
Laodicea: Making God Sick

Revelation 3:14-22

Pastor Russ Kennedy

Dateline: 60 AD. Headline: **City Refuses Government Aid** Laodicea, a city recently devastated by earthquake, has refused all government aid and will not be declared a Federal Disaster Area, the government spokesman said today. In a communiqué released today, the city spokesman said funds to rebuild were already being raised by its own citizens. The city's businesses would see to their own reconstruction. Its banking and financial powerhouses were mobilized today to create vast projects for rebuilding. Wool production (famous for glossy black wool) and its medicinal products would begin as soon as the shops can be rebuilt. In a final note, the religious temples, Jewish Synagogues, and Christian assemblies all were endorsing the spirit and the stand taken by the city fathers.

Though this dateline is fictional, the history behind is factual. Laodicea was a city that prided itself for its independent and self-reliance. Its refusal of aid from the government simply reflected the pragmatic pride of its people.

It is interesting to see the church here taking on the character of the city's culture. To some degree, that is inevitable. People, individually and collectively will take time to think through and be transformed from worldliness to heavenliness. Sadly, this church has become so infused with the character of the culture around her that she is self-deluded and deceived about her true spiritual condition. And let me say this: when we speak of "the church" we are talking about the collective and corporately embraced view of the people who make up the church. That the church is like this together comes about because this is the consensus of the church individually.

And just at the outset it is important for us as Christians here in America, in the mid-west and in the Dayton area to have an authentic Christianity, one that is growing evermore heavenly and less and less like the culture around us. So while we are surrounded with pragmatism, pluralism and a self-absorbed therapeutic culture, let us grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ to the end that we are most like Him and least like all this.

To this end, to that church and to us, comes this final message. And what a stunning and powerful word this message is.

The Character of Christ

(v.14)

As in all of them, we begin with the particulars of the character of Christ that are most needed to open spiritually deaf ears and soften hardened hearts.

¹⁴ "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

So Christ is the...

Affirmation of the *Promises* of God

The Amen

He affirms the truth and promises of God as *the amen*.

2 Corinthians 1:19-20 reads, *For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. Christ is God's "yes" to all His promises for us.*

Revelation of the *Person* of God

The Witness

His witness and testimony is *faithful and true* – He tells what He has seen and knows. Jesus is the very person of God in *logos* form. He is God's self-knowledge, so perfect and so faithful and so true, that He stands forth from God as the second person of the Godhead.¹ He is not only the witness of God's person, but He is also has the true testimony of the character and deeds of the church. In the face of their own self-delusion, they need the true witness of the Word of God who moves among them and sees them and knows them truly.

Expression of the *Power* of God

The Ruler

The ideas here is not that He is the first created thing, rather He is the source, origin and thus the **ruler** of every created thing. This is ever the emphasis in the Scripture. God made all that is. He is the creator. And since He is the source and sustainer of all that is not God, all the cosmos, then He is its ruler. And He is its final judge.

This tells us why we have a multitude of myths about origins. If you can show that God is not the source of all things, then you have the right to deny that God rules and that we are ultimately accountable to Him. Understand this, that we believe that God made all things as the Scripture tells us in 6 days and all very good. We believe that He sovereignly rules over history. We believe that we owe Him our total and delighted allegiance and fealty. And we will one day stand before Him to give an account.

¹ See the discussion of this in Jonathan Edwards and John Piper.

The Condemnation of the Church**(v.15-17)**

So as the Ruler of the world and Lord of the church, Jesus relates to their deeds and their works. He knows them personally and experimentally. He does not have some angelic report of them. He is not coming to them on the word of the great Accuser of our souls.

¹⁵ "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.

He has tasted their spirituality...

Lack of Spiritual *Passion***(v.15-16)**

He is not grieved by them; He is not angry with them; He is disgusted with them ... He is nauseated by them. He wants to spew them out of His mouth.

Now, the words here are not meant to be understood in some spiritually metaphorical sense. God would much rather you be spiritually cold than the disgusting lukewarm. That is not it at all. God wants you to be what you are supposed to be.

Imagine you are hot and thirsty from a long stint of yard-mowing. The sweat is running off your brow and you are THIRSTY. There sits a large glass of tea. And you pick it up and drink deep and ... YUCK ... it is warm. The ice has long melted, the thirst-quenching delighting cold gone.

