

Gold, White Clothes, and Eyesalve
Rev 3:14-22

- 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;
- 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
- 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.
- 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:
- 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.
- 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
- 20 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.
- 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.
- 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. KJV

Introduction:

First, we should locate this church both geographically and chronologically. Where was it and when was it? It was located in the province of Asia, which occupied the western end of what we know as Turkey. It was on a trade route that cut through the center of Turkey, west to east, and was inland from Ephesus. Laodicea was very close to Colosse, to which Paul wrote one of his letters. We are near the end of the First Century. All of the apostles are gone but John and he is very old, nearing death himself. Many of those first converts of the apostles are also gone, some to martyrdom and some to the short lifespan of the times.

The church at Laodicea appeared to be doing quite well and the pastor believed himself and the church to be prospering, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” But the truth was that this was anything but correct. The Lord’s evaluation was, “thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” It is obvious that there was a tremendous disconnect of some kind, a total inability to appreciate the spiritual situation. For this either the pastor or the church was in danger of being rejected and/or disciplined by the Lord Jesus Christ in a very profound way, “I will spue thee out of My mouth.”

What was the problem?

The diagnosis of Jesus was that this pastor was “lukewarm” and neither “cold nor hot.” It is a condition to which the Lord Jesus even preferred that one be spiritually cold. Thus we decipher

that it is actually worse.

We have very little help in scripture for this condition though the book of Malachi seems to have been dealing with a very similar situation. Similarities between this letter and the book are quite significant. Both are the last words directly to a people in a particular era, Malachi the end of the OT prophetic era and Laodicea the end of the NT specific revelations to a people. Both are addressed to the leadership of the people of God though we suspect that the sins of the leadership were passed down to at least a significant part of the people.

Even though the passage from The Revelation does not mention specific sins directly, we may take some clues from the remedies put forward by the Lord Jesus Christ.

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

First of all, we must state the obvious, that Jesus was not selling these remedies. The word ‘buy’ is a euphemism for ‘acquire, obtain, get’ and instruct the reader to go to Him and petition Him for the items that are mentioned. Now, the items are also given allegorical names. The cure for the problems at Laodicea were not physical gold, white clothes, and eye ointment. Those are simply clues to point us in the direction of a remedy.

So, let us look at each item and consider what it has to say to us.

Gold, tried in the fire.

The reference here is to purified gold, gold without any impurities, the only kind that might be associated with the Savior. I am assuming that everyone knows that this is the way gold was refined in those days and may still be. It is heated to the melting point of the gold, which is usually lower than that of the impurities in it, which allows the impurities to be skimmed off. Gold is a very heavy metal and most, if not all of the things found mixed with it naturally are lighter and rise to the top. Therefore fire was always associated with the refining process and pure gold had always be ‘tried’ or purified by fire.

But we are not talking about actual gold, are we? Is there something or some references in scripture which might help us here?

Well, first of all, gold was an emblem or figure of wealth for the OT writers just as it still is today. The one who owns a lot of gold is a rich person.

But there is something even grander than gold, according to David.

Ps 19:7-14

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

- 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.
- 12 **Who can understand his errors?** cleanse thou me from secret faults.
- 13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer. KJV

The Laws of God are the definition of right behavior and they are far more valuable than anything this world has to offer. The one who follows the instructions that God gives, “**This is My Beloved Son, hear ye Him,**” obeys and attentively listens to the Son saying, “**Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.**” They repent of their sins, turn from them by the Regenerating Power of the Holy Spirit, and take up a life of obedience to the commands of God that apply to them. (*I say that because we found out in Acts 15 that not all of the laws given to the Jews were mandatory for the Gentiles.*)

But, there is a hindrance to the implementation of this order of events, “**Who can understand his errors?**” Who understands his sins so as to obey the Father and the Son? Man is not good at self-diagnosis in the arena of sin and almost always either somewhat or altogether fails at repentance unless he is given something very valuable. And, this very valuable thing, I think you will agree, was in low supply at Laodicea.

This is a long reading but well worthy of our time to do it.

Prov 8:1-36

- 1 Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?
- 2 She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.
- 3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.
- 4 Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.
- 5 O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.
- 6 Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.
- 7 For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
- 8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.
- 9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.
- 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.
- 11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to

be compared to it.

12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.
13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.
14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.
15 By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.
16 By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.
17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.
18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.
19 **My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.**
20 I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:
21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.
22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.
23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.
24 When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:
26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.
27 When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:
28 When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:
29 When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:
30 Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;
31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.
32 Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.
33 Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.
34 Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.
35 For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.
36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death. KJV

Wisdom was at a low ebb in the life of the pastor of Laodicea and where wisdom is missing, foolishness is almost always present in ample supply. Like darkness is the absence of light, foolishness is the vacuum left when wisdom is removed.

Now foolishness is not always what we might expect it to be. Some foolish people do a good job of masquerading as wise. Our national and state capitols are full of such people. My Father had

a name for them, he called them “really smart fools.”

I think there are many preachers in this condition in our country. I only hope that I am not one of them. They are really good at religion but not very accomplished when it comes to Genuine, Historic Christianity. They can give you a really good, funny, well-composed lecture on a variety of topics but they will not touch Biblical Repentance at all. They make salvation a simple process of following a few rules, saying a prayer, and submitting to whatever rituals their denomination specifies but they will not, ever, question the candidate for church membership concerning his life, his sins, nor his repentance. In fact, they will mock the very idea. They are good at making church members but not so much with genuine Christians.

