



Greenwood Baptist Church

Brian Bond

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The One About Vomit: The Revelation to John

Revelation 3:14-18

I titled this message "The One About Vomit." So there you go. I know you're like, "Did he just say vomit?" Yes, I did. I said vomit. We describe it in different ways when we're talking to people. "Yeah, I had a little bit of..." But there are times when you get that sickness where it feels like your whole stomach is about to come up. You describe it because you want people to understand how sick you really were. I know you all are thinking, "What is he talking about?" We're going to go to Revelation 3:14-18. There is a word in here that they've translated from the Greek to be a little bit milder. But I am going to read it as the original Greek intended.

Revelation 3:14-18: The Message to the Church in Laodicea

"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation: 'I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth! You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.'"

I wouldn't say this passage has troubled me, but it has nagged at me throughout my entire time following Jesus. It has nagged at me because I don't want to live a life following Christ that is so offensive to my Savior that His only way to describe what it brings to Him is to vomit from His mouth. It's a very graphic description. That Greek word is the word for vomit. The interpreters and translators will spit out sounds a little bit better—a little bit more genteel. Just like our moms would have little genteel ways of saying things, that's the way the translators came up with it.

It means "to vomit." And you're already sick of me saying "vomit," "upchuck," "blow chunks," whatever. I understand that, but I also understand how sick Jesus must be of the way we're living to say something like that. This is a letter to Christians. This is not for non-Christians. This is for believers—this is for us. I fully admit there have been times when that probably described me,

but I don't want to live that kind of life. So we're going to dissect what he means by that and how we can change it.

You may be like, "Lukewarm, hot, cold. Does that mean God wants us to be all passionate? How do I get that way?" It's not really about that, and we're going to see that. But there are three things he talks about. He calls them poor, naked, and blind. We're going to go through each one. Here is one thing about this passage. He says, "Look, you say, 'I'm rich. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched, miserable, and poor." So the first thing He tells them is, "Hey, you think you have everything together and have everything that you need."

This is especially challenging because, at the time, Laodicea was certainly not on the same scale as the United States, yet it was a place of great wealth. The economy was booming, and they were doing very well. So you can see what Jesus is saying: "You've gotten to where you rely on your stuff. You think your stuff makes you rich, but it doesn't." We live in a culture—we live in a time—unlike any before us. We are rich beyond measure.

If you think about it, pretty much every single one of us in this room—except for some of you kids, and you all don't need one anyway—has a device in our hands that can access all kinds of information. You can order food from it. I've pushed a few buttons on the app, and people have delivered cold Bluebell ice cream to my door. That is amazing! We have all of these things that we take for granted. I understand that life can be hard, no matter how much stuff you have, but the things we complain about are usually fairly minor when you look at the life someone had a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago and the way they lived.

We don't have to worry about a lot of those things. A hundred and fifty years ago, people were like, "Man, it's going to be hot in church! Make sure you bring a fan." We've got air conditioning. We've got people with blankets. They bring blankets in here because it's so cold. But it's got to be a little bit cold. If it's too warm, people start drifting off, and then I've got to start yelling—and nobody wants that.

But we've got all these comforts. You're all sitting on padded chairs. When I went with my grandma, they sat on wooden pews with no air conditioning. I used to go to church with my grandma in south Mississippi in the middle of summer, when it was 4,322 degrees outside. And it was even hotter inside that church! And you wore church clothes to service back then. You had to dress up. You had to wear things you were not comfortable in, and they did not feel good.

They didn't have moisture-wicking stuff back then. They had moisture-sticking stuff! Do you know what I mean? When you came out of there, everybody had big ole' pit stains. It was not nice! So we live in this culture now, where we have so many things and are so blessed. It's easy to look around and just go, "Man, life's good!" There is nothing wrong with working hard and doing well. There is nothing wrong with having stuff. There is nothing wrong with that.

But here's the problem: how much of your life, how much of your heart, how much of your mind, and how much of your effort is devoted to stuff? Whether it's the stuff you have, getting more stuff, improving your stuff, or whatever. Here's what Jesus says in Matthew 6:19-21:

"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal."

