

11. Laodicea: Yuck!

Letters from Jesus

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Bible Text: Revelation 3:14-22

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Thank you. When they said two were getting up, I just knew Tim and Linda were singing a duet. I've really been let down there, Brother Tim. So I tell you what, that was a blessing. Thank you.

May I ask you to turn in your Bibles to Revelation 3. As you can see, I have a rather elegant sermon title this morning, "Yuck!" This is the last of our churches in the list of the seven churches in the book of Revelation and we have spent now probably, I would say roughly ten weeks looking at the preamble to that and then looking at the preceding six churches and the good news is that your pastor is making great recovery and so hopefully next week, I told him to let me know if we couldn't, but hopefully next week you'll have the first string back behind the pulpit again and that will be wonderful for you.

So we're going to look at Revelation 3, beginning at verse 14 and just look at the letter to the church at Laodicea which all you can really say about it is "Yuck," from Jesus' perspective. I think it would be worthwhile to take a quick review of where we've been in terms of the other seven churches. There are five traditional views about ways that you can approach those letters to the seven churches. One is that the letters are really written to individuals like you and me so that we can be inspired in our wholehearted love and obedience to Christ. Another is that it is historically written to seven churches during the time of John's ministry and to evaluate their spiritual condition and to encourage them. Another view is that it represents seven different periods of church history. Still another view is called the "universal" view and it is that it represents, really it's written to all churches everywhere and at some point what's in each of those letters to the seven churches touches churches that are alive today so we have churches today like the church at Ephesus; churches today like the church at Smyrna and Pergamos and Thyatira and Sardis and Laodicea. Then others say it was eschatologically which is the study of the last times. A lot of this book is about the last times and a lot of this book is written for the purpose of encouraging Christians who will be here during, not Christian so much but we plan on being raptured out by and large, but there are going to be people that are going to be saved during the tribulation period. We know there are 144,000 witnesses. We know that they will lead people to Christ during the tribulation. Those people die as martyrs for their faith and they need encouragement and so much of what's in this book is written for

them. Much of it is written for the kind of persecution that these churches were about to go under in the days of Nero and Domitian and Diocletian and some of the other Roman Emperors who persecuted the faith.

So we've looked at these seven churches now and we've gotten the previous six and of the seven churches, only two had everything positive to say about it. Christ had words of encouragement for Smyrna but no real words of criticism. He knew they were suffering for their faith and he encouraged them to be faithful under their suffering. Philadelphia, we looked at last week and it was nice to look at a church that Christ didn't have a lot of negatives to say about. And the church of Philadelphia, he encouraged because of their faithfulness in the church even though they were seemingly small and insignificant in a lot of respects. There were some letters that were peculiarly hard and I'd say of all these letters, the two that were the hardest in terms of criticism was the church at Sardis which is the church that he says, "You have a reputation that you're alive but you're dead." That's pretty strong criticism. Then the one we're going to look at today which is the church at Laodicea, the last one.

I'm going to ask you to stand in honor of God's word as we begin reading Revelation 3, beginning at verse 14.

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. 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 [or spew 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. 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. 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.'

May God add his blessing to the reading of the word.

Thank you. You may be seated.

So let's look at Laodicea, the city for just a moment. I may spend a little more time in background on the city here than I normally do but it's very instructive and helps us to understand exactly what he's saying. Laodicea you see here is on that group of cities that is on the right toward the bottom. It's south of Philadelphia. It was located near both the Lycus and the Meander Rivers. By the way, if you've ever heard somebody say, "Well,

that's a meandering river," well, this is where the name comes from because it was a very crooked river that made lots of turns and so to meander around means to make lots of turns. And so they were south of these rivers and not too far from Colossae where Paul wrote the epistle to the Colossians. They were also south of Hierapolis which will be significant to us in a little bit.

Now, there are several things that I want you to notice about this and there is a page on the back of your bulletin if you want to take notes. The first point would be that it was a prominent place. It was a prominent place. First of all, it was on a postal route. They had mail back in these days too and, of course, I think it was probably carried by chariot more so than by Paul Revere or the Pony Express or anything of that nature. They were 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia but the mail route went from Pergamum and went through Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia all the way to the Mediterranean. So they were along the mail route. They were also about 100 miles east of Ephesus on a main Roman trade route to eastern Asia Minor. And Philadelphia and Laodicea were also the only two routes in the kingdom of Phrygia which was the eastern province from the west so by the time you add a postal route and you add a Roman trade route and then you have routes into the kingdom of Phrygia all converging on Laodicea, it was a busy place and it was a prominent place. It was a very important place.

Not only was it a prominent place, but it was a prosperous place. Being there were all these rivers that converged together and all these roads converged together and they were actually a little distance away from the rivers but they had a lot of commerce coming through here and the location was just really good for commercial enterprise and they had banking and textile manufacturing and medicine and eye salve. In fact, they were so prosperous that it was even reflected in the Christian church there and that's not normally true. Most of the other places, you know, the Christian church was under persecution. It was kind of a small place but we actually have found the remains of three large church buildings in Laodicea. It probably had some of the richest archeology of any place. And they had a textile industry that had these soft, sleek, black garments. Their sheep for some reason there, were black. It was prosperous enough that they had their own banking system and they even minted their own coins there and they would use it as a medium of exchange.

So we can find lots and lots of evidence of their prosperity and there is a rich set of ruins there even today if you want to go look and archaeologists have investigated it and there are still places where the churches, remnants of the churches stand and columns from their buildings still stand. You remember last week we talked about how the pillars and columns were some of the last things to ever fall when a building fell in those days and that's what significant when Christ tells the church in Philadelphia that if they'll overcome, if they persevere, he'll make them pillars in the house of his God. So we have some rich remains and architectural wonders inside Laodicea. In short, in many ways it was a city that had it all. You can see in this diagram there is a stadium; there is a gymnasium; they had aqueducts; they had two theaters; they had two major temples; they had public buildings for meeting in. It was a big place. The fact is, there's still a fairly

decent city there to this day. Eskisihara is the modern name of the city that is ancient Laodicea.

Now, there was a great quantity of Jews in this place. It turns out that Antiochus the Great transported about 2000 Jewish families to Phrygia out of Babylon and so many of Laodicea's inhabitants were Jewish people and they tended to thrive well in business and we've found records that they sent an annual sum of 20 pounds, I didn't say ounces, I said pounds, 20 pounds of gold every year to support the temple in Jerusalem. That was a significant contribution by any standards.

