

REVELATION – SERMON 24

THE LORD'S LOVE FOR THE LUKEWARM

Revelation 3:19

INTRODUCTION

- Many churches today have become entirely reliant on themselves, their programs, their methods of church growth, and everything else they have, so that they don't need the Lord.
- When the Laodiceans gave a testimony of their spiritual state, there was no praise of Jesus Christ; they boasted in themselves, their imagined spiritual riches, their self-sufficiency, their need of nothing.
- Their self-deluded state was so repugnant to the Lord that he threatened to spue them out, to cast them off entirely as reprobates.
- What a warning it is to us that we examine ourselves for any trace of this lukewarm, self-righteous, self-glorifying, proud, hypocritical, self-reliant, independent spirit, knowing how hateful it is to God.
- Perhaps the most astonishing part of Christ's message to the Laodiceans is not His threat to expel them, but His loving counsel to such sickening creatures.
- What a revelation of the heart of Jesus, that He yet pleads with them, and offers them deliverance from the judgment that hangs over them!
- In this verse we discover some precious words of encouragement from the Lord to His church, that they would be moved to come to Him for spiritual riches, clothing and vision, when they consider His affection for them in chastening them and calling them to repentance.

This powerful verse shows us the antidote to lukewarmness:

I. A REDEEMER'S COMPASSION TO BE EMBRACED

- A. Who is being addressed here – the saved or the lost in the church?
 1. Arguments in favour of them being believers
 - a. The Lord regards them as one of His true churches
 - b. The Lord expressed His love for them
 - c. The Lord chastened them, which is usually given to sons (Hebrews 12:7)
 - d. His threat to spue them out of His mouth may indicate they were part of His body
 2. Arguments against them being believers
 - a. Being part of a church does not make one saved

- b. Christ's description of their state in v.17 as "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked" indicates they did not possess Christ's imputed righteousness, but were relying on their own self-righteous acts
- c. To spue out, is to expel something foreign out that does not belong to us; it is not to remove a part of one's body
- d. To spue out is to cast out, and Christ promised true believers: "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)
- e. Christ is threatening to utterly reject and condemn the Laodiceans unless they repent, yet the believer is no longer under God's condemnation (John 3:18; 5:24; Romans 8:1)
- f. While other churches received rebuke for sinful behaviour and false doctrine (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira and Sardis), the rebuke upon the Laodiceans is directed at themselves and their spiritual state, not merely their actions
- g. The other churches are exhorted to remember, hold fast what they had, and strengthen the things which remained, but in Laodicea there was nothing to strengthen or remember.
- h. There does not appear to be a distinguishing between two groups in the church of the Laodiceans as there was with the church in Sardis (3:4) – the message is to the whole church, calling all of them to repent.
- i. Christ is represented as being outside the door of the church, seeking for any one there to open to Him, showing that they are not in union with Him (cf. Colossians 1:27)

B. Christ's love for the Laodiceans

- 1. Some have argued that because the Lord loved them, they must be His elect
- 2. Yet, while there is a discriminating love Christ has for those He has redeemed (Romans 8:35-39) – the love of God which is in Christ Jesus – He extends His love to all the people of the world (John 3:16)
 - a. As He commanded us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44), so He showed His love for His enemies by dying for them that they might be reconciled to God (Romans 5:8,10)
 - b. His love is shown by the fact He "will have all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4); He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11); He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), and "now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30) and sends the Holy Spirit to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8)
- 3. The Rich Young Ruler was very much from the same mould as the Laodiceans
 - a. He was wealthy, and trusted in his riches; he was a religious hypocrite with a very high opinion of his spiritual state; he was self-reliant, having need of nothing, and he especially felt that he did not need Jesus Christ (Mark 10:17-22)

- b. Yet “Jesus beholding him loved him” (Mark 10:21)
- 4. The Greek word for love in Revelation 3:19 is *phile* which indicates the Lord’s deep affection for those in the church

II. A REBUKE AND CHASTENING TO BE ENDURED

- A. True love rebukes and chastens
 - 1. Many today think it is unloving, harsh and legalistic to rebuke
 - 2. Yet God does not overlook sin and error, and nor should we, whether it be in the home, church, or society
- B. His rebuke
 - 1. This rebuke involved plainly describing their sinful condition
 - 2. It involved warning them of impending judgment
 - 3. This same verb is used in John 16:8 where the Holy Spirit will “reprove” (convict, convince) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment
- C. His chastening
 - 1. This is a clear allusion to Proverbs 3:12 and Hebrews 12:6
 - 2. Chastening is not condemnation, judgment or punishment, but is discipline, instruction and correction
 - 3. Chastening is most unpleasant and grievous, but it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness (John 15:2; Hebrews 12:11; Psalm 94:12)

III. A REPENTANT CHANGE TO BE EFFECTED

- A. The need for repentance
 - 1. The command to repent is given throughout the letters to the seven churches (2:5,16,21-22; 3:3,19)
 - 2. Without repentance there is no salvation
 - a. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3,5)
 - b. Those who would not perish, must come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)
 - c. The Great Commission requires repentance to be preached among all nations (Luke 24:47)
 - 3. What is repentance?
 - a. “Repentance unto life is a saving grace (Acts 11:18), wrought in the soul by God’s Spirit, whereby a sinner comes to have a true sight and sense of sin (Psalm 51:3-4; Acts 2:37), and of his own lost and undone condition by nature, and also apprehends by the illumination of the Holy Ghost the tender mercy of God in Christ (Joel 2:13); which works in him godly sorrow and grief for his sin

(2 Corinthians 7:10), causing him to also hate and loathe it, and to turn from it unto God (Jeremiah 31:18-19).”

- b. It is not merely a change from unbelief to belief, as some falsely claim
 - c. Repentance is a gift from God (Acts 5:31; 2 Timothy 2:25)
 - d. Repentance is exemplified in the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:17-19)
- B. The zeal that is required
1. The Greek word for zealous (*zeleue*) is from the same root as “hot” in vv.15-16 (*zestos*)
 2. Christ was consumed with godly zeal (Psalm 69:9; John 2:17)
 3. Zeal must be according to knowledge and in those things that are good (Romans 10:2; Galatians 4:17-18)
 4. Phinehas is eternally remembered for his zeal for the LORD’s sake (Numbers 25:11-13)
 5. Paul commended the Corinthians in their zeal for church discipline (2 Corinthians 7:11)
 6. The Scriptures use other terms for zeal:
 - a. Jealous for the Lord (1 Kings 19:14)
 - b. Stirred up (Acts 17:16; 2 Timothy 1:6)
 - c. Fervent in spirit (Romans 12:11)
 7. Christ redeemed us that we would be zealous of good works (Titus 2:14)

CONCLUSION

1. The preeminent truth in Christ’s letter to the Laodiceans is that He loves them.
 - He loves sinners, though they be ever so rebellious, proud and self-righteous.
 - He loves us enough to tell us of our true depraved spiritual condition
 - He loves us enough to warn us of the judgment that will come upon us
 - He loves us enough to provide us the way to escape damnation
 - He loves us enough to give us space to repent
2. Can there be a greater sin than to repay this love with lukewarmness, indifference and apathy?
3. His love constrains us to die to ourselves and live unto him who died for us and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)
4. “Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”