

Revelation 3: 14-19; "Lukewarmness, Its Cause and Cure", Sermon # 27 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 13th, 2006 in the Afternoon Worship Service.

As we come to this last message given by the Lord Jesus to the 7 churches of Asia, we would do well to remind ourselves that these letters or messages are intended by our Lord to awaken and arrest the attention of all churches in all generations until the end of the age. In the last verse to the message to Philadelphia in verse 13 it says what is said at the end of each message delivered; "He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." The Spirit is speaking to the churches and He wants us to understand that we may have the same kind of problems that they had. Either we will listen to our Lord's concerns and criticisms of the way that we are living the Christian life or we will not. If we do, it is because we have eyes to see and ears to hear, and that will lead us to repentance and to praying that God will renew us to a true obedience. David, after he sinned says in Psalm 51: 10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." "Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." I think that of all the churches that we have looked at in this study of the seven churches, that this church of Laodicea comes the closest to matching the churches in the United States of America at this time in history. I am saying this in a general sense. No doubt there are many fine churches and many fine Christians in this great country, but the problem which the Lord Jesus saw in the church of Laodicea is certainly to be found in many churches in our land and in the hearts of many believers in the churches in general. True Christians can become those who are lukewarm in their relationship and service to Christ, and when they wake up to their need, they will repent. And there are others who while professing to be Christians can become lukewarm and do nothing about it. They may prove themselves over time not to be Christians at all because they will not be zealous against their lukewarmness and repent. So this study I am sure will be profitable for us all if we take good heed to the warning.

It is a very sickening thing to our Lord to see those who call themselves Christians become lukewarm in their commitment to Himself; because when they do not see their need to change from that condition, they will often become very self-justifying. But just because He is sickened by it does not mean that He cannot or that He will not do something about it. And so the question that we will look into this afternoon is, "What will the Lord Jesus do about lukewarm Christians?" And we see that first He gives His diagnosis of the sinful problem and how He feels about it. And then we will see 2ndly that He gives them counsel about what they should do about it, and what He can do to cure them of their lukewarmness. So we will look at 2 points together; the diagnosis and the cure.

1st- The Diagnosis - They are neither cold nor hot. (Verses 14-16)

I am told that Laodicea was supplied with water from a hot springs which was about 6 miles away, near Hierapolis and it sent water of a medicinal quality down to their city. But by the time that the water arrived there, it had cooled considerably, and because of the calcium carbonate in the water, it had a nauseating effect on the people who drank it. (Kistemaker's Commentary) The water was tepid. It was lifeless and did not refresh the one who drank from it. Jesus Christ would drink from the lives of His people and know that our lives will strengthen His cause. When they are lukewarm the Lord is nauseated when He drinks from the wells of water that He has given them but which they have allowed to grow lukewarm. He

is about to spew them out of His mouth. The works of the church of Laodicea showed that she was neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm in her interest in His cause of holiness and truth. The Lord Jesus is the great physician. Usually when a physician takes a patient's temperature, if the forehead is hot, then the patient is sick with a fever. If cold, perhaps near death. But the healthy Christian is one who is "on fire for the Lord," He is hot, boiling and bubbling up with interest and excitement in what Christ has done and what He is doing, and what He will do for him and for others by His grace. He is "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Our Lord as the great Physician can, with one touch of His hand to our soul, know whether we are cold or hot, whether there is life, warmth and health or whether cold death is creeping closer. These people at the church at Laodicea were neither hot nor cold. Many of them did have the life of Christ within them, but they were lackadaisical about everything that they had been given and everything that they knew. There was no warmth, no fire in their bones, no eager anticipation of praying to the Lord Jesus to see what He could do for them by His powerful grace.

Christ tells them why they had come to this state. It is because they had said to themselves, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing." This could mean that they had come to realize what a precious treasure that the gospel and God's Word were initially, but now they were unaware that they still needed to meditate on this Word day and night so that they could continue to prosper spiritually. Or it could mean that earthly riches and the security that they had worked for had come to take the place of fervent seeking of God's presence and their taking the initiative to do good works that Christ would be pleased with. They did not think that they needed anything. I rather think that this was the case with them. There was no sense of need of anything further spiritually because they had all the money and goods that they needed to be comfortable and so spiritual progress in righteousness and truth did not seem so important if their bank accounts were secure. If they just gave their money and attended church sometimes then that was enough. They had Jesus they thought, and so heaven was secured and, so they became very casual and unconcerned about their being involved in the work of service in the church and the evangelism of lost people. They were rich towards themselves but not toward God. They had the form of godliness, but not the power thereof. This is a very bad condition to fall into for a believer who has been given so many spiritual privileges and blessings. A person could lose his soul if he is trying to find his ultimate security in the wealth and possessions that he has accumulated here upon the earth. In Luke 12: 15 Jesus says, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." "Then He spoke a parable to them saying, 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.'" "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops.'" "So he said, 'I will do this; I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.'" "And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'Fool!' "This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Christ cuts the legs right out from under this kind of thinking. He says in verse 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." This is awful spiritual blindness when a person thinks that they have it made, and actually in Christ's eyes they are in the position of being wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. This is how Christ saw them at that time and they would come to experience the reality of this loss as time went on if they continued to be lukewarm. This is the worst of self-deceptions, but it had happened to some