Then it was a protected place. Now, the city was founded by Antiochus II about 253 BC or actually some time before that. We know it's before that because he named it after his wife, Laodice, and yet he then divorced his wife and so you probably don't name a city after your ex-wife like you would have named one after your wife but that's where the city got its name from. It eventually became more important than Colossae in terms of its importance and it came under Roman control in 133 BC. There was a very famous person by the name of Cicero. He was a proconsul in the Roman government and he resided at Laodicea and so it became an administrative and judicial center as well and it became an increasingly wealthy city. Not only that, but the Romans thought it was important because whenever there was revolt against the Roman government, Laodicea would remain faithful to the Roman Emperor whereas others might participate in the revolt. So that kind of put Laodicea a notch up in the Emperor's viewpoint.

It also was a physician place, so if you're taking notes, there's another "p" for you. It was a prominent place and it was a prosperous place and a protected place but it's a physician place as well. This is significant. It was famous for mixing chemicals and making medicines to cure disease. There was a medical college there. Now, there was a temple Men Karou which means "god of the valley" and that was one of the gods they worshiped for healing. There was also some followers of Asclepius which was the Greek god of healing there. There was also a temple just north of Laodicea and Hierapolis had a temple to Asclepius. There was a man by the name of Herophilos that developed an idea about medicine. His idea about medicine was if you had a complex disease, you needed a compounded medication. In other words, if it was a complex disease, you needed a bunch of stuff mixed together and given to you. I think we still have doctors doing this sort of medicine today instead of figuring out maybe the one root cause. Well, let's give you four or five medicines to solve the problem. That's what Herophilos came up with and so they invented in Laodicea what was called Phrygian powder and we even know the name of their main eye doctor. Now, it's hard to imagine having eye doctors back in the time of Christ but there was an eye doctor during the first century A.D., an ophthalmologist by the name of Demosthenes Philalethes and he combined Phrygian powder into an ointment, made a salve and they would rub it on people's eyes that had eye problems and it actually cured several different kinds of blindness. Now, not everything, obviously, not anything with nerve damage or anything but diseases that would otherwise very often lead a person to permanent blindness were often cured there so it wasn't important thing.

We find that they did regard the god Asclepius a good deal. You see there on the left a carving that actually represents two gods in Greek mythology. One is Asclepius, that's the one that's on the left and if you look very carefully, you see that there is a snake that's kind of twined around the rod. You remember when you go to the doctor, you see a picture of a rod and there's a snake wound around it and that's from this Greek mythology. We can also say that it's rather interesting though because in the Old Testament, there was a brazen serpent that Moses made and if you looked unto it you would be healed so you can take your choice as to which of those two ancient symbols becomes the symbol for the American Medical Association. But you see him and he's actually feeding the snake here. I can promise you, I would have never made that role. If a snake comes, the last thing I'm doing is feeding it. He might be dinner for somebody else but I'm not feeding it. By the way, the god on the right is Hygeia, that's where we get the word "hygiene" from. So they at least had this idea that, yeah, you needed treatment but you also needed cleanliness and they had a god for each one and there is kind of a mosaic tile on the right of Asclepius and you see there again in his hand the staff with the snake wound around it.

Now, another interesting thing about Laodicea, it was a very proud place. So there's another point for you. It was a proud place. "Laodicea" means in Greek, "laos" is the word for "people" and really it means "the people speak or the people rule." They valued their freedom. In fact, in A.D. 60 during the reign of the Emperor Nero, the city was destroyed by an earthquake and you may notice a common theme if you've been listening now for several weeks is that we had earthquakes all through this region. It was an earthquake prone place. It was a bad place to live if you wanted stability. But because they had never revolted against Roman government, Nero offered them financial assistance to rebuild the city and they're like, "Nah, we've got it." You see, the Laodiceans understood something that most people don't understand today and that is: when you take government assistance, you take government regulations and you lose your freedom when you get the government to solve your problem. I have a T-shirt and I wear it when I work out a lot that has my favorite Ronald Reagan quote on it. It says: government isn't a solution, government is the problem and Ronald Reagan was exactly right about that. So in order to not get any more under the thumb of the Roman government to whom they remained loyal, they said, "No, we'll fix it," and with their own wealth, they rebuilt the city and that was kind of a point of pride. "We don't need the Roman government around here. We'll take care of our own problems." They had a taste for the arts and they built things beautifully.

But with all of these good things about Laodicea, it was also a problem place. They didn't actually have their own water source. Now, they were several miles south of two rivers but they didn't really have a water source there and so they built an aqueduct to a city six miles south of them. That city's name was Denizli and we can actually see and you can look there in the picture and there are parts of the aqueduct. They built pipes and they went upstream and they got their water from a higher elevation and let gravity bring it into Laodicea. They had a problem though and Denizli is pretty close to Colossae and they were famous for their cold springs that came out of the ground. There is nothing more refreshing than cold water. I remember many years ago one of my jobs, I was in

high school, during the day I was going to college at night but I had three jobs. I worked a job at the newspaper office; I ran a paper route; and then I mowed lawns around all the water towers for the city of Jacksonville. I was out mowing some lawns or mowing the grass around some of these water towers in Jacksonville and during the summer that was hot, hot work. One of those was on the side of Jacksonville that's on the Frankston highway that goes out toward a little community called Frankston and one day I was thirsty and I knew because I had grown up there that if you drove just a little way out of Jacksonville and you're on your way toward Frankston, on the left-hand side coming out of the side of the ground was a pipe that someone had put in there during the reconstruction era and there was a spring that always had cold, clear water coming out that pipe. People would stop by the side of Frankston Highway, Highway 175 and they'd bring their big five gallon water bottles and they'd put it under there and they'd fill the whole thing up with this clear, sparkling, cool, spring water. I'll tell you what, when you mowed the lawn or if you feel like I do right now, that would have been some really good water. So you'd go and get some nice cold, clear water.

