own riches and resources, because they are really bankrupt. Turn around and look to Me."

The ancient Greek word **zealous** comes from the same word as *hot* in Revelation 3:16. Though Jesus detested their lukewarmness, He would really rather them be *hot* with zeal rather than cold with unbelief.

Application

"When you and I shall be stretched upon our dying beds, I think we shall have to regret, above everything else, our coldness of heart. Among the many sins ... perhaps this will lie the heaviest upon our heart and conscience, 'I did not live as I ought to have done; I was not as earnest in my Lord's cause as I should have been.' Then will our cold sermons, like sheeted ghosts, march before our eyes in dread array. Then will our neglected days start up, each one seeming to wave its hair as though it were one of the seven furies, and to look right into our hearts, and make our very blood curdle in our veins." (Spurgeon)

2 Corinthians 7:1 NLT

Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.