Or imagine it is bright cold winter day. And you have been out shoveling the snow. You come in and shake out of your coat and mittens and rub your hands together. Ah, there is a pot of coffee. You pour it into your cup and bring it up slowly and someone has turned off the warmer. It is just at that nasty, lukewarm state.

This is what God is trying to get us to feel and see. He has come to His church in her works and deeds and it is like drinking the water from a garden hose long lying in the sun. He is gagged by them.

Lack of Spiritual *Perception***(v.17)**

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.

They are hugely self-deceived, self-important and self-centered.

You say
Rich
Wealthy

You are
Wretched
Miserable
Poor
Blind
Naked

They had lost their vigor, values, vision and vesture. Their very words and self-talk and self-view have contributed to their deception. Beloved, it is imperative

that we ever keep before us that we are anything we are *by the sheer mercy and powerful grace of God.*

The Correction of the Church (v.18-20)

Look at how verse 17 connects to verse 18. "Because you say _____ and are _____ I counsel you to _____."

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. ¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so 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 eat with him, and he with me.

In His Counsel (v.18)

These 3 things were related to the particular strengths of the city around them.

True treasure	Refined gold
True righteous- ness	White garments
True faith	Eye salve

In His Command (v.19)

He does not leave solution at mere advice. It is not just, "O, this is just a good idea that you can take or leave." No, it is utterly vital.

Explanation

Because He is moving among them with the rod of correction, they can be assured that they are still the objects of His love. His chastening of them proves that they were believers.

Instruction

Exhortation

So, be zealous and repent. Have a passion and change.

Injunction

Listen to these related texts: Romans 12:9-13; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:8. Do you get the point? Away with a passionless devotion to Christ and fervorless love for Christians! I tell you that some of you have more passion for a sports team than you have for the God of all the universe. What an absolute shame.

In His Communion**(v.20)**

This may well be the most misinterpreted, misunderstood, and misused verse in the whole Bible. This verse has *nothing* to do with evangelism.

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 eat with him, and he with me.

NOT	IS
Door of the heart	Door of the church
Salvation	Fellowship/communion
To the lost	To the saved
“Asking Jesus into your heart”	“Giving Jesus place in His church”

This will come as a shock to many of you. But the common way of evangelism where we tell people to ask Jesus into their hearts is totally unbiblical. Yes, Jesus does dwell in our hearts *by the Holy Spirit*. But not ever, not once anywhere are the lost exhorted to ask Jesus into their hearts. This utterly reverses the Scriptures. It is never that we ask God to come to us, but always that we come to God. So use Biblical language. The command of the Scriptures is to believe, to bow, to acknowledge, to repent and to call on God.

The Lord promises a fellowship which is:

- Real
- Spiritual
- Rich
- Mutual
- Heavenly
- Personal

Even when the church is lukewarm, self-satisfied, content and self-deceived. Jesus will fellowship in sweet communion with believers who have a passion for Him.

The Challenge to the Church**(v.21-22)**

Here is the final challenge from our Lord...

²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered 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.' "

In Our Relationship**(v.21)**

This refers to:

Ephesians 2:4-11 Raised and seated in heavenly places. Present spiritual reality in anticipation of:

Revelation 22:1-5 Glorified and reigning in heaven itself. Future hope that becomes a glorified reality.

We can sit down with Jesus on His throne after overcoming JUST AS He overcame and sat down. What is the point? The work is accomplished. He finished His work of redemption. And we finish our work of the great commission.

In Our Responsibility**(v.22)**

Here we meet the very voice of God,
For when we read the Word of God,
We hear the Spirit of God.

Reflect and Respond

It is wrong to misuse the Scripture in our evangelism. We must discard evangelistic talk that is grounded in a misuse of this text. Don't invite people to "ask Jesus into their hearts." Nowhere in the Bible is that kind of evangelistic appeal. Always, we encourage, plead, weep with people to believe, repent, trust, confess and bow to Christ.

Are we lukewarm? Is there really a passion and a zeal for God? Does your spouse or your closest friend know this to be true? Does the Lord Jesus?

Are we deceiving ourselves? Is it possible for us to content, comfortable and complete while being in desperate spiritual need?

Loved children are disciplined: fuel the fires of your passion for God. Change; repent.

Let us hear what the Spirit is saying,
Lest we leave Savior standing,
Outside the door of our church.

