

## **If All Else Fails**

### **Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place**

**April 11, 2021**

#### **Revelation 3.14-22**

#### **I. Horrible state of the Laodicean church**

##### **A. Revelation 3:14–22 (NASB95) —**

1. 14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:
2. 15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.
3. 16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.
4. 17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.
5. 19 ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.
6. 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 will dine with him, and he with Me.
7. 21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.
8. 22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”

##### **B. Characteristics**

1. Lukewarm

2. Self-sufficient
3. Spiritually impoverished
  - a. Ignorant of their impoverishment

C. Observations

1. **Self-sufficiency reveals a selling out to worldliness**
  - a. Located on plateau in Lycus valley in SW Phrygia; both E-W and N-S trade routes
  - b. Famous for banking
  - c. Major producer of black woolen garments
  - d. Famous medical school
    - (1) Produced Phrygian Powder to make eye salve
  - e. With clothing, healing arts, money, nothing more needed to get along in this world
  - f. **2 Corinthians 5:1–8** (NASB95) — 1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. 6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight— 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.
    - (1) Contrast between earthly conditions and

heavenly hope

- g. Romans 8:18–25 (NASB95) — 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

(1) Not much groaning in Laodicea

(2) No longing for glory

- h. Can be rich and be a Christian; not easy

(1) Hard to believe there is a distinction  
between material and spiritual blessings

(2) in our age we judge the one by the other

2. **Lukewarmness is essentially spiritually fruitlessness**

- a. Tendency to see the issue as zeal

(1) Would be better to be hot

(2) Cold is bad; better to be cold because they  
would know they were not hot

- b. City's water supply – received cold water from

Colossae; hot water from Hierapolis; all lukewarm by the time it reached Laodicea

- (1) Hierapolis hot springs had healing properties
- (2) Cooler water from Colossae was refreshing
- (3) Laodicean water was neither healing nor refreshing

c. These people didn't have the spiritual resources to bear fruit

- (1) No healing
- (2) No refreshment
  - (a) Acts 3:19 (NASB95) — 19 “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”

3. **Spiritual impoverishment is serious and complete**

a. **Miserable**

- (1) **1 Corinthians 15:19** (NASB95) — 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be **pitied [miserable]**.
- (2) Without the resurrection, for us to believe in Christ makes us the most deluded, pathetic people on the face of the earth

b. **Wretched**

- (1) **Romans 7:24–25** (NASB95) — 24 **Wretched** man that I am! Who will set me free from **the body of this death?** 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh **the law of sin.**

c. **Poor**

- (1) Without spiritual wealth

- (a) Cf wealth of the city
- d. **Blind**
  - (1) Clueless about spiritual things
  - (2) **1 Corinthians 2:14** (NASB95) — 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.
  - (3) **Romans 3:11** (NASB95) — 11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS...
  - (4) Characteristics of the unregenerate
  - (5) Nothing the medical school could do about that
- e. **Naked**
  - (1) **Revelation 16:15** (NASB95) — 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who **stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked** and men will not see his shame.”)
  - (2) **Revelation 19:8** (NASB95) — 8 It was given to her to **clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**
  - (3) **Romans 3:10** (NASB95) — 10 as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE...”
  - (4) Characteristics of the unregenerate
  - (5) Nothing that black wool could do about that
- f. Indicators of unregenerate people
  - (1) No exceptions
  - (2) Cf Sardis – reputation for life, but dead
  - (3) Revelation 3:4 (NASB95) — 4 ‘But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk

with Me in white, for they are worthy.