at Laodicea. Let us learn and see from this that the things related to our soul and to Christ Himself are the most important. "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" We can think we have it made and have it all together in our money and possessions and yet we are wretched in the things of our soul and the meaning of life. Christ sees it and knows it, but do we know ourselves as we should? The things that we live for and work for in this world are passing away and yet we place all our emphasis upon them. We give them our time, our strength, and then we die and we have forgotten to store up any treasure in heaven with Christ. This is why Christ says we are wretched. Remember Lazarus and the rich man. Abraham said to the rich man who was tormented in the flame after he died, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented." What is the answer to prevent this kind of wretchedness and misery? Well-

2ndly- Let's look at the cure, which Jesus prescribes, which is to listen to His counsel.

"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." The counsel is given in picture language. Gold is a precious, enduring, valuable metal. And when it is refined it becomes even more precious. The dross or the worthless elements that cheapen its quality and value are brought to the surface in the process of refining and they are skimmed off. The Lord is saying to the church, "Come buy from Me gold." "Come and transact with me, it will cost you something in that you yourself will have to be refined and your faith refined in order to get rid of this lukewarmness." "But pray to me and ask me to bring whatever it takes." In 1 Peter 1: 6 and following it says, "In this salvation you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Gold that has been refined by fire has stood the test. Job in Job 23: 10 says, "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." He sought the Lord and transacted for a golden faith in and through his testings and afflictions. You and I must do the same.

Then He says, "buy from Me white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed." He is saying here, "You must come to me and transact with me in prayer and by faith for my righteousness which is called the garments of salvation in Isaiah 61: 10 - "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, and etc." The shame of our nakedness is that which God can see, what we are like without Christ's righteousness and without the covering of His grace in the atonement that He made at Calvary. But with Christ's atonement we may "buy" these garments by faith. God can see that our righteous deeds apart from Christ's atonement are not at all sufficient to cover the shame of our disobedience, our failure to do and to keep His holy law. He has done so much for us and we do not at all measure up to all that He has given and done. But when we are in Jesus Christ we are clothed with Him, and in Him we come to find power, love, and a sound mind because of His grace. We become zealous for good deeds. When we seek Him we find Him and are not lukewarm because of the exceeding greatness of the power of his grace towards us.(Ephesians 1: 19) We must not think that we are sufficient in ourselves to live the Christian life or that we do not need the instruction and help of other Christians who are older than us and more experienced in the Christian life than we are. Listen to 1 Peter 5: 5

- "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders." "Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Wearing the garments of Christ's righteousness leads to our humility, it does not fuel our pride and self-sufficiency.

Christ's 3rd word of counsel to the Laodicean church is that they should "anoint their eyes with eye salve, that they might see." The eye salve that is to be bought from Christ is that which will allow us to see clearly spiritually speaking. The eye salve that Jesus used in Mark 8: 22 was His spitting on the his eyes. "When He did so He put His hands on him and asked him if he saw anything." "The man looked up and said, 'I see men like trees, walking.'" And that is how it is sometimes when we enter upon the Christian life. We have a distorted view of men, we see them as greater than they should be regarded. We see them as trees walking. "But when Jesus put His hands on this man's eyes again and made him look up, he was restored and saw everyone clearly." It is when Christ gives us the salve of His Holy Spirit's discernment that we see clearly. It is an anointing to the "eyes of our heart" that He gives to us. We have a better view of what we ourselves are like and a more realistic view of other men, that they are men, and that God is God. This is how it should be. Self-sufficiency and trust in men are things that must be repented of in the life of the Christian. With this holy salve we are able to see doctrinal truth and the practical applications of that truth more clearly as time goes by. In relation to that truth we learn to come and "buy" from Christ everything that we need of life, and strength, and wisdom, and peace, but especially that we might discern spiritual things rightly. Christ will give us the right view of everything that we are looking at when we pray in humility and ask for His view of things. This will be salve to anoint our eyes with.

In closing, let us understand that one of greatest causes of lukewarmness in the Christian life is the false sense of security that we fall into when everything is going well for us in a worldly sense. Christ will vomit out of His mouth the tepid water of that kind of service to Him from a church which is neither cold nor hot. He would have us to understand that even if we satisfied with ourselves in our earthly well-being that our spiritual state in our relationship with is wretched and miserable. We are really poor and blind and naked in that sense which is the greater and more important sense. Let us pray to receive and act upon His wise counsel. Let us buy from Him the gold refined by fire that we might be truly rich toward Him. Let us buy the white garments which will clothe the shame of our nakedness, which thinks that our own thoughts, words, and deeds will be sufficient to please God. They will not. We must learn to think the thoughts of His Word with Him and do that which would please Him. And let us also buy the eye salve which will enable us to see clearly all that we need to do to live this glorious life that Christ has died to purchase for us. He will not allow us to remain lukewarm toward that which He has died to purchase for us; the riches of His grace and truth; and the holy fervency of spirit that will serve Him with joy and with all of our strength.