Everything you own right now that is important to you will eventually become junk or be thrown away by the people who come after you. Some of the things you've spent your life trying to get will be tossed aside down the road, or they'll just rust or fall apart. The trophies you spent all this time making... You can go to any pawn shop and find trophies that you know meant something to somebody when they won them, and that they handed down to somebody.

At some point, they were handed down to someone who said, "I don't want this," and then sold or given away. All the things you are seeking after will go to someone else, and they won't care about them the way you do. That's just life. Jesus said, "Look, don't store up these treasures on earth, where moths eat them. They're going to fall apart, or rust destroys them, or thieves break in and steal them. Store your treasure in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves break in and steal." And then He says, and listen to this:

"Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."

Whatever you treasure most is where your heart will be. If your heart is in stuff, then guess what? Your stuff will fall apart and eventually become worthless. Have you ever watched videos of these towns? Some of them are cool. Sometimes there are huge buildings, and they set up chargers in them, hit one button, and it all explodes at once, collapsing in on itself.

And then it's just a pile of rubble. But at one point, it was the newest, best, most amazing building in the area. It might even have been named after someone. And that was their crowning achievement, and now it has been reduced to rubble. Listen, wherever your heart is, whatever you treasure, if those are the things you treasure, they're all just going to be rubble someday.

Am I saying we shouldn't build buildings? No. Am I saying we shouldn't try to do well in life? No. Am I saying we shouldn't try to win a buckle or try to get ahead? No! Those are good things. But here's my question to you: Is that your treasure? Is that where your thoughts, your mind, and your heart are? If there is no thought or effort toward the things of God, you are wasting your life on things that will just end up in the junk pile.

But the effort, love, and life you put into the things of God, into loving other people, into serving, giving, and telling others about Jesus, are the things that are going to be forever. They are going to be forever! You will receive a reward in heaven that will last forever. So there is nothing wrong with doing well. There is nothing wrong with those things. But where is your heart? Are those the things you treasure? ***"Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."***

Do you know what He is telling this church—this group of people? "Listen, you've got a bunch of stuff, and you think you've got it all, but you've got nothing, because there is going to come a time when none of those things are going to matter. And the things you had a chance to invest in that mattered, you didn't spend any time in. So you think you're rich, but you're really poor. Store

up treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves cannot break in and steal."

Be investing in the eternal. Do you know what? As fathers, we have the opportunity to do that all the time. If your kids are around, invest in your children. Tell them about Jesus. Show them what really matters in life. There are all kinds of things for your kids to do now. There are fifty thousand camps you can send them to, there's this sports league, that sports league, this camp, that camp, this kind of thing... There are all kinds of things, and some of them can be good, but make sure you're building and demonstrating to your kids that you're going to say no sometimes.

You know, at those tournaments for the little kids, they give them these big, giant rings—they're not really expensive. I hope you all know this. At the time, you're like, "Whoa!" and the kids are like, "I've got a ring!" And now half of them don't even know where they are. They're stuck in the bottom of a closet, and the older they get, the less it matters to them. Is it wrong to play sports? No, absolutely not. My kid still plays baseball, and he gives it his all. He does his best to do well at it, and that's a good thing.

But if you do that to the exclusion of things that are eternal, you're going to pay for it, and they're going to pay for it. So that means sometimes you've got to tell your kids—there is this word. Say it with me... NO. It's okay to say no. And they'll get over it. But you've got to demonstrate to them that there are things that are more important in life than winning trophies and getting stuff. There are things that matter more.

Teach your kids to invest in those things. And not only that, show them. Show them. Jesus came to them and said, "Look, you think you're doing great because you've got a bunch of stuff." But He's telling them, "But your life is lukewarm." There were probably other people around who thought, "Man, they're really blessed. They've got a bunch of stuff! They've got this, and they've got that. They seem to be doing really well." But they were just lukewarm.

