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In the gospels, Jesus refers to his own as sheep. In the gospel of John, Jesus states, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” A born-again believer is called a sheep. A sheep is a follower; it follows behind the shepherd. Sheep are gentle creatures, they do not attack other animals. Now a goat, on the other hand, is stubborn and self-willed and it likes a good fight. I have a friend who owns a farm and on that farm is a mean goat and one day that goat cornered me against a fence. I tried to push the goat away by grabbing its horns but that goat got madder and madder and fought me and it was a lot stronger than me and all I could do was to outrun that goat which I quickly did. I have avoided that goat ever since.

There are people in churches like that goat. They like to fight and cause trouble. There may be some in your congregation like that, Preacher Brother. Jesus even calls the unsaved “goats” in Matthew 25 as seen in verses 31-34. Let me read it to you now.

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

So we see in Scripture that sheep represent the Lord’s people and goats the unsaved. Years ago, there was a knock on my door and I answered it. There stood a Jehovah’s Witness with his companion standing behind him. As I learned who they were, I said to the one facing me that there would come a day when Jesus Christ will separate his sheep from the goats. This Jehovah’s Witness turned to his friend in anger and he said, “This guy just called me a goat!” Well, I never called him a goat, I was just stating how Jesus viewed him.

Now, dear friends, stop for a moment and picture in your minds a church building with a pleasant edifice and inside the church the sanctuary is full of church members who call themselves Christians and they sincerely believe themselves to be saved individuals on their way to heaven but there is something deeply wrong within this church. Although

they are all members and some of them prominent church members, the fact remains that they are unconverted church members, baptized heathens, they are not the Lord's sheep at all. They are church goats and they are greatly deceived and on their way to the torments of hell unless they repent.

Now, you may be asking yourself what church am I talking about? Let me take you there in the book of Revelation 3, beginning in verse 14, it is the Laodicean church. Listen friends, for the last 60 years in America, there has risen a false teaching within the church and this false teaching has been propagated by many Bible scholars in their Bible commentaries and many influential preachers have preached the same thing to which I refer is that the church members mentioned in Revelation 3, in regard to the church at Laodicea, are merely lukewarm Christians who need to start living for the Lord; they are carnal Christians, not living for the Lord as they should. And this teaching of the carnal Christian has had a profound influence on the way we conduct evangelism and on the church in America since WWII. Many good men have taught this doctrine of the carnal Christian and they meant well but they were greatly in error.

Listen friends, there is no such thing as a carnal Christian. You are either saved or lost. You are either a born-again believer regenerated by the living God who serves God within the corporate body of the church or you are an unregenerate person who joined a church, was baptized and is greatly deceived in believing that one day you will start living for the Lord once you surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but you are not there yet, you are a carnal Christian who is still in their sins but on their way to heaven. This philosophy has gained such a prominence within our modern day denominations that many big preachers preach this nonsense. We must remind ourselves that for the last 60 years in America there has been a great departure from God in the land and in the church. This has been a time of great spiritual declension within major denominations and when society is unraveling all around us and perversion abounds in high places and the church is in a downward spiral of its own spiritual declension, then many false teachings abound and eventually they become orthodox in the eyes of the majority. When the majority is in rule, then what the majority has to say is taken as truth and it must be followed implicitly or you will be considered a heretic.

Well, I must stand here today and declare that much theology abounding today was considered heresy in wiser days, in the days of our fathers. And this notion of the church of Laodicea being a bunch of carnal Christians who need to start living for the Lord, again, is utter nonsense for there exists no such animal. You are either a sheep or a goat and if we would simply interpret this passage of Scripture properly it would explain why there exists in our churches such vast amounts of individuals who call themselves Christians but who live like the devil. It would explain all the hypocrites in the church. It would explain why there is such infighting and division within our churches today, why there are so many church splits and people mad at their pastor. Do sheep get mad and attack their own? Of course not, but yet we have accepted the teaching of others and rely on best-selling Bible commentaries and we have embraced this false teaching of the carnal Christian.

Wiser men in better days properly viewed this passage of Scripture and called the Laodiceans what they were: unconverted church members who have yet to come savingly to Christ. I'm speaking of the Puritan writers like Thomas Watson, Joseph Alleine and Matthew Henry, men who preached and lived in a day of vital Christianity because the church in their day was a persecuted church. Over 2,000 ministers were forced out of their pulpits and their livelihoods because they refused not to preach the truth of the gospel of the Son of God. These men did not adhere to a notion of a carnal Christian for no such notion existed in their day. You were either lost or saved, a sheep or a goat.

My message today is entitled "Church Goat" and our text is found in the book of Revelation in chapter 3 and in verses 14-22. As we turn there, try to view this passage from the vantage-point of the Puritan writers who described the Laodicean church members as the unconverted and, please, get it out of your mind what you have formerly been taught on this passage being about lukewarm Christians who just aren't living for the Lord. How many times have we heard a church member say about their son, "My Johnny is a good boy and he got saved when he was four but for the last ten years, he just hasn't been living for the Lord. Pray for him, that he will start living for the Lord." That parent needs to change the way they pray for their child and pray for their conversion, that God would save them.

Listen friends, to how ridiculous the teaching of the carnal Christian can be: There was a Sunday School teacher in a Baptist church and in her class a little boy raised his hand and asked if Hitler was saved. The Sunday School teacher had been raised on the doctrine of the carnal Christian and she replied to the boy, "Well, we don't know if Hitler accepted Christ as a boy or not but he certainly didn't live for Jesus. We can only hope he was saved."