So they had this wonderful idea, "Let's build an aqueduct to Denizli and get some of their cold, clear, refreshing water," because if you went out and mowed the lawn in Denizli back in the first century A.D. and I don't know how you did that, by the way, but you'd come in and you'd be hot and you'd be sweaty and you'd get the dipper gourd and they didn't have, you know, the fancy things. They didn't have Dixie cups back then, let's put it that way. That's what I drink out of all the time. But without Dixie cups, they'd get a dipper gourd and you never wanted to get sand in your dipper gourd because it was hard to get out and it kind of ruined every dip of water after that for a while. In fact, I have a phrase around my house that when something irritates me, I say, "That grits my gourd," and that's where that comes from. Anyway, you'd get that and it would just taste so good and taste so wonderful.

What happened though, somehow or other, even though they did their best to build these pipes, the pipes somehow picked up some of the salts and minerals that were in the ground and by the time it got the six miles from Denizli to Laodicea, it was salty and it was lukewarm and it made you want to puke. So then they came up with another idea because government has this idea that if it doesn't work the first time, let's do it again. That's government. By the way, that's also called the definition of stupidity. Stupidity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different answer. And so they dug another ditch, or aqueduct, excuse me. I said ditch. Aqueduct is more refined, isn't it? That's the college word for a ditch. They dug an aqueduct 11 miles to Hierapolis and because Hierapolis had these hot mineral springs. Now, they had a temple to the god Asclepius there and people would go up there and right there at the temple was one of these hot springs coming up and these people would go in with all their aches and pains and they would go down and sit in these hot springs and because of the mineral content in the springs, because of the heat of the springs, the geothermal value, they always got warm and it made their joints feel better and they just felt like they had been healed and they'd offer up an offering to Asclepius and they'd go home until they were hurting again and they'd be back at the temple. And they said, "You know what, we can't get the cold water but hot is good too, let's get that." Let's face it, most of us would want to drink

either hot stuff or cold stuff and so they dug this ditch, the only problem was that by the time the water got through 11 miles of aqueduct from Hierapolis to Laodicea, once again, even though they did their best to build it and you'll see some other pictures there of pieces of the aqueduct here in a moment, it picked up whether it was cracks in the pipe or something they made the pipe out of, it absorbed the minerals and things from the soil around it and it got into Laodicea and it was salty and it was lukewarm and it made them want to puke.

They had a problem in terms of their water supply. Interestingly enough, whatever minerals it was that got in and made the water taste so brackish and so nasty, evidently caused all the sheep to turn black. They didn't have white sheep, they had black sheep and all of them were black. If you think that's weird, go back and read the book of Genesis where Laban had a bunch of sheep and he's got a son-in-law working for him and the son-in-law is trying to get more sheep and he lays these reeds out and cracks them open and there's something in there that causes some of the sheep to be spotted and some of them not to be spotted and he kind of made a deal with his father-in-law, "Give me whichever one is spotted," and he lay these reeds out and they all came out spotted. So there is something to this and so they had all these black sheep. The fact is, here are some more pictures of some of the remains of their aqueduct that basically they built pipes inside of blocks and they brought this in. You see another one here in the foreground and they had a problem with their water supply.

Well, let's look at Laodicea, the church now. First of all, it's interesting that the Apostle Paul never went here but he was concerned about the church at Laodicea. It says in Colossians 2, "For I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." He says, "They haven't seen my face in the flesh." "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Then at the end of the epistle to the Colossians, he tells the Colossians this, "When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church at Laodicea; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." So we don't have this but apparently Paul also wrote a letter to the church at Laodicea to encourage them in their faith.

Now, every one of these letters to the seven churches starts out by identifying the Christ that is speaking to them and here is how Christ identifies himself, he says, "the amen." That's interesting. We say amen at the end of the prayer and yet here to the church at Laodicea, the first thing Christ says about himself is that he is "the amen." Amen is the Greek verb which means "so be it," or "let it be." So basically he is the "so be it." In other words, when Jesus says something, it's not debatable. When Jesus says something, it comes to pass. When Jesus says something, he's sovereign. He is in control and what he says is a decree from God and it happens. He also says "the faithful and true witness" and we looked at that phrase back in Revelation 1. The word "witness" there is the word in Greek "martyr." He's the faithful and true martyr. He lived a faithful life. He lived a sinless life. He gave that life for us and for our sins.

Then we have kind of an interesting phrase, he is "the ruler of God's creation." Now, your translation may say "the first of God's creation" or "the beginning of God's creation." It's the Greek word "arche" and he says the arche tes ktiseos tou Theou, he's the architect. Arche, we get the word "architect" from. In other words, the arche of creation is the architect of creation; the one who designed it; the one who implemented it; the one who brought it into existence. It means to be the first not only in terms of time but in terms of preeminence. He's basically saying, "I am God. I am sovereign and now you'd better listen to what I have to say to you." I don't know if you've ever done this with your kids, by the way, is to remind them before you give them a word of correction, particularly if they appear not to be listening and none of your kids ever do that, right? They never do this but if they're not listening, you may change the tone of your voice just a little bit and say, "Now listen, I," in your best Darth Vader voice here, "I am your father," and then you speak those words of exhortation in their life. Well, God does the same thing here. He says, "I am the amen. I am the sovereign God. I am the faithful one. I am the true one. I'm the one that died for you and whatever I say goes and I am the architect of all creation. You'd better listen to what I have to say."

Now, you will notice that in this letter like the letters to the church at Sardis, the commendation is absent. He doesn't have anything good to say. In fact, you know, almost every time in these seven letters that Jesus says, "I know your works," and he says that to every one of the churches, "I know your works," and when he says that, he usually points out a few good things. He gives commendation before he gives condemnation. He gives praise before he gives criticism. But here he doesn't have any good thing to say because he's going to say, "You make me sick to my stomach," and it's pretty hard to say something good about something that makes you sick to your stomach.

Now, I went out last night. I have this belief that you should at least try new things. Try new things, within limits, okay. They are not putting pig's blood in my hot sour soup when I'm in China, okay. I draw the line at that sort of thing but years ago, I had a coworker introduce me to sushi. It became a favorite. My middle name is William but I changed the "W" to stand for wasabi because it's just that great and so I love to eat sushi and I got Judy introduced to it which was one of the most expensive mistakes I've ever made in 34 years of marriage. So last night was our 34th wedding anniversary and so Judy decided she wanted to go for sushi and after 34 years of putting up with me which she informs me is about 18 years of embarrassment so I don't know how the math figures there but 34 years of marriage is about 18 years of embarrassment. But we went out to sushi because she's put up with a lot and she deserves to be treated right. Of course, we got in there and I saw a sign, "Ask about our fresh uni." If you ever see that sign, do not order it. There is a lot of good sushi. I will eat just about anything but I have tried uni one time and it's sea urchin and it is nasty. If you ever put sea urchin in your mouth, you will immediately think about this passage in Revelation that says, "I will spew you out of my mouth." Instantly I thought, "I'm not ordering that." You know, that's not happening.