4. These conditions exist in what is outwardly a Christian church!
5. Interaction among these characteristics
  - a. Self-sufficiency leads to spiritual impoverishment
    - (1) Motivating conditions for the pursuit of spiritual development are absent
  - b. Self-sufficiency leads to ignorance of spiritual bankruptcy
    - (1) Confuse material and spiritual blessings
  - c. Self-sufficiency and spiritual impoverishment leads to fruitlessness
    - (1) **Acts 3:19** (NASB95) — 19 “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come **from the presence of the Lord...**”
    - (2) Spiritual life comes from God, HS; no HS, no spiritual life, no spiritual fruit

## II. **How did the church get this way?**

- A. **Didn't follow the directions** (“if all else fails, follow the directions”)
  1. Colossians
  2. **Colossians 4:12–16** (NASB95) — 12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you **and for those who are in Laodicea** and Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. 15 **Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea** and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. 16 When this letter is read among you, **have it also read in the**

**church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.**

B. **Rejected the word of God**

1. **Revelation 3:18** (NASB95) — 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich...
2. **Psalms 19:7–10** (NASB95) — 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 **They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;** Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
3. Their church started with the word
  - a. **Romans 10:17** (NASB95) — 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
  - b. **Colossians 1:3–6** (NASB95) — 3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard **in the word of truth**, the gospel 6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;
4. They were to have lived by the word
  - a. **Colossians 3:16** (NASB95) — 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

5. Remedy – return to the Word
  - a. Must be captivated by the riches of the Word to avoid being captivated by the riches of the world
6. Possible to be a materially rich Christian only if you regard the Word as more valuable than gold

C. **Failed to practice true righteousness**

1. **Revelation 3:18** (NASB95) — 18 I advise you to buy ... white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed...
2. **Revelation 19:8** (NASB95) — 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
3. Colossians speaks of righteous acts in context of putting on clothes

- a. **Colossians 3:1–4** (NASB95) — 1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

(1) Mind has to be fixated on things above;  
need the right taste in clothes

- b. **Colossians 3:5–11** (NASB95) — 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living



in them. 8 But now you also, **put them all aside**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you **laid aside the old self** with its evil practices, 10 and have **put on the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

(1) Spoken in past tense – have put off the old self, put on new

- c. **Colossians 3:12–14** (NASB95) — 12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on** a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things **put on** love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

(1) Present tense – need to put on these righteous clothes

4. These are the fruit of the Spirit

- a. **Galatians 5:22–23** (NASB95) — 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

b. True righteousness comes from God

5. Our righteousness is likened to a filthy garment

- a. **Isaiah 64:6** (NASB95) — 6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment...

6. Remedy – buy only the best clothes
  - a. True righteousness
  - b. By the Spirit
- D. **Lost Spiritual Understanding**
  1. **Revelation 3:18** (NASB95) — 18 I advise you to buy from Me ... **eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.**
  2. Eyes and sight as metaphors for understanding
    - a. **Ephesians 1:15–19** (NASB95) — 15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that **the eyes of your heart may be enlightened**, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe....
    - b. **Romans 11:8–10** (NASB95) — 8 just as it is written, “**GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.**” 9 And David says, “**LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. 10 “LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.**”
    - c. **Romans 1:21–22** (NASB95) — 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as

God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their **foolish heart was darkened**. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools...

3. **Colossians 1:9–10** (NASB95) — 9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all **spiritual wisdom and understanding**, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...
4. **Colossians 2:1–3** (NASB95) — 1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the **full assurance of understanding**, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
5. Remedy – buy what it takes to open the eyes of their understanding
  - a. Really Christ Himself!

E. **Lost sense of the supremacy of Christ**

1. **Revelation 3:14** (NASB95) — 14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the **Beginning of the creation of God**, says this...
2. **Colossians 1:15–21** (NASB95) — 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or

dominions or rulers or authorities—**all things have been created through Him and for Him.** 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds...

3. **Colossians 2:9–15** (NASB95) — 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

III. **This supreme Christ stands at the door and knocks**

- A. **Revelation 3:20** (NASB95) — 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 will dine with him, and he with Me.

- B. Never too late, even in an apostate church, for one to be saved
- C. Evangelism
  - 1. Ministry of the Word of God
  - 2. Focused on the supremacy of Christ
  - 3. Delivered by people who exhibit true righteousness
  - 4. Fueled by people who pray that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened
- D. Don't know how many Laodicean churches there are
  - 1. Not important
- E. Important – the supreme Christ, the Amen, the faithful witness, the beginning of the creation of God, still comes to such churches
  - 1. And He knocks!
  - 2. Purpose – make new creations out of unregenerate people who are ignorant of their spiritual condition
- F. Answer the door!