Then He tells them, "You think you're clothed, but you're naked." That was a sign of humiliation, of being uncovered and exposed. Nakedness is a sign that we're lacking. It reveals things we don't want to reveal. To be clothed means those things are covered. There are two different things here. It says in Revelation 19:7-8:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself. She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear." For the fine linen represents the good deeds of God's holy people."

So at some point, we're going to be dressed in the good deeds that we've done here on this earth. That's righteousness. Righteousness covers our sins. There are two kinds of righteousness. I'm going to give you a theological term. There is what's called imputed righteousness—that is, righteousness that comes outside of ourselves. We didn't earn that. That is God declaring us righteous. That's God giving us righteousness because of Jesus. You can't earn that.

It says in Romans 4:4-8:

"When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God, who forgives sinners." That's imputed righteousness. It's given to us. We're counted as righteous. "David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it: "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of sin."

You don't earn entry into heaven. The linens it refers to in Revelation aren't about "You got into heaven because you clothed yourself." You can't. You need this thing called imputed righteousness. God declares us righteous; we get credit for the righteousness Jesus lived because God loves us and forgives. But you have to have faith in Jesus. When you get that, you are declared righteous. God says your sins are as far from me as the East is from the West. He sees us as righteous.

But there is another kind of righteousness. There is imputed—that's given. And then there is imparted, which means that in the act of imputing—giving us righteousness—we're also given the ability to live righteously. That's imparted. We're given power over sin. It no longer has power over us. That power is broken. Sinners are going to sin because that's their nature.

Believers still sin, but we have power over sin. The power of sin over us has been broken. Not only that, God has given us everything we need to do well—to live righteously, to make right choices, to do the right thing, to invest in things that are eternal. God has given us everything we need.

Philippians 2:12-13:

"Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."

This is a description of what lukewarm means. Lukewarm means you've been given righteousness. It was credited to you, and then it was imparted to you—you've been given the power to live righteously. New believers, we go after it. We want to tell everybody about Christ. But then there comes a point, sometimes, when you just get comfortable, and it isn't urgent anymore. You get caught up in other things. It's not like you went from following Jesus to *Breaking Bad* all of a sudden—"I'm an international cartel dealer," or whatever.

You stop moving forward. You stop living in such a way that people see Jesus in you. You're still living in such a way that people say, "He's a good dude" or "She's a good lady." But you're not showing progress. You're not, as Paul said, "working hard to show the results of your salvation." Salvation is given to us, in part, so that we can show that we're saved. You ought to be able to see that we're saved, not just because "Well, I don't do this anymore, and I don't do that anymore."

Here is something that may be hard to hear: Your kids would be better off if you were cold toward the things of God rather than lukewarm. I've heard all kinds of stories about where people come from. There are stories in this room of all different kinds. This is not scientific in any way. It's just something I've observed. But I've heard more stories about people who are now following Christ from those who were raised in a Christian home with believing parents and taught the things of God—maybe they drifted away for a while, but they came back—maybe they didn't.

I've also heard a lot of stories from people who said, "We didn't go to church. My dad didn't want anything to do with it. He never went. Maybe my mom went, but my dad never would." Dads, let me tell you something: your kids are probably not going to rise above your spiritual level. It's a tough deal, but it's true. I've heard lots of stories where the dad was cold to the things of the gospel, didn't follow the Lord at all, and they came to know Jesus. But I've heard very few who talk about their dads, "Well, my dad was kind of a lukewarm Christian."

I hear very few. I'm not saying there aren't any, because the amazing thing is that we have a God who loves us and pursues us. But God also designed the family. That's part of the order of things, that we would demonstrate—the family would show, as best they could—that this is how it's supposed to be. A father is supposed to love his kids, discipline them, and set an example for them. It's built in us, particularly as boys. If you're a dad, at some point you've looked back and realized that your kid is walking like you, watching you, and doing exactly what you do.