That's what he says to them. He says, "I know your works." Now, I want to show you, pay attention to this verse because I believe this is one of the most misinterpreted and wrongly preached verses in the New Testament and it grits my gourd when I hear this

because the way he says this, he says, "You're neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot." So here's how preachers preach it wrong: they say, "Well, to be hot means you're on fire for the Lord, you're fervent for the Lord, you're serving the Lord, you're sharing the Gospel with people, you're reading your Bible. You are just filled with the Holy Spirit of God and to be cold means that at least even though you're not living like a Christian but you're not talking like a Christian either so at least you are not really damaging the cause of Christ because nobody really knows you're a Christian. What's bad is for you to be lukewarm because then you're talking like you're on fire for the Lord but you're living like the world." I got that the first time I went to the basic seminar. That's wrong. I've gotten that from a lot of other preachers but let me tell you very clearly why it's wrong: all you have to do is listen to the words of Jesus. What does he say? "I wish you were hot or cold." Now, if Jesus says, "I wish you were this or that," it means they're both good things. Jesus would never wish anyone to be a closet Christian, would he? He'd never want you to live like the world and keep quiet about it so you didn't damage the cause of Christ, would he? That doesn't make sense, does it? He is saying hot is good and cold is good. If you go out and you need healing, it helps sometimes to sit in a hot, bubbling water. You get sore after you work out and that's why they have those big whirlpool tubs and Jacuzzi tubs and whatnot at health clubs because the heat helps bring the toxins out of your body that you just got from working out. But then, oh boy, that cold water. I wouldn't mind at the last right now. That's refreshing. It's cool.

Do you know what? I've had both kinds of Christians in churches that I've pastored through the years. I've had those that seem to be able to give you a special comfort just at the moment you really needed somebody to lift you up. Have you all ever known a Christian like that? It was just like being around them during a difficult time made it bearable just because they had that touch. They listened to you. They felt with you. My wife is one of those people. My wife can sympathize. The bad week I had before I came here last Sunday, we doubled and tripled that this week. It was really lousy this week. There weren't many bright spots. I had maybe three hours of sleep on a good night this week and then I was so looking forward because I just got through two big projects through and I thought I've got to wind down. I'm looking forward to this week now thinking I'm going to wind down and chill out and then Friday, my boss calls me so I'm on a plane to Indiana this week for yet another crisis. It was just about the straw that broke the camel's back and I thought seriously about telling him that but, anyway, it was a stressful week and it's going to be another one. Okay. So I don't know how much more of it I can take but my wife helps me through it. She is sympathetic. She is understanding. She puts up with me. She understands that sometimes you have so much stress and my apologies to Matt for what I'm about to say, you have so much stress that only a mozzarella cheese stick can fix your problem. Okay, there's times I know that's emotional eating. That's bad, isn't it? But sometimes you're just like that. But then I've also been around Christians that seem like every time you got around them, if you were the least bit tired, they were like something that was effervescent. They were bubbly. They built you up. It was just like they were excited about Jesus. They had a big smile. They love the Lord. Kathy H. is one of those people if you get to know her, she's like that. I love that kind of Christianity. That's exciting. I love being around those kind of people.

Now, he's saying, "I wish you were either cold which is refreshing and bubbly or hot which is healing and sympathetic but the reality is, you're just useless." That's what it means to be lukewarm. It means that you're not good for anything and that's what he's telling the church. Look at how Jesus, the adjectives Jesus uses. He says, "You're wretched. You're miserable. You're poor. You're blind. You're naked. You're lukewarm." Lukewarm is just isn't a good thing. Lukewarm salty water can hit your stomach like a brick.

I'll try not to be overly graphic here but I remember one morning about a year and a half ago. I was in Tyler, Texas and I took two of my kids out to the airport and my brother who was a test pilot for the space shuttle and later an American Airlines pilot and as soon as he retired from flying 777, the first thing he did is he built a plane. It's a two-seater. Somebody sits in front and somebody sits in back. It's got a stick to fly. So he took a couple of my kids up flying and then he wanted to know if I wanted to go and I said sure but it's about 11:30 now and in Texas, the air heats up pretty quickly. So while the kids were up flying, I got thirsty so I went over to this cooler that he had there in his hangar where the airplane was garaged normally. I opened it up and I got out a diet Pepsi. Now, I don't like diet Pepsi to begin with but I was thirsty. I grabbed the diet Pepsi and his little refrigerator must not have enough freon in it because it was just kind of lukewarm.

Well, I had oatmeal for breakfast, I drank the lukewarm diet Pepsi and then we went up and my brother wanted to teach me how to do aerobatics in the airplane. So we get up and we do some 30 degree turns. No big deal there. Then we do 60 degree turns. Now, in a 60 degree turn in an aircraft, you pull 2Gs so if you normally weigh 200 pounds, you'll feel like you weigh 400 because it glues your back to the seat. But, you know, we did that a couple of times. I did that a couple of times. And you do kind of feel your stomach trying to come up to the top of your diaphragm but then we did some 90 degree turns. In a 90 degree turn, the wings are perfectly straight up-and-down and the plane tries to stall as you're going around so the whole plane is shuddering and when he said it was my turn I thought, I said, "Fred, I really don't think I want to do that one." You pull 4Gs in that so now your 200 pounds feels like 800 pounds. That's really nasty.

