

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹⁴To the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation, says this: ¹⁵I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. If only you were cold or hot! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm and not hot or cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You say, "I am rich. I have become very wealthy and need nothing." But you do not know that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments, so that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness may not become public, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

¹⁹I rebuke and discipline those whom I love. So take this seriously and repent. ²⁰Look, I stand at the door and I am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in with him and dine with him, and he with me. ²¹To the one who is victorious I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.

²²Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **This is God's Word.**

Dear Members of God's Church,

Close to the beginning of the book of Revelation, God directed John to write letters to 7 churches and in these letters he commended these churches for their faithfulness but also warned them about the dangers of false prophets and false teachings that were infiltrating their churches except for the church in Laodicea. There was no praise for the church at Laodicea – only warning. God described the congregation as being "lukewarm."

What do you think of when you hear someone described as "lukewarm?" It's not a very flattering term. We would rather be described as being "hot" with enthusiasm and zeal – passionate about what drives us but "lukewarm." That's not a very flattering term because it just means we don't care – we don't want to get involved – we are not interested.

Well, that is how God described the congregation in Laodicea. they were "lukewarm" and that was having a serious impact on their spiritual life. But things weren't always that way. All of the congregations that received these letters had started out with a zeal for the gospel. They had been excited to be called to faith – so what happened? You might say life happened.

Some of the congregations endured persecution and grew because when the church is persecuted you dig into the Word more and more – persecution tends to draw you closer to God because you need his strength and comfort to endure what is happening in your life. But the congregation in Laodicea wasn't really persecuted like some of the others however they were struggling – struggling with what we might call Satan's favorite temptation – they were struggling with prosperity.

The city of Laodicea had a lot going for it. They were a banking center and were even home to a mint. That meant there was a lot of trade happening and the people of the city were prospering. Laodicea was also a textile center – they were known for their manufacture of fine wool clothing. That too added to the prosperity of the city. Finally, they had invented an eye

salve that worked to heal eye problems. All these things made Laodicea a prosperous city and many of its citizens were well-to-do and that included the congregation of Laodicea as well.

You might be thinking, well isn't prosperity a good thing? Isn't that one way in which God might bless us? The answer to both questions is "yes." Sometimes God does bless us with prosperity and material wealth and it can be a good thing if we keep everything in perspective and don't let our wealth take over our lives. The people of Laodicea had everything they needed and could take care of themselves. Their wealth and prosperity took them down a path where they didn't feel they had to rely on God for anything. They became indifferent to God. It didn't happen overnight. It was a gradual change where the things of this world started to crowd God out of their hearts.

That is why God looked at them and said, **"You say, 'I am rich. I have become very wealthy and need nothing.' But you do not know that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."** Physically, they were doing great but spiritually they were lacking – their life was in shambles. At this point they deserved God's condemnation – they are relying on the ways of the world and are headed directly away from God but God doesn't condemn them. He calls out to them, **"I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments, so that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness may not become public, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see."**

God uses the items that the city is well known for to call out to them to return to the richness of the Gospel. To once again let God clothe them in the robe of righteousness washed clean in the blood of the Lamb and to let him anoint their eyes with the healing salve of faith so that they can see Jesus as their Savior. Even though God says, "I advise you to buy," the price has already been paid. Jesus, God's Son, gave his life so that they and us can have the richness of the Gospel message.

God goes onto explain his love for the Laodiceans and for us, **"I rebuke and discipline those whom I love. So take this seriously and repent. ²⁰Look, I stand at the door and I am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in with him and dine with him, and he with me."** God loves them and wants to live in their hearts and so this is a call to repentance and a call for the people of Laodicea to be faithful once again and to have zeal for the Lord.

So what about us? If the Lord were to write a letter to us what would it say? Would he commend our zeal for the Lord and how we stand up for the truth found in God's Word or would he describe us as "lukewarm," caught up in the way of the world. I think we would all want to be in the 1st category but if we are honest, we would have to say that there are times when God isn't our 1st priority – there are times when we might be "lukewarm" for the Lord..

Thankfully, the Lord loves us too. He calls us to repentance and brings forgiveness into our hearts. He helps us back onto the path of righteousness and cloths us with the robe of forgiveness – washed in the blood of the Lamb and he gives us a promise, **"To the one who is victorious I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with**

my Father on his throne.” All those who are faithful have the sure hope of sitting with Jesus in heaven. That is where we all want to be some day – sitting next to our Savior in heaven.

Jesus closes this letter by telling us, **“Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** In other words, this is important so listen to it. In reality our life – our spiritual life – depends on it!

Life is good. we all have what we need and in many cases more than we need. The Lord has been good to us. May we always look forward with zeal to come and hear the richness of the gospel. May we always be thankful that the Lord has clothed us in his robe of righteousness and may we always thank God for opening our eyes of faith to see how gracious and loving he is to each and everyone of us. Amen.