In a day of spiritual declension, when we don't properly understand what true conversion is, then false teaching will abound to the harm of many. As I read this passage, bear in mind when Jesus describes these church members as lukewarm he doesn't call them lukewarm believers, he calls them lukewarm individuals who comprise the church in Laodicea and he says he will spew them out of his mouth. Christ does not reject his sheep and spit them out. The modern view of this text in our day is that the Laodicean church is the worldly and financially prosperous church in need of nothing but they are born-again believers who are just not focused on the things of the Lord; they are living for themselves instead of living for eternity; they just need to start living for the Lord. That is what a modern day egg-head, I mean, Bible scholar will tell you, "Johnny, is just not living for the Lord right now. Pray that he will start living for Jesus."

Just bear that in mind as I read to you the Word of God.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and

increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

So, here is a picture of an unconverted church with Christ shut out of it. He stands on the outside of it as a stranger knocking rather than reigning in the sanctuary of that church in his preeminence. We have for years misused this verse in evangelism as Jesus standing outside the door of the sinner’s heart with his hat in his hand hoping that someone will come along and let him into their hearts so that they can have a personal relationship with him. That’s the evangelism of our day that speaks of an impotent Christ unable to do anything but knock and wait for someone to accept him and invite him in. That’s the nonsense of our hour. That’s the false teaching which would say, “Well, we don’t know if Hitler was saved. We can only hope that he accepted Jesus when he was a little boy.” Hitler is in hell, friend, and the person sitting next to you in church is going to hell if they’re not washed in the blood and born from above.

Listen friend, when Christ saves a sinner he comes in with majesty and authority and transforms the life with a regenerated heart and the gift of saving faith. He doesn’t stand helpless as an insurance salesman would knock at your door hoping you’d buy an insurance policy against the fire of hell. But that’s what today’s evangelist will tell you: “Just accept Jesus.”

Listen friend, it’s not a question of your accepting Jesus, it’s whether Jesus accepts you or not. You come to Christ by receiving Jesus, not accepting him. You receive him as a Lord and as a Savior; Lord and Savior go hand-in-hand with the Son of God and the gospel of the Son of God. When we start preaching like that, it should be preached that Jesus is Lord, then the Spirit of God can come along and take that truth and apply it to the conscience and convict the sin and do his job which is the job of regeneration.

Listen to the comments of Matthew Henry taken from his Bible commentary on the book of Revelation as he describes Laodiceans:

“They may call their lukewarmness charity, meekness, moderation...it is nauseous to Christ, and makes those so that allow themselves in it. They shall be rejected, and finally rejected; for far be it from the holy Jesus to return to that which has been thus rejected....they had learning, and they took it for religion; they had gifts, and they took them for grace; they had wit, and they took it for true wisdom...How careful should we be not to

put the cheat upon our own souls! Doubtless there are many in hell that once thought themselves to be in the way to heaven.”

Now, listen to this friends, please listen carefully to Matthew Henry’s comment next:

“They were naked, without clothing and without house and harbour for their souls. They had neither the garment of justification nor that of sanctification. . . They lay always exposed to sin and shame. Their righteousnesses were but filthy rags.”

In other words, these Laodicean church members were unconverted church goats and not sheep at all. They were blind to their own condition and saw not their danger of resting on their duties and their false hopes and they had a false security and they needed true repentance and saving faith.

Listen friend, Jesus came to save his people from their sins. He never preached the sinning religion. There is no such creature as a carnal Christian, they are lost church members, church goats on their way to hell unless they exercise repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. You won’t bump into Hitler in heaven, friend. You won’t bump into your lost church friend either. You won’t bump into your unconverted minister though he stands behind the pulpit, he doesn’t stand justified in Christ and his merits. This is serious business and all eternity depends upon how we view the Bible and how we preach the gospel and how we share our faith with others. We do men harm if we are not honest with them and we have their blood on our hands when we stand before the Lord on that day.

Let us preach the gospel in all its purity in proper order and call lost sinners to their duty of repentance and their necessity of the work of God upon their heart in regeneration. Let us cease to call a lost church member a carnal Christian and do them the favor of praying for them that the Spirit of God will awaken them to their lost condition and perilous position outside of Christ. The five foolish virgins spoken of by Jesus were deceived individuals who truly believed their standing with God was right and that they were saved as they waited for the bridegroom to come and take them to the marriage supper of the Lamb, but they were unconverted church members. They were goats instead of sheep. They were not carnal Christians who just weren’t living for the Lord, they were lost and they died and they went to a horrible place called hell.

And you, friend, if you’ve never been born from above and washed in the blood, if you are resting on your own merits and duties and have never seen yourself as a lost, ruined sinner in need of a Savior, if you’ve never been convicted of your sins by the Spirit of God and have never had a work of grace upon your heart, then you too are a church goat and in great danger. You are blind without the robe of justification and the garment of sanctification. When a person comes savingly to Christ, self is dethroned and another is enthroned there, the Lord Jesus Christ. Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. Prove your own selves, “Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you except you be reprobates?” Church goats go to hell, sheep go to heaven.

Listen friends, men have no use to say this: “The rich young ruler was a good boy but he wasn’t God’s boy.” Today, in our churches, we would accept the rich young ruler and baptize him and make him chairman of the deacons even though money was his god. We would call him a carnal Christian who is just not living for the Lord yet. Church goat or saved sheep? There is a day approaching fast, sooner than many of us realize, where the chaff will be separated from the wheat and the sheep placed on the right hand of the Son of God and the goats placed on the left and many on the left who were members in good standing in their churches, will defend themselves on that day and say to Jesus, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful good works?” Then the Lord of glory will turn to them with his eyes of fire and declare, “I never knew you. Depart from me ye that work iniquity.”

Are the footprints of your life, dear friend, the footprints of a goat on a wide and broad path? Or are they the footprints of a sheep that travels along a narrow way, walking closely behind the Good Shepherd? Examine your tracks and ask the Holy Spirit of God to examine your hearts, I pray in the strong name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.