



THE PRAYER CLOSET

ENCOURAGING & EQUIPPING BELIEVERS IN PRAYE

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ISSUE 3

LEARNING FOR LAODICEA

Laodicea is the most well known of the churches mentioned in **Revelation 2-3**. When you mention Laodicea, you immediately think about lukewarm water – not hot or cold. You also vividly remember Christ saying that He would spew them out of His mouth. That’s hard stuff to forget! It makes Laodicea stand out among these seven churches.

Of all the churches in **Revelation 2-3**, Laodicea receives the most scathing rebuke. Jesus uses the harshest of words to speak to this church. Jesus is full of love and compassion but He deals sternly with this church. The time had come to repent or face the judgment of Christ. It was a significant and sober time in the life of the Laodicean church.

Outwardly, Laodicea was a prosperous church. It was a prestigious church in a well-to-do community. Laodicea was the center of the major trade routes in Asia Minor. They had one of the most famous, powerful banks in the world. It was an industrial center, manufacturing a variety of goods. It was also home to a world famous medical school. This medical school had developed an eye salve that was used all over the world. It was a rich church in a famous city. What could possibly be wrong at Laodicea?

Jesus however had a very different perspective. He sums this church up with one word – lukewarm. Their material prosperity masked their spiritual poverty. They were a spiritually poor church that needed Jesus Christ and His riches. This church was part of the affluent society around it. Rather than exercising a significant spiritual influence in this culture, it had been absorbed into the culture. It was no different from the culture where it was.

How does the message to this church almost two thousand years ago apply to us today? In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we will look at how this text should shape the church today. We will also examine how we can use this text to pray for our churches and ourselves.

The church is in danger of self-deception (3:14-15)

The words of Jesus in this text are harsh. It is the severest condemnation of all seven churches. It would be hard to swallow what Jesus says in this text. That’s why He starts out with this description of Himself, “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (3:14). These words point to Christ’s faithfulness and reliability.

Jesus is the “Amen.” This word means surely, truly. Jesus is the absolute truth – fixed, unchangeable truth. At the same time, He is the faithful and true witness. He is the ideal witness whose testimony never falls short of the truth. He is also the Creator of all things, “beginning of the creation of God.” This stresses His absolute authority. When Jesus says something, it is pure, fixed, unchanging truth. He backs it up with His supreme authority.

Why does He describe Himself in this way? It’s because of what He says in 3:15, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.” Those are hard words. Really hard words. Only Jesus has the authority and truthfulness to say something like this. If these words came from somebody else, they could easily dismiss them. Yet, these words come from Jesus Christ – the absolute Truth, the always truthful, reliable Witness, and the supreme Creator of all things.

These verses point to the truth that churches can be deceived about their condition. We can often be blind to our spiritual need. This is a constant danger that the church has to face. We often don’t see and look for what is displeasing to the Lord in our midst. It’s uncomfortable and messy to have to be honest about where we are spiritually as congregations and individuals. There is a grave danger of being deceived about our spiritual condition (3:17).

Unfortunately, we tend toward pride, especially in our churches. We should rejoice in the

blessings that God gives. We should be thankful for the ways that God works in and through our churches. However, this cannot blind us to our true spiritual condition. We should not use this as an excuse to be lazy when it comes to sober, self-examination.

This is why we must saturate ourselves with the Word of Christ. His Word is like a mirror that reveals to us what our true condition is. At the same time, the Holy Spirit is the revealer of our hearts. He sees and knows all. Jesus Christ uses His Word and Spirit to reveal to us our condition.

Pray that your church will have a sober awareness of its spiritual condition. Ask that it will not be deceived about its condition. Plead for a powerful work of the Word and Spirit in your church.

Jesus despises lukewarmness (3:16)

What does it mean to be lukewarm? Jesus provides us with a definition in these verses, “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot: I will spue thee out of my mouth” (3:16). Jesus described their spiritual condition in terms of water – they were lukewarm, neither cold nor hot.