So we got over that and so he said, "Okay, well, let's show you how to do a barrel roll," so he does a barrel roll, two rolls in that direction, to rolls in this direction. He's explaining what he's doing and he lets me have the stick and so I increase the throttle, I pitch the nose of the plane up and then at the right moment, I roll the stick over to the right and I come out but instead of coming out with both wings like that, I came out with both wings like that so he made me do it again. And again. And again. Until I got it right. I finally got it in the right direction and went right in this direction so I had done now about five or six barrel rolls in that direction, five or six barrel rolls in that direction plus the ones that he had done so we had now been through just shy of 20 barrel rolls with oatmeal and a warm diet Pepsi. Then, let's just say that I fought the urge. I had to fight to keep something down and I succeeded but I told him, there was a little headset here and I told him, I said, "Fred, I think we need to go back to the hangar." So he said, "Okay." So we're flying back to the hangar and he says, "You take the stick, I want to work with this," because the intercom wasn't working quite right so he's up there monkeying with

wires and I'm flying the plane trying to look over him and see where the field is and we went over the lake and the air is starting, you have cool air over the lake that is meeting with the warm air or vice versa, anyway, let's put it this way, going over the lake at 11:30 in the morning, you get bumpy and now we're bumping and the second time, I couldn't quite fight the urge and I decorated the back of his seat with oatmeal.

We got down and he didn't notice anything, thank goodness. Got down and he landed the plane. We taxied and, of course, as soon as we were on the taxiway, he opened up the canopy over the plane which it was warm in there. He opened up the canopy of the plane and we got the prop wash which is air coming back over the propeller and oh that felt so good. That's when I finally got his attention and I said, "Fred, I decorated your plane." He was very sensitive to it. He said, "Oh, don't worry. In Air Force crews and C-130s four months into it, people are still barfing on the flight crew." He was trying to, he just said, "I'll go in the hangar and get some towels and bring it out here and your kids will never know." Of course, the first thing they did was walk out and see that daddy was also decorated in oatmeal. You know, it wasn't a good thing. But let me just say that lukewarm diet Pepsi and a lukewarm aircraft being heated up and a little turbulence will make you think about sea urchins. We'll just say it that way.

But it's just not good to be lukewarm. Cold is good. Hot is good. But in between, that's a nasty thing. And if you've ever been, and I'll confess to this, guys do stuff that you girls find gross but, you know, I've come back from some flights and when you're in an aircraft, because of the way they treat the air in the plane, they have to pressurize the cabin of the plane, it dehydrates you so if you fly a lot, you learn to get a bottle of water before you get on the plane and drink it so you don't get dehydrated. But I had gotten dehydrated coming back from a flight and I got my baggage out of the baggage claim, caught a bus to the parking lot where I parked my car, got in the car and I'm dying of thirst. I'm parched and as I get in the car, I see there, still sitting in the cup holder from a week ago when I got on the plane, whatever that drink used to be and I thought, "It's liquid. I'll drink it." That's a nasty sensation, let me tell you. Even if the taste is not...it hits your stomach like a brick.

So that was a vivid picture that you see there. There is another vivid picture here because their religious feasts, they either had hot things or they had cold things but typically they would have hot things and it was vivid because they knew about hot water and cold water. They knew if they went and visited six miles to their south in Denizli that they could get nice cold water. They knew if you went up to Hierapolis to visit the temple, you'd get nice hot water and they just wanted some of that. Now, what made the church at Laodicea lukewarm? Jesus tells us, now listen, here's his answer. He explains what it means to be lukewarm and most people just think lukewarm just means to be compromising. No, Jesus defines it. Here's what he says, "You are saying, I am rich and have become rich, and I have need of nothing and you do not know that you are wretched and pitiable and poor and blind and naked." So lukewarm Christians are Christians that don't realize how spiritually needy they are. They ignore their own spiritual condition. They have put themselves on spiritual cruise control going through the same motions week after week, going to church on Sundays but not really reading the word of God in

between, not getting any fresh insights from the Lord. Giving whatever they give. Some Christians don't give at all. Some give \$50 month. Some give a tithe but they give but maybe their heart isn't really in it. They see people all around them. They're around people all the time, they have a spiritual need and yet they don't share Christ with them.

He says, "You're lukewarm precisely because you say you have need of nothing." It reminds me of that water coming down the ditch or the aqueduct from Hierapolis to Laodicea or from Denizli to Laodicea and picking up the soils and the salts from the surrounding thing and getting lukewarm and making them sick to their stomach. I wonder sometimes have we as churches gotten to the place where we've picked up too much from the world and we're no longer different like this church in this picture that has a Saturday night Beatles themed worship. Or like the church that's on Interstate 35 between Fort Worth and Austin, sign on the left says "30 minutes of great Christian entertainment every Sunday morning." If they knew what the word "entertainment" meant they'd know it meant to entangle one's self. What they do is they draw people in with something that's supposed to pump them up and make them feel good and yet they don't give them the meaning and the deep teaching of the word of God. God help us when we're in the entertainment industry because the world offers a lot more compelling entertainment than we can. We're losing it.

What happens when we fail to be hot or cold? The world sees us as irrelevant. If we're not healing or refreshing, if we're not helping them with their hearts or giving them encouragement to go on, then we've become irrelevant and the world develops their own views of faith. They've developed the doctrine of universalism which says, "God cannot be good enough unless everyone goes to heaven. It's not good enough that he gave his one and only Son." Or the new phenomena that some of the young ladies from our church learned about when they went to hear Mike Riddle out in North Carolina, the Emerging Church which says, "Quoting Scripture, just stop. God can talk to the hand." The fact is, you're going to think this is a picture of manikins. This is a picture of a pastrix, that's the name she's given to herself for a woman pastor and if you could see that picture up close, you'd see that her and her buddies have decided to put beards on because it makes them look more authoritative and she even has some YouTube videos. She just published a book and she calls herself a pastor to teach people about the Pastrix Nadi Balz-Uber and she just wrote a book and published it and the very first word of the book is a profanity I can't even think to repeat. Yet she teaches that basically we all come to God, we just have to feel good about ourselves. That's what the Emergent Church does. It doesn't have a real doctrine of salvation. One of the things that they teach is this doctrine of deconstructionism. It means what kind of freedom would it be if we can't make the Bible mean what we want it to mean? So they don't try to figure out what the Bible says but interpret it.

Now, Jesus in this letter like every other letter, gives some commands to the church. Where is she? There she is right there. One of my daughters knows I'm thinking about her because the command here from Christ is, "Go shopping." I have one daughter that is particularly motivated by shopping. She loves to shop. She was born to shop. At least 2-3 times a week, she finds a reason to need to go shop and I pray she marries a merchant.