The preacher at Laodicea needed wisdom to lead his people to real worship of God. The lack of wisdom had brought them to a problem with worship, so much so that the Lord Jesus was sickened by what was going on.

I have no doubt but that there were similarities with what was going on in the days of Malachi.

Mal 1:2

2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?

Mal 1:6

6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

Mal 1:7

7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee?

Mal 1:8

8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?

Mal 1:11-14

11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.

13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

14 But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the LORD a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen. KJV

They doubted God’s love because the preacher doubted God’s Love. It had ceased to be a precious thing to him so he had slackened in his call for seriousness in the worship of God and

allowed it to become slack, half-hearted, Lukewarm.

The really interesting thing is that the Lord did not call this pastor out for teaching or allowing false doctrine as He had the pastors at Pergamos and Thyatira. We can only conclude, then, that a pastor and his people may become Lukewarm while holding to all of the orthodox theology of the Bible, at least formally. This should frighten us all.

But even though we could spend the rest of our time this morning on the subject of wisdom and/or the lack of it we must press on.

“...white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed...”

White raiment, clothes, robes, are almost always associated with true righteousness, sometimes perfect and eternal righteousness but at other times, as here, practical, temporal righteousness.

Rev 3:4

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. (KJV)

Rev 6:9-11

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (KJV)

Now, I do not want to get into a discussion as to the relationship between eternal and practical sanctification. That is not the purpose of this discussion this morning. The reason that the pastor and at least some of the people at Laodicea needed to acquire white garments from the Lord is because they didn't have any of their own, which means they were failing in the area of practical righteousness.

Even though their theology seemingly as yet was undamaged, their doctrinal teachings were sound, and even though there were no Jezebels or Nicolaitans at Laodicea, there was a breakdown in practical godliness. Again, the failures are not specified but what we know about Lukewarmness tells us that it impacts every category of Christian service, beginning with personal prayer and worship.

When one becomes Lukewarm personal devotions suffer first. They may not altogether cease but something happens which distorts them, alters them, hinders them, and prevents them from being satisfactory to the Lord. In fact, everywhere that Lukewarmness touches, the Lord is sickened by it. Personal devotion may become just perfunctory, going through the motions, it

may become formal, just a ritual that one is going through. They may become hit-and-miss, not regular and certainly not earnest. Or, they may morph into very strict, almost Pharisaical, regimented forms which have the appearance of spirituality but are actually only a manifestation of pride. The fact is that anything other than a whole-hearted and complete commitment and devotion to Christ is unacceptable. It must be, and remain, that which Jesus Himself would regard as 'hot' or it is unacceptable and an offense to Him.

All of these things may be true about the other parts of our spiritual experience as well:

Church attendance,
Personal Bible reading and study,
Personal witness and testimony,
Loving support for our brothers and sisters, etc., etc,

We must acquire these white clothes from the Lord because we are not able to sustain a vibrant, hot, relationship with Him on our own. We need the constant intervention of the Holy Spirit, providing us the energy, determination, and focus to sustain our own walk with God in this world in a way that is pleasing to our Savior.

And then there is this:

“...anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

Lukewarmness is attended with a failure to see spiritually what we need to see.

And it is difficult to have awareness of what is not visible. There are all kinds of things in life which teach us this, but nothing like driving at night when your eyes are not what they once were. There are things that are there, dangerous things, things that will hurt us and even kill us, but we struggle to see them. Some of us have bought special glasses to help us see as we drive at night.

But nothing is more damaging spiritually to a child of God than the loss of spiritual vision, awareness of ourselves, our situations, the needs of others, our responsibilities and our duties.

Our vision must be kept fresh else we fail even to see what we should be doing or how what we **are** doing is missing the mark.

Let us test ourselves with some questions.

What is it that you are failing to see?

Are there duties you have that are not clear to you?

Are the people who need you in some way that you do not see?

Does the Lord want something from you, has He called you to some service, that is invisible and hidden from your spiritual eyes?

What are you seeing that would look much different if your spiritual eyesight was improved?

Are all of the things in your life as pleasing to the Lord as you think they are?

Are some of them actually displeasing to Him?

How differently would they look if your eyesight were to be improved?

In conclusion:

Please do not come to me asking about these things. I don't have any gold, white clothes, or eyesalve to give you. Look again at what Jesus said.

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

You must go to Him, prevail upon Him, for those things. He is the One with the Wisdom and He is willing to gladly share it.

Warning: please do not go and ask if you are unwilling to hear and obey Him. That does not work well.

But will the Lord receive me if I am Lukewarm? I hear the question now. Look again at what He said.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Interesting that we come back again to the subject of God's Love for His people. If you belong to Him, He loves you with an indescribable affection. He is not going to stop. He also does not withhold good things from His children and if He tells you to ask for something it is a good thing.

Matt 7:7-11

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, **how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?** (KJV)

James 1:5

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (KJV)

I have no doubt that the letter to Laodicea was left for last so that there would be a permanent testimony from the Lord to His people concerning the dangers of falling into complacency, self satisfaction, and wrongly held comfort in their service to Him.

We should take the warnings to heart and seek His face for recovery, looking to Him not to men and their books. You must remember that many of them may have been written by preachers just like or in worse shape than the pastor at Laodicea.

I do not want to be Lukewarm. I am hoping that you do not either. But the reality is that it is an ever-present danger.