You didn't even think about it, but you spit over the side, and your kid stopped and spit. And your wife is saying, "Would you quit spitting? Now he is spitting all over!" You don't realize that it's programmed in us to follow our dads. Your kids would be better off if you were cold to the gospel than if you're just going to live a lukewarm life of following Jesus. Because here's the thing about being lukewarm: you are a prime target for the Enemy. And the thing is, when you're lukewarm, you don't know you're lukewarm. You think you are just fine.

Until you can admit, "I'm the one. It's my life that Jesus is saying, 'Because you are lukewarm, I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth.'" That's not an easy thing to hear, but that's how seriously Jesus wanted them to understand. Sometimes we give graphic descriptions of when we get sick because we want people to understand how sick we really were. We want them to know.

There was a Christmas when we were up at my parents', and I got sick. We had to go to a hotel room. I was so sick I thought I was going to have an aneurysm because I was throwing up so hard. Have you ever had one of those? It's so violent. And then to recognize that Jesus is saying, "Your life makes me feel that way." Your body is saying, "We've got to get this stuff out of here! It is repulsive, it is damaging, and I don't want it in me. I want it out!" And God is saying that about a life that is lukewarm. That's about as graphic and as direct as Jesus gets.

This is a letter to the churches. It's not for lost people; it's for believers. And they didn't even realize it! Part of that is because they couldn't see. He says, "You think you see, but you're blind." Most lukewarm people think, "I'm fine. I don't have a problem with this. Yeah, maybe I do that, but I can quit any time. I do some things, but..." There are all these excuses. "Well, yeah,

I do that, but it's not as bad as I could be doing. I'm still pretty good." "Yeah, I'm involved in that, but it could be worse. Is it really that bad?" That's called being blind.

Whenever you make light of the sins that put Jesus on the cross, you're being blind. That's what lukewarm people do. They have convinced themselves that even though they're involved in some things, they still do some good stuff. Like that matters. Like it just evens itself out. Or like this sin is really not that bad. "I know I did those things, but that's not really me." Yes, it is. And until you can confess that and admit it, you're going to continue on being lukewarm, and you're going to continue on living a life that makes your Savior, the One who gave Himself for you, want to vomit you out of His mouth.

Some of you are like, "Dang, man! It's Father's Day, Bro." I know, but dads, you need to hear this, and you need to know it. You are the spiritual leader in your home. You are the spiritual leader of your home. And just because you decide you don't want to lead, or you don't want to do it, you are still the spiritual leader in your home. Your kids are going to follow you. That's what I mean by your kids are probably not going to rise above the spiritual level you're at, or the level you're going to reach. It doesn't mean you've got to be perfect, but be moving forward. Be doing something.

What about this blindness? How do you get to where you don't see?

2 Peter 1:5-9:

"In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins."

So what does he tell them to do? Supplement your faith. Build on it with moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, patient endurance, godliness, and brotherly affection. Grow in these things! But people who fail to do so are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. They're blind because they refuse to move forward and to grow.

Growth sometimes feels like one step forward and two steps back. Sometimes it feels that way. Sometimes growth comes for a while, and then there is a period when you're not growing, and you have to recommit yourself. You've got to move forward again. I'm not talking about, "Hey, you have to go out of this room, and you'd better be hot going out of it!" What Jesus is saying is, "Don't be stagnant!" Don't stay stuck! You don't have to stay stuck! Change the way you think about things. Grow in knowledge.

I meant to do this earlier regarding the 250th Anniversary of the United States. There was a general named Nathanael Greene, who became Washington's most trusted general. He grew up on a farm and became a lawyer. He had no military experience whatsoever, but he grew in knowledge. As he saw things become the way they were, he got every book you could possibly imagine on military tactics, studied them, and learned from them. Later on, he became a general without having been in the military before, and he was very successful. As I said, he was Washington's most trusted general.

There was a guy named Horatio Gates who was in charge of the colonists' Southern forces at the time. He was defeated at Camden, and his army retreated. He got on horses with his guys, and they ran so hard that they covered a hundred and fifty miles in two days. Just them. He outran his army and everything. He disgraced himself, and they were like, "We're taking this guy out. We don't need champions of retreat." So they took him out and sent Nathanael Greene down there.