He says, "Go shopping," and he says, "There are three things that you need to buy." So if you want to make out your shopping list, here it is. Write this on the back of your bulletin. You need this shopping list. He first of all says, "I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire in order that you may become rich." Now, let me point out something. He just got through telling this church that they're poor and now he tells them to go shopping for gold. Doesn't that seem a little weird? If you're poor, how are you going to buy gold? Well, guess what? Jesus puts gold on sale. What is gold? In Job 23:10, well, gold is a store of value. We'll come to that in a moment. But gold is a store of value. Then he says, "Not just gold but gold that's been refined by fire." So as Richard pointed out, we sang that hymn a few minutes ago. It says,

"When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

Job in Job 23:10 says, "But he knows the way that I take; he tests me I shall come out like gold." So what is this gold? Psalm 19 says it quite well, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving life. The testimony of the Lord is firm, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, making the heart rejoice. The command of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether," now listen to this, "more desirable than gold, even much fine," or refined, "gold; and sweeter than honey, even honey in the comb." What is the gold? It's the word of God. It's the wisdom of God. It's better than silver or gold. We're told in Proverbs 4 to seek after wisdom like we would silver or gold because it's valuable. We do know, by the way, Scripture teaches in many places, Isaiah 48, "Behold I have refined you but not as silver. I have tried you in the furnace of affliction." Psalm 66, "For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried." 1 Peter 1, he says, "You rejoice greatly although now for a short time if necessary you're distressed by various trials so that the genuineness of your faith more valuable than gold that is passing away is tested by fire. May it be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Then he says the second thing you need to buy is you need to buy white raiment. Think about this for a minute because it's particularly interesting. At Laodicea because of this stuff in their water, their sheep would drink the water and their sheep turned black. All their sheep were black. It was no big deal to say, "I'm the black sheep of my family," in Laodicea because that was everybody, right? But they had these black sheep so they would gather the wool off the black sheep and they made this luxurious, soft, slick, black garment. They made black rugs. They sold all this but it was all black and yet if you went to the temple to worship, you were supposed to take off and these were pagan temples but also if you went to church, you had the idea that you were supposed to take off the black garments you wear everyday which were considered luxurious and something they had in great abundance and you were supposed to wear something white as a symbol of purity. Jesus is telling this church, "Take off the black and put on the white. Take off the luxury

of the world and put on righteousness and holiness to God." He says, "You need to take off the black and put on the white." It's very reminiscent, by the way, of Ephesians 4 where the Apostle Paul says that "you take off, according to the former way of life, the old man, who is being destroyed by deceitful desires but be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man in accordance with God, who is created in righteousness and holiness from truth." He says, "Take off the black and put on the white." By the way, did you notice he says when he says put on the white raiment, he says, "that you may cover the shame of your nakedness." You see, Jesus believes in modesty. He believes in covering what should be covered, not defrauding others by leaving stuff uncovered. But particularly that we be clothed in the righteousness of Christ because we don't have any righteousness of our own.

Then he says as the third thing that you should buy: by eye salve. By eye salve. They had invented this ointment that helped restore sight in many cases but what Jesus is saying is, "You need some eye salve from me so that you can see your own needs because you've been saying you don't have any needs. You've been saying everything is fine with you spiritually," and I don't know where you're at this morning, some of you may have come to church and thought, "It's Sunday, I need to go to church because it's the right thing to do. My family needs to be there." But you get there and you're kind of at ease and you didn't even before church started, maybe you didn't even say to God, "God, would you show me something I need today," because it never dawned on your mind that there was a need in your life and Jesus could point it out if you asked him to do so. Sometimes we think, "Ah, we'll listen to the sermon and we'll have lunch and we'll have a good time fellowshiping and off we go." Do you know what we really need to do? We need to start praying on Saturday night because the Bible says the evening and the morning were the first day. We need to start praying on Saturday night for God to show us our own need in our own lives on Sunday when we hear the pastor preach. He said, "You need some eyes alve so you can see the needs."

Then we have one of the most misused verses of the New Testament. I'm not beating you up because I've used this verse this way. You've probably used this verse this way before too. But you're taking it out of context and I've taken it out of context. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and I will sup or eat or fellowship with him and he with me." That's the promise and we use that verse all the time to tell somebody who is lost and we're at the end of trying to lead them to the Lord. You say, "Christ is knocking at your door. He wants to come into your life. You need to open the door and let him in." But do you realize that in the context of the letter to the church at Laodicea, Christ is not talking to lost people, he's talking to the Christian church and he's basically saying, "You have a church but I'm on the outside." How did that happen? He says to this church, "You say you have no needs so you haven't invited me in and asked me to open up your heart with the Holy Spirit and show you what you need. You just went through the motions one more time." He says, "Open the door and say, 'Jesus, come into our church. Show us our need. Give us the grace to repent. Make us fall down on the floor on our faces and cry out to you and say, 'O God, restore to me the joy of my salvation.'"" He says, "I stand at the door of First Baptist, Church, Las Colinas and I'm knocking. If you'll open the door and let me in, I'll

fellowship with you. I'll show you my spiritual treasures. I'll give you truths that you didn't know. You'll start searching the word of God on your own instead of having it spoonfed to you on Sundays. You'll find the joy of living and following me." That's the real meaning of, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Jesus wants fellowship with us but the context here is to the church.

Then he gives this promise to close this with, he says, "I'll give you true riches," and he says, "You'll sit on the throne with me." I want to tell you just right up out in the open here, I have no clue what this means. Every now and then the word of God throws something at me that I don't think it would matter how much I studied it, I think it's too big of a concept for my small mind to wrap tentacles around or neurons, I guess would be a better word. He says something here that just blows my mind. "To him that overcometh, I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and I am set down with my Father on his throne." I can't fathom what it means to rule and reign with Christ. I don't know what it means when he has this thousand years of millennial reign on the earth that's coming after the tribulation period, what it means that he brings us with him as part of his government administration for those thousand years. I can't imagine what it means that we rule and reign together with him. The fact is, it just blows my mind when the Bible says we are made kings and priests unto our God and that's now. I can't fathom because every time I picture heaven, I don't picture myself sitting on a throne next to Jesus, I picture myself on my face before his throne casting any crowns that God may be gracious enough to give me back before his feet. So I'm not going to explain this to you. I'm just going to tell you the one thing that I know about this verse: whatever that is, it's good. I don't know what that is, I'm not smart enough to explain it to you but it's good. It's something you ought to want. That's the promise that he gives to Laodicea.