Laodicea had difficulty with its water supply. It had to get its water from Hierapolis or from Colosse. Neighboring Hierapolis had healing, hot spring water. Nearby Colosse had cool, life-giving water. The problem is that, by the time it traveled the pipes to Laodicea, the water was lukewarm. The water in Laodicea was somewhere between these two in temperature. Such tepid water was sickening on either a hot or a cold day.

Lukewarmness is somewhere between hot and cold. You’re not zealous, committed and on-fire for Jesus but neither are you antagonistic and unbelieving toward Christ. You’re just in-between. Moreover, in this middle ground, you’re self-content, self-absorbed, and self-righteous. Lukewarmness is the middle ground between genuine faith and hardened unbelief.

Jesus despises lukewarmness. How do I know this? First, He says that He wishes that they were hot or cold. Jesus is not interested in the middle ground. He wants you to either be committed to Him and pursuing Him or He wants you to be antagonistic and unbelieving toward Him. Why? He can mightily use those who are committed to Him and pursuing Him. At the same time, there is hope for those who are antagonistic and unbelieving.

There’s hope for them to come to Christ in genuine faith. It’s much harder when you are lukewarm, self-righteous, and content.

At the same time, Jesus declares that He was ready to spew them out of His mouth (3:16). He is at the point of vomiting them out of His mouth. Vivid picture isn’t it? This shows us how much He despises lukewarmness. It shows His opposition to it. Lukewarmness does not glorify Jesus; it is an insult to His glory and greatness. Yet, even at this desperate point, there is still hope. Jesus is full of mercy and calls for them to repent and turn to Him (3:19).

Plead that Jesus will deliver your church from lukewarmness. Ask that He will kindle and stir afresh your church’s commitment to Him and your worship and witness for Him.

Jesus desires to have an authentic relationship with people (3:17-18, 20-22)

Why was the Laodicean church in a lukewarm state? Jesus reveals that in 3:17. This church was rich and didn’t feel like it needed anything, including Jesus Himself. They were content and had no idea what they really needed (3:18). Jesus reveals that they needed three things. He calls on them to “buy” three things:

- “gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich” – Jesus tells them that they needed genuine faith, faith that can withstand the fire. They needed a faith that would produce works and stand fiery tests.
- “white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear” – Jesus now tells them that they need righteousness – a righteousness that will clothe them and cover them. Without this righteousness, they will be utterly disgraced before God.
- “anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see” – This refers to the famous eye salve developed in Laodicea that brought healing to eyes all over the world. They needed “spiritual” eye salve – they needed a cure for their spiritual blindness. They needed the illuminating, teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. They needed the Holy Spirit to open their eyes to their condition and to teach them the truth.

Interestingly, Jesus tells them to go “buy” these things. No doubt, they were rich. However, it should be obvious that they couldn’t go and “buy” these things. Where then could they get these things? They could only find these things in Jesus Christ. He alone could grant these things to them. They were to seek and trust in Jesus Christ because:

- Jesus Christ is the only One who could work faith in their hearts and sustain, strengthen and grow that faith;
- Jesus Christ is the only One who has a righteousness that could cover their sinful nakedness and make them acceptable to God;
- Jesus Christ is the only One who has the Holy Spirit to teach and guide people in the truth.

This was a church filled with people who professed Christ but did not possess Christ. As in all churches, there were true believers. Yet, this church had so accommodated and absorbed the culture that the church was full of people who had no genuine relationship with Jesus Christ.

For this reason, Jesus offers His famous invitation in **3:20**, “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.” This church desperately needed Jesus. It was filled with people who had no authentic relationship to Him.

The sad truth is that our churches are filled with people who are like this. John Bunyan once wrote, “We have filled our churches with baptized sinners who have never known the guilt of sin nor the need of a Savior.” Even the purest churches on this earth will have people that are not converted to Christ. Unfortunately, this is what characterized the church at Laodicea.

