

Theme: The church must not try to be independent and sufficient in its own resources, but find its sufficiency for life and ministry only in Christ.

I. Intro - Most Famous Letter

- A. This is the most famous of the seven letters
- B. The idea of spewing out lukewarm water
- C. Painting of Jesus at the door by William Holman Hunt
- D. 'Jesus knocking at door' often used in evangelism
- E. But do we really understand Jesus' message?

II. Jesus Speaks To His Church In Laodicea

- A. The church in Laodicea
 - To the angel of the church in **Laodicea** write: Rev 3:14
 - 1. 45 miles SE of Philadelphia; 100 East of Ephesus
 - 2. Close sister city to Hieropolis and Colossae
 - 3. Built at major crossroads; became very wealthy
 - 4. Major banking center; famous for black woolled sheep; medical school and eye salve from area
 - 5. No natural water; aqueduct 5 miles from south
 - 6. Water was lukewarm, full of bad minerals - terrible
 - 7. Church received letter from Paul now lost - Col 4:16
- B. Jesus the Sovereign One speaks to His church
 - To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: **These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.** Revelation 3:14
 - 1. Every other letter gives vision; this one has titles

- 2. The titles stress Jesus' faithfulness & authority

- C. Jesus was faithful to the Father and His Word, and has now entered & rules God's New Creation - & He calls His church to the same faithfulness.

III. Jesus' Word for the Church in Laodicea

- A. A word of rebuke
 - I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. Revelation 3:15–16
 - 1. No word of commendation - only rebuke
 - 2. Even in Sardis a small group was commended - but not in Laodicea
 - 3. The rebuke - you make me want to vomit
 - a. V16 - I am about to spit you out of my mouth
 - b. The reason - you are lukewarm
 - c. I wish you were either hot or cold - not lukewarm!
 - d. Allusion to the lukewarm, poor water in Laodicea
 - 1. Colossae had nice cold water - great for drinking
 - 2. Hieropolis had hot water good for bathing
 - 3. Laodicea's water was neither cold or hot; it was useless, and a source of unhappiness for the people

B. The root problem - **lack of zeal** or self-sufficiency?

I know your works: **you are neither cold nor hot**. **Would that you were either cold or hot!** ¹⁶ So, **because you are lukewarm**, and **neither hot nor cold**, **I will spit you out of my mouth**. ¹⁷ **For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing**, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ **I counsel you to buy from me** gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Revelation 3:15–18 ESV

1. Some think root problem is **lukewarm faith**

- a. Metaphor makes sense to us - lukewarm vs. hot
- b. A few times in NT cold or hot used this way (Matt 24:12; Romans 12:11)
- c. Jesus will tell them to be earnest and repent in v19

2. The real problem is **self-sufficiency**, not lack of zeal

- a. Lukewarm rarely if ever metaphor for tepid zeal in ancient world
- b. Jesus says cold is better than lukewarm (vv15-16)
- c. V17 - "For/because you say" - gives the reason
 1. NIV drops this word; most translations keep it
 2. Even vv17-18 describe how they are lukewarm
- d. V18 - cure for self-sufficiency, not lack of zeal

3. The Laodicean's self-sufficiency (v17a)

- a. They think we're rich, prosperous, need nothing
- b. Church has drunk in the self-sufficiency of Laodicea

1. Laodicea so rich it refused help to rebuild after earthquake in 60 AD
2. It was rich; it clothed others; it treated others eyes

4. Jesus' assessment of their self-sufficiency (v17)

- a. You are wretched & pitiable - overall sad condition
- b. You are poor, blind, and naked - utterly destitute
- c. Poor, blind, naked - 3 areas Laodicea thought it excelled
 1. Poor - but they were materially rich, banking center
 2. Blind - medical school; famous eye salve
 3. Naked - famous for black wool for clothing

5. The church had become like Laodicea - convinced of its self-sufficiency rather than seeing its poverty and deep need of Christ & His sufficiency.

C. The solution - sufficiency from Christ

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Revelation 3:18

1. Should come to Jesus for gold, clothes, eye-salve
2. Same 3 areas Laodicea prided itself for!
3. We want to find our sufficiency within, in our own resources and works. But the Gospel says our only sufficiency is found outside - in Christ!

D. The call of love

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:19–20

1. Jesus rebukes and disciplines those He loves!

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. Proverbs 3:11–12

- a. Jesus is speaking as Yahweh - Deity of Christ!
- b. He rebukes them because they are His children
- c. No correction would be a sign He did not love them

2. They can earnestly repent because He loves them!

3. Jesus' love calls us to repent of self-sufficiency because it is self-destructive!

4. Jesus promises renewed communion if they repent

- a. Famous idea is not about those outside the church!
- b. Jesus promises renewed communion with us if we repent of our self-sufficiency
- c. Jesus offers Himself to any who will turn away from themselves, for only in denying self and self-sufficiency can we find communion with Him.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Have I ever turned from self to Christ?

1. V20 are famous words used in evangelism

2. It does have secondary application to that

3. Call is especially applicable to modern Americans Most Americans believe that their problem is something that happened to them and the solution is from within. They think they have an alien problem with an inner solution, while the Gospel declares we have an inner problem with an alien solution. - Al Mohler

4. Are you looking within - our outside to Christ?

5. We are all born in sin - poor, blind, naked

6. Look to Him for true riches, sight, clothing

7. He provides it free to all who come!

B. Have I been seduced to self-sufficiency rather than Christ-sufficiency?

1. Rebuke was to church - they had shut Jesus out!

2. This is a consistent struggle for believers and the church - to look within for our riches, rather than to Christ

3. It is especially a problem for us today in America - we live in Laodicea

4. We are trained to look within, to believe in our own abilities, and to minimize our need for Christ

5. We think there is a formula we can control for everything in life - including revival, church growth, fulfillment. Just do the right thing and you can guarantee results

6. But revival, church growth is given by God as He wills, and true fulfillment is found in intimacy with Christ - not a formula!
7. “The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is not inadequate technique, insufficient organization, or antiquated music, and those who want to squander the church’s resources bandaging these scratches will do nothing to stanch the flow of blood that is spilling from its true wounds. The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common.” - David Wells *God In the Wasteland*
8. The result of such a view is a lack of zeal - but that is the fruit. The root of our problem is self-sufficiency.
9. Do I have too high a view of me and my abilities?
10. Do I have too low a view of Christ, His glory & sufficiency?

C. Dining With Christ at His Table

1. Christ is here to meet and feast with us
2. Hear His voice, repent of self-sufficiency & let Him feed you

Laodicea - The Lukewarm Church

Revelation 3:14-22

April 9, 2017

Communion

Revelation 1:4-5

Teaching keywords: Holy Spirit; false teaching and heresy

John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, Rev 1:4–5

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. ¹⁹ Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹ To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I 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.” Revelation 3:14–22