

REVELATION – SERMON 23

THE DELUSION OF THE RELIGIOUS HYPOCRITE

Revelation 3:17-18

INTRODUCTION

- The tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes* portrays the absurd scene of someone going out in public thinking he was clothed, but in reality was naked.
- Yet this was the spiritual state of the church of the Laodiceans in the first century, and is the state of many who profess to be Christians in the twenty-first century.
- There is a great gulf between how God sees them, and how they see themselves.
- We saw last week in vv.15-16 that the Laodiceans were not cold; yet they were also not hot; they were lukewarm
- They have a faith, but it is a dead faith (James 2:17)
- They have a faith, but it is a feigned or insincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:5)
- In Christ's sight it is preferable that people be "cold" – unbelievers with no pretence of religion – than to be the religious hypocrites.
- Their conduct is a stench in the nostrils of God.
- Such people are a blot and stain upon Christianity; their absence of true godliness while bearing the name of Christ gives cause for the heathen to blaspheme the Lord.
- Such people are useless to the Lord; they do not have the Holy Spirit sanctifying and directing them; they do not have Christ as their Lord, ruling and reigning over their lives.
- They are like lukewarm water, good for nothing, but to be spewed out and utterly rejected.

I. THEIR DELUDED BOAST OF SELF-RELIANCE (17)

A. Rich and increased with goods

1. The self-sufficient attitude of this wealthy city had infected the church
2. Gain is not godliness (1 Timothy 6:5-6)
3. Affluence does not equal God's blessing
4. Many have a false notion of their spiritual riches, thinking they are close to God when they are far from Him

5. Smyrna was opposite – they were poor materially, yet spiritually rich (Revelation 2:9).

B. Have need of nothing

1. The danger of riches is that those who have them put their trust in them (1 Timothy 6:17)
2. “Give me neither poverty, nor riches” (Proverbs 30:8-9)
3. God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith (James 2:5)
4. It is a woeful state to be in to think that one has “arrived” spiritually (1 Corinthians 8:2; 1 Corinthians 10:12; cf. Philippians 3:13)

II. THE DEPLORABLE BLINDNESS TO THEIR SOUL’S ROTTENNESS (17)

A. Knowest not

1. Men in their natural state are in complete ignorance of their true spiritual condition (Luke 19:42)
2. We are the worst judges of our own spiritual state
3. Only God sees us as we truly are and can reveal to us our true state (Hebrews 4:13)

B. Wretched

1. This word means *afflicted* – as a slave who is worn out and fatigued by grievous labours
2. In our lost state, we are under the curse of the law, subjects of God’s condemnation and wrath, in certain danger of hellfire, and unable to extricate ourselves from this predicament
3. A true Christian, will say with Paul, “O wretched man that I am!” (Romans 7:24)

C. Miserable

1. This indicates *pitiable*
2. A life lived independently of God is a miserable, vain and hopeless existence
3. It is misery in this life, and misery in the next

D. Poor

1. Man is a debtor to the law and unable to pay even part of the debt
2. Though rich materially, their souls starve
3. If a man is not “rich toward God” he has nothing of true value, though he gains the whole world (Luke 12:21)

E. Blind

1. The devil has blinded minds against the gospel, rendering man unable to understand spiritual truth and oblivious to the awful danger before them (2 Corinthians 4:4)
2. Religious hypocrites refuse to acknowledge their spiritual blindness (John 9:39-41)

F. Naked

1. To be naked is to lack the necessary clothing of justification
2. It is to be laid bare and constantly exposed to sin and shame
3. The only clothing the sinner can adorn himself with is the “filthy rags” of self-righteousness (Isaiah 64:6)

III. THE DIVINE BESTOWAL OF SAVING RIGHTEOUSNESS (18)

A. Christ's counsel

1. He does not demand or command, but lovingly counsels the sinner to come to Him for life and salvation
2. They had heretofore followed the counsel of their own proud, depraved hearts (Proverbs 28:26; 19:27)
3. Christ is the “Counsellor” (Isaiah 9:6) and only His counsel, revealed in the Scriptures, can be trusted (Proverbs 19:21)

B. Buy of me

1. The rich think that money can buy them everything they will ever need, yet there are some things that money cannot buy
2. There is some irony in the Lord's counsel to buy from Him these spiritual graces that no money could ever buy
3. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1)
4. The only “price” required to obtain them is a humble, repentant spirit (Psalm 51:17)
5. There is no other Saviour – Christ says, “Buy of ME” (Matt 11:28; 1 Tim 2:5)

C. Gold

1. This is the treasure of redemption purchased by Christ's blood (2 Cor 8:9)
2. Christ's riches are *unsearchable* (Ephesians 3:8)

3. The spiritual riches found in true piety are not to be compared with the riches of this world (Proverbs 8:18-19)
4. The Christian's treasure is laid up in heaven (Matthew 6:20)
5. At the judgment seat of Christ, gold represents those works that were done in His name and for His glory (1 Corinthians 3:12-13)

D. White raiment

1. Adam and Eve's attempt to clothe their nakedness was insufficient, and they required God to clothe them (Genesis 3:7,10-11)
2. These are the "garments of salvation" that God clothes believers with (Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 3:5)
3. On the day of judgment, the only clothing that will be accepted will be the clothing of Christ's imputed righteousness (Matthew 22:11)

E. Eye-salve

1. The Laodiceans were known for an eye-salve that was used to treat eye-problems
2. The blind sinner can never see the depravity of his own heart, the holiness of God, the way of salvation and the person and work of Christ, except through the grace of God illuminating the soul (Ephesians 1:18)

CONCLUSION

1. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." (Proverbs 30:12)
2. How few there are in the world today who truly know themselves to be poor and blind and naked.
3. It is only those who know they are sick that will seek the Physician (Matthew 9:12)
4. What is your boast in – your wisdom, might and riches, or in the Lord? (Jeremiah 9:23-24; Galatians 6:14)
5. Many lost people think they are Christians, and rendering service to God
6. These people will even take their delusion with them to the day of judgment, and before Christ on His throne, will seek to present their religious credentials (Matthew 7:22-23)
7. What a rude shock it will be – expecting heaven, but cast into the lake of fire.
8. Yet Christ is merciful and gives opportunity to us, while we live, to repent.
9. There is hope for the hypocrite that, on the day of judgment, he may be accepted.
10. Instead of hearing, "I never knew you," you may hear, "I know you,"; instead of "depart from me," you may hear, "abide with me."