So Jesus closes this letter as he always does, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." We've ended our journey of the seven churches and let me tell you my own belief: yes, I believe there were seven literal churches but I believe that every one of those churches represents some church that's here today and they all talk about dangers that face Christians today. We're all in danger of losing our first love for Jesus Christ as they did at Ephesus. I think we're in danger of being afraid because of persecution and suffering that's coming and the Smyranean Christians had some of those thoughts, no doubt going through their minds. We're in danger of doctrinal defection because when God's churches get lukewarm and they are not relevant, the world develops its own theology and that's where you get all these false teachers that rise up and some of them are popular. They build Crystal Cathedrals. They have television programs. They have large mass healing ceremonies and they wear white jackets and they make people fall over backwards through whatever. They get invited on Larry King and they get to talk about that the Gospel is positive for anybody and you don't really need to say anything bad about homosexuality because they can be part of the kingdom too and you don't really need to preach the Gospel of Christ to people, just teach them how life can be better. And if you are thinking, you've probably guessed who some of those people are that I just mentioned.

We're in danger of doctrinal defection. We're in danger of moral departure like the church at Thyatira that was so materialistic that they started only thinking about their physical comforts and their physical stuff. Someone shared with me the other day something that they were able to buy and that was wonderful and I was glad for them but what if you're able to buy stuff and yet you don't give to the house of God? Where does that leave you? Where are your priorities? The church at Thyatira had them in the wrong place. Or God help us if we're like Sardis. I've been in some churches and I walked in and when I walked out at the end of the service I thought, "There is no life in that church." Philadelphia had nothing wrong said about it but he encourages them, "You need to hold fast," because we all need to hold on to the faith because if we don't hold onto it tightly, we don't tie a knot in the Gospel and grab onto it, we'll let go. The church at Philadelphia is faithful and so we need to be. Or maybe we're just lukewarm. I don't know how to tell you if you're lukewarm but I found some questions that someone asked and I thought these were good questions. Do you come to church but you're not wholehearted about the worship service? Do you bring a Bible but did you read it this week? You give but do you do so sparingly or grudgingly instead of cheerfully? Do you listen to a sermon and when it's done you think, "Good sermon," but you didn't really ask God, "Hey, was any of that for me?" Do you sing songs as Richard pointed out a while ago, parroting the words back to him and you don't really think about the meaning of the words that you're singing?

There are probably other questions you could ask. There have been a lot of times in my life that I've been that lukewarm Christian, more often than I care to admit and that's when I'm reading the right words and I'm going through the motions but I'm not really connecting with Jesus. He's on the outside of my life because I'm too busy to fit him into my schedule. I hope I'm the only one here like that. I doubt I'm the only one here like that.

So as Richard leads us in a song of invitation, I want to ask you to stand and what I really want to do is to invite you that after you stand to kneel. We've been down a long journey and looked at a lot of churches with a lot of spiritual characteristics.

1 2 **Laodicea: YUCK!**3

Review of
the letters to the 7 churches

4 **Five views of the letters**

1. Individually: Written to inspire wholehearted love and obedience in individuals.
2. Historically: Written to seven actual churches in John's generation to address their spiritual condition and to encourage them.
3. Periodically: Written to churches that represent periods of church history.

5 **Five views of the letters (2)**

4. Universally: Written to all churches for application. Jesus spoke to individuals ("he" who has an ear), then applied it to a group ("churches").
5. Eschatologically: (Eschatology is the study of end times): The letters are to prepare the end-time Church for the events of Revelation 6-19.

6 **The 7 churches**

1. Ephesus –The Loveless Church
2. Smyrna – The Lasting Church
3. Pergamum – The Lenient Church
4. Thyatira – The Licentious Church
5. Sardis – The Lifeless Church
6. Philadelphia – The Loved Church
7. Laodicea – The Lukewarm Church

7 **Revelation 3:14-17**

- *"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.' " 'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*

8 **Revelation 3:18-20**

- *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. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 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.*

9 **Revelation 3:21-22**

- *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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'* "

•

10 **Laodicea: The city**

11

12 **The Lycus and Meander rivers**

13 **A prominent place**

- On postal route (45 miles southeast of Philadelphia) that ran from Pergamum through Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia to the Mediterranean.
- 100 miles east of Ephesus on the main Roman trade route to eastern Asia Minor
- Philadelphia and Laodicea were situated on the only two routes into Phrygia (the eastern province) from the west.

14 **A prosperous place (2)**

- Situated along the banks of a river and stood at the junction of three great roads traversing Asia Minor.
- Location was conducive to commercial enterprise.
- Specialized in:
 - Banking – made their own coins
 - Textile manufacturing for clothing
 - Medicine – in particular, eye salve

15 **A prosperous place (3)**

- Evidence of this prosperity is found in the present-day ruins of three large church buildings dating back to the early days of Christianity.
- Laodicea's economy was fueled by a textile industry that produced soft, sleek, black garments and carpets from the wool of black sheep.

16 **A prosperous place (4)**

- Banking flourished because of strong economy
- Laodicea minted their own coins which could be used as a medium of exchange

17 **Laodicea**

- Evidence of this prosperity is found in the present day ruins of three large church buildings dating back to the early days of Christianity. Laodicea's economy was fueled by a textile industry that manufactured from the wool of black sheep, soft, sleek, black garments and carpets that were popular both locally and in the surrounding region.

18 **Laodicea's rich ruins**

19 **Ancient Laodicea**

20

21 **A city with it all!**

22 **Modern Eskisihara**

23 **A philanthropic place**

- Antiochus the Great transported 2000 Jewish families to Phrygia from Babylonia (Joseph.,

Ant. Jud., xii.3.4).

- Many of Laodicea's inhabitants were Jews. They sent a sum of 20 pounds of gold annually to Jerusalem for the Temple.

24 **A protected place**

- City was founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus II sometime before 253 B.C., when he divorced his wife Laodice, after whom he had named the city.
- Became more important than Colossae
- Came under Roman control in 133 B.C.; remained loyal to Roman during revolts

25 **A protected place (2)**

- Under Cicero's proconsulship (51–50 B.C.) it was an administrative and judicial center for the region.
- It eventually became a banking center and an increasingly wealthy city.