However, the good news is that Jesus desires to save and have an authentic relationship with people. Jesus knocks at the door! He is full of mercy and love. He longs to save. He will come in and have fellowship. He will establish a relationship with those who turn from their sin and trust in Him. He even desires that we sit and reign with Him (**3:21**). The Master is calling. Are we listening (**3:22**)? Are we willing to welcome Jesus back into the church and our lives?

Pray that every member of your church will know Jesus Christ as the personal Lord and Savior of the lives. Plead that Jesus Christ will be preeminent in your church. Ask

that faith, righteousness, and understanding in the truth will characterize every believer.

How Can This Text Help Me Pray?

The following are some suggestions on how you can use this text in your praying:

Adoration:

- Praise Him for being the absolutely reliable
- Praise Him for being the faithful and true witness – that His Word is always true.
- Praise Him for being the Creator of all that is.
- Praise Him for being the merciful Savior who corrects and chastises His church.

Confession:

- Confess any lukewarmness in your life.
- Confess any spiritual blindness and hardness of heart.
- Confess any compromise with the culture.
- Confess putting anything or anybody ahead of your relationship to Jesus.

Thanksgiving:

- Thank Jesus for desiring to have fellowship with us.
- Thank Jesus for His willingness to let us share in His victory (**3:22**).
- Thank Jesus for loving His church, His people, no matter what.

Petitions:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything displeasing to the Lord that you are blinded to.
- Pray that the Spirit of God will stir and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ and His Word.
- Pray for the power and discipline to fellowship with Christ every day by His Word and prayer.

Intercession:

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will renew the witness of your church – that it will influence the culture around it instead of being conformed to it.
- Ask God to grant genuine spiritual awakening to your area.
- Plead that the Holy Spirit will convict the people of your area of their lostness and their need of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 2-3 Prayer Guide

In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we finish our look at the seven churches in **Revelation 2-3**. It’s my hope and prayer that these newsletters have helped you pray for your church in some new and

The Prayer Closet Ministries, Inc.
Dr. Kevin Meador
P.O. Box 278
Hickory, MS 39332

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fresh ways. The goal of these newsletters was to provide you with a variety of insights and prayer pointers on interceding for your local church.

I'd like to offer you a simple prayer guide based on what we find in **Revelation 2-3**. You can use this to intercede for your local church and for those around you. We desperately need to pray for our churches – the ones we belong to and those that our brothers and sisters in Christ belong to.

Ephesus – **Revelation 2:1-7**

Pray that your church will be careful not to leave its first love – that Your church will love Jesus above all else.

Smyrna – **Revelation 2:8-11**

Plead that your church will trust God in the midst of suffering and persecution, boldly standing for Christ no matter what.

Pergamum – **Revelation 2:12-17**

Ask that your church will not compromise the truth but will love, defend, and live out the truth.

Thyatira – **Revelation 2:18-29**

Pray that your church will not waffle on its morality, but that it will seek purity in thought, word, and action.

Sardis – **Revelation 3:1-6**

Plead that your church will be on its guard against spiritual deadness – that God will revive and refresh your church.

Philadelphia – **Revelation 3:7-13**

Pray that your church will walk through open doors for sharing the gospel of Jesus – that God would empower the witness of your church.

Laodicea – **Revelation 3:14-22**

Plead that your church will avoid at all costs the loss of its passion for Jesus Christ and His Word.

In **Revelation 2-3**, seven times Jesus says, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” The question is not, “Is God speaking?” The question is, “Are you listening?” Jesus Christ loves His church. He desires that we hear Him and become what He desires and commands. Pray that your church will grow and become all that Christ desires and commands. At the same time, seek the same for yourself. Jesus Christ is Lord of the church. He will bless and respond to your prayers for His beloved Bride, purchased with His own blood.

prayer@prayerclosetministries.org
www.prayerclosetministries.org
 (601) 635-2180 (601) 646-2295