

**Subject: *The Not-So-Hot Church***

**Scripture: *Revelation 3:14-22***

In last week's message we looked at the first of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. This week we are looking at the last of the seven churches. These were local churches in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). By way of introduction I want to say several things about the local church. The local church is important to God and His purpose on earth. Some say the church is not all that important. What does the Bible say?

- Jesus promised to build His church (Mt. 16:18)
- The book of Acts tells about the beginning and expansion of the church
- The New Testament epistles were written to churches and church leaders
- The church is described as a holy temple, the body of Christ, and the bride of Christ

In Revelation 2-3, Christ examines these seven churches and gives them a spiritual x-ray. As the great physician, He gives them an examination, a diagnosis, and prescribes a remedy. What does he say about the church in Laodicea? It is the only church for which Christ has no compliment or something good to say. He says they're not cold and they're not hot. They are lukewarm or not-so-hot. The church should be and must be hot, on fire for God. What happens when a church is like the one at Laodicea, when it becomes lukewarm?

**The not-so-hot church makes the Lord sick (vs. 16)**

Some churches make the Lord happy, some make Him angry, and others make Him sick. It is clear that the church may be in one of three spiritual conditions: hot, cold, or lukewarm. The word "lukewarm" is found only here in the New Testament, and it refers to water that is so-so. Jesus says, "You make me sick." The church that is lukewarm is offensive and sickening to the Lord. The description of being lukewarm probably describes everything about the church, its actions as well as its attitudes. It has the form of godliness, but denies the power of God. This kind of church promotes churchianity. Today some preachers have developed the art of almost saying something. They preach sermonettes for Christianettes. Two ladies were leaving church one day and one said to the other, "Our pastor didn't say much, did he?" The other lady said, "No, but didn't he imply a lot." Someone described preaching as a mild-mannered man telling mild-mannered people how to be more mild-mannered."

**The not-so-hot church deceives itself (vs. 17-18)**

The church at Laodicea was a wealthy, important commercial city in that day. It was known for several things: banking, wool, medicine (especially its eye salve), and its underground aqueduct as a water supply. They had material things, but they were spiritually bankrupt. Worst of all, they were unaware of their true spiritual condition. They were so blessed with worldly things that they could not see their spiritual need.

It is ironic that the things they had physically were the very same things they lacked spiritually. As a banking center, they had worldly wealth, but Christ offered them spiritual riches. They were known for their black wool industry, but Christ offered them proper clothing to cover their nakedness. They had the famous eye salve, but Christ offered them

sight for their blind eyes. The neighboring city of Hieropolis was famous for its hot springs and the nearby city of Colosse was known for its cold mountain stream, but Laodicea had an underground aqueduct in which dirty, lukewarm water traveled for miles into the city. The church became like that water, lukewarm and sickening. They thought they were rich, but they were poor. They thought they were to be envied, but they were to be pitied. Christ offered them spiritual gold, spiritual clothes, and spiritual sight.

### **The not-so-hot church is loved, rebuked, and chastened (vs. 19)**

The Lord corrects His church because He loves it. It is a proof of His love.

**Proverbs 3:11-12** <sup>11</sup> My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: <sup>12</sup> For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

**Hebrews 12:5-6** <sup>5</sup> And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: <sup>6</sup> For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

He rebukes and corrects us through His Spirit, through circumstances, through His Word, and through His servants.

- Correction through the Holy Spirit – **John 16:8** *And when he (the Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*
- Correction through circumstances – **Psalms 119:71** *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*
- Correction through the Scriptures – **2 Timothy 3:16** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*
- Correction through His servants – **2 Timothy 4:2** *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

### **The not-so-hot-church must repent and rekindle its fire (vs. 19)**

How does a lukewarm church get on fire?

- There must be a desire for a difference

Somehow there must be a holy discontent where the church sees what it is compared to what it could be. Charles Finney did not come to the platform one time during a revival so an associate went looking for him. He was found on his knees praying and weeping, “Oh, Lord, I will not go out there unless you go with me.” Jesus said, “Without me, ye can do nothing.”

- There must be a fear of failure

A violinist finished his concert and received a loud, standing ovation. Going backstage he said, “I’m a failure.” The friend said, “What do you mean, look at all those people standing and clapping.” The violinist said: “But look at the man on the front row. He’s not standing or

applauding.” The friend said, “Don’t worry about that old man. What does he know?” The violinist said, “You don’t understand. That’s my teacher.” If the whole world applauds what the church is doing, and yet Christ is not pleased, then we are a miserable failure.

- There must be a seriousness about sin

We need to realize that the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart. A man falling from a building doesn’t need a positive attitude; he needs a net to catch him. A drowning man doesn’t need a seminar; he needs someone to rescue him. A lost person needs a Savior to seek and save him.

- There must be a readiness to repent

Sinners would rather do anything than repent. The Lord says “be zealous” which means to be eager. Martyn Lloyd-Jones describes what it means to repent: “Repentance means that you realize that you are a guilty, vile sinner in the presence of God, that you deserve the wrath and punishment of God, that you are hell-bound. It means that you begin to realize that this thing called sin is in you, that you long to get rid of it, and that you turn your back on it in every shape and form. You renounce the world whatever the cost, the world in its mind and outlook as well as its practice, and you deny yourself, and take up your cross and go after Christ.”

### **The not-so-hot church must invite Jesus back in (vs. 20)**

This verse is often used to mean that Christ is knocking at the sinner’s heart to save him. Actually, Jesus is outside the church and He is knocking at the door wanting to come in. Imagine that...Jesus standing at the door on the outside trying to get in His church. There is a famous painting by an artist named Holman Hunt. He pictures Christ standing at the door and knocking. When he finished the painting, he asked some friends to come by and take a look. One friend told him he left something out, the door handle. Mr. Hunt replied, “This door only opens from the inside.”

Jesus calls out to the church, but anyone can answer the door (vs. 20, “if any man...”). The message is to the church, but anyone who has ears to hear can hear. He says if you will let me in, I will come in and sit and have supper (the evening meal), which means He will have close fellowship. Christ invites them to have fellowship before the night of judgment fell and it was forever too late. Then He says one day you will come up and sit with me on my throne in heaven. He will sit with us now. We will sit with Him then. Christ was knocking through this letter to the church. He is still knocking through this letter, through this sermon. Is anybody listening? Will you open the door and let Him in?