26 **A physician place**

- Famous for successfully mixing chemicals to cure diseases. Its physicians worshiped the serpent god Asclepius
- Had a temple of Men Karou ("god of the valley"), the god of healing.
- Followers Herophilos developed "Phrygian powder" – a compound medicine for eye problems.

27 **A physician place (2)**

- During the first century A.D. where a famous ophthalmologist, Demosthenes Philalethes, practiced.
 - Used Phrygian powder in an ointment for eyes to help restore sight for some forms of blindness.

28 **Asclepius and Hygeia**

29 **A proud place**

- Laodicea means "the people speak or the people rule."
- When destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60 during the reign of Nero.
 - Laodiceans refused Roman imperial assistance because they did not want the obligations associated with it.
- They rebuilt the city from their own wealth.

30 **A problem place**

- Laodicea's water tasted terrible as it leached minerals from surrounding ground
- 1st aqueduct – Denizli (6 miles to south)
- 2nd aqueduct built to import water from Hierapolis

31 **Aqueduct remains**

32

33 **Laodicea: The church**

34 **The Apostle Paul**

- Never visited Laodicea but expressed concern for them.

– Colossians 2:1-2 -- *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*

35 **The Apostle Paul (2)**

- Colossians 4:16 -- *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

36 **Christ as Sovereign God**

- Speaks as the Amen ("so be it")
- The faithful and true witness (martyr)
 - Lived a perfect life
 - Died a martyr's death
- Ruler of God's creation
 - ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ.
 - Architect, designer, ruler
- Emphasizes authority before rebuking them

37 **Commendation is absent**

- This is one two churches about whom Christ has nothing good to say.
- LEB -- *'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! Thus, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth!'*

38 **How Jesus describes Laodicea**

WRETCHED
MISERABLE
POOR
BLIND
NAKED
LUKEWARM

39 **Lukewarm isn't good!**

- Ever been so thirsty that you just took a drink of a cup that had been sitting out for a long while and had assumed room temperature?

40 **A vivid picture**

- Religious feasts or normal meals featured liquids that were either hot or cold but never lukewarm.
- Laodicea had terrible water
- Dug an aqueduct to Hierapolis where there hot healing springs and another temple to Asclepius.
- Neighboring Colossae and Denizli famous for cold springs

41 **What made them lukewarm?**

- Jesus explains His statement about their lukewarm condition.

– Because you are saying, “I am rich, and have become rich, and I have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and pitiable and poor and blind and naked,...

- Lukewarm Christians are on spiritual cruise control and are not aware of spiritual needs.

42 **Have we picked up too much dirt from the world around us?**

43 **When we fail to be hot or cold**

- The world sees us as irrelevant
- The world develops their own versions of “faith” and belief

44

45

46

47

48 **Commands**

Go shopping!

49 **Buy refined gold**

- I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire, in order that you may become rich...
- Gold – a store of true value
- Refined by fire
 - When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine
 - Fire often comes by trial (Job 23:10)

50 **Psalm 19:7-10**

- The law of Yahweh is perfect, reviving life. The testimony of Yahweh is firm, making wise the simple. The precepts of Yahweh are right, making the heart rejoice. The command of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of Yahweh is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of Yahweh are true; they are righteous altogether, more desirable than gold, even much fine gold; and sweeter than honey, even honey in the comb.

51 **The consuming fire of trials**

- Isaiah 48:10-11 - Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.
- Psalm 66:10-12 - For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

52 **Buy white raiment**

- The Laodiceans wore black clothing.

- Jesus tells them to purchase white raiment – to seek God’s cleansing from their sin.
- Two ideas pictured here:
 - Take off your black clothes which represent sin tolerated in a life of ease
 - Put on the white clothes because these alone can cover your “shameful nakedness” (their spiritual poverty)

53 **Ephesians 4:22-23**

- ... *that you take off, according to your former way of life, the old man, who is being destroyed according to deceitful desires,*
- *be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man (in accordance with God), who is created in righteousness and holiness from the truth.*

54 **Buy eye salve**

- The Laodicean medical school had invented an ointment for the eyes that restored sight for certain types of blindness
- But Jesus tells them that they need an eye salve for their souls so they can recognize their own spiritual needs and the needs of others around them

55 **Jesus loves you**

- He states emphatically – *I love you* (even though the way you are now makes me sick)
- Because I love you, I will chasten you
 - Proverbs 3:12 -- *because whomever Yahweh will love, he will rebuke, as a father delights in his son.*

56 **Jesus wants fellowship with you**

- This passage is addressed to Christians
- He stands at the door and knocks and is waiting for you to open the door
 - Not a plea for salvation
 - It is a plea for the Christian to open up his life for self-examination, repentance, and then fellowship with Christ
 - Without intimate fellowship with Christ, there are no true spiritual riches

57 **Jesus wants fellowship (2)**

- We often use this verse in personal – salvation witnessing.
- The context here is to the CHURCH! – the SAVED! – and Jesus is on the outside!
- NOTICE THE ORDER...
 - 1. Jesus KNOCKS...He initiates everything!
 - 2. We HEAR, We OPEN – our responsibility 3. Jesus COMES IN. He nurtures the relationship.

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58 **The Promise**

- True riches
- Rule and reign together with Christ (seated by Him)

59 **Overcomers of Laodicea**

Revelation 3:21

- *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.*

60 **He that has an ear, let him hear!**

- The dangers facing today's Christians:
 - Losing their first love (2:4) – Ephesus
 - Being afraid of suffering (2:10) -- Smyrna
 - Doctrinal defection (2:14–15) -- Pergamum
 - Moral departure (2:20) -- Thyatira
 - Spiritual deadness (3:1–2) -- Sardis
 - Not holding fast (v. 11) -- Philadelphia
 - Lukewarmness (vv. 15–16) – Laodicea

61 **Are we lukewarm?**

- Do you come to church, but are not wholehearted about the worship service?
- Do you bring a Bible, but...did you read it this week?
- Do you give, but do it sparingly or grudgingly?
- Do you listen to a sermon, but fail to hear from God?
- Do you sing songs without singing them as prayers to the Lord?