Greene was way outnumbered; his army lacked training and was used to being beaten. Here's what he did: he strategically fought and lost nearly every battle he commanded. But here's what he said, and this is for fathers and for people who are growing: "We fight, we get beat. We rise, and we fight again." He understood that all he had to do was keep fighting, even if he didn't win a battle, because every battle was depleting his enemy's army. They didn't have any replacements. Every battle was making it harder for them to continue.

Eventually, he fought them so many times that they went off and thought, "Man, let's go rest at this place. There is a little peninsula up here. We'll just go hang out for a while and recoup from all of this fighting." It was a place called Yorktown. Ever heard of it? If you haven't, look it up. That's where Cornwallis finally surrendered to Washington. "We fight, we get beat. We rise up, and we fight again." That's the quote most often attributed to Nathanael Greene. Understand that it wasn't about, "Hey, we did this, and we won these battles." It was about getting beaten over and over again, yet being resilient, keeping on, and not quitting.

Sometimes the Christian walk is about that. You're going to experience defeats. You're going to blow it every now and then. Some things won't go your way. But those who live a life marked by the hot fire of Jesus are those who *refuse to quit*, and they keep going. The amazing thing is that it's never too late to turn around. "Well, you know, that's just the way I am." It's not too late. Here's what Jesus said: "I correct and discipline everyone I love." Just like a father—He is your loving Father. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. Repent. That's what repentance means. Turn away from it.

You may be thinking, "I'm not going to change my whole life overnight..." I get that. "Jesus has already saved me and imputed righteousness to me, but tomorrow I'm going to get up, and yeah, I've got to go to work, and I'm going to try to do well. But I'm also going to put some thought into how I can do something for the kingdom at work today. I'm going to start putting my heart and my treasure into things that will last. I'm going to start living that example in front of my kids. I'm going to stop doing the things that are harming my family. I'm going to quit. I'm going to turn and follow Jesus."

Be diligent and turn from your indifference. Here is one of the amazing things. These verses are in a row. The other verse is right after the ones I read to you earlier, and this one is right after that. The same passage; the same letter to the same church.

"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends."

You may have heard that over the years as an evangelistic message—"Hey, Jesus is standing at the door knocking." But that verse is not for lost people. It's for Christians, and more importantly, it's for lukewarm Christians. It's Jesus' message. ***"I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in."***

As a dad, you go through different phases of eating meals with your kids. When you're young, you're constantly trying to pick up for them. When you've got a baby, you want to go to the restaurant because you want people to see, "I've got a baby! Look at my baby! My baby is beautiful!" You want people to see your baby. So mom puts them in these elaborate outfits, and you take them out. You're like, "Hey, you need to see my baby!" Put them in that little car carrier thing and put them up on the table, and everybody is looking. Everybody loves a baby!

You want everybody to see them. And then they hit a phase, from two to four or something, when somebody reaches down and hits the volume switch, and they have a fit in public, and you're like, "Shhh! Quit, stop..." and you get embarrassed. With every single one of our kids, I had to tell my wife at one point, "Okay, we're not going to be able to eat in public for a period of time because they're going to embarrass us, and we're just not going to do that."

Then they get past that, and you can go out again. Then it's good because you can go places and get kids' meals. I knew where the cheapest kids' meals were in town, and I'd be like, "Let's go!" And then there's a point where they're like, "Hey, I'm still hungry." "Well, let me get you two of them." Then there comes a time when that doesn't work either, and you're like, "Okay, now I'm having to pay for three adults, full-grown, and then there's four. Oh my gosh! This is costing me a hundo every time we go to McDonald's!" So you don't want to go out that much.

Later on, they become teenagers, start building their own lives, and grow up. And then you want more than anything to sit down with them and have a meal. And it's one of the best things you can do, just to sit down with them and enjoy being with them. There is a reason why Jesus wrote this and wrote it this way. He says, "Listen, I'll come in, and we'll share a meal together as friends."

In Jesus' day, one of the most intimate things you did was share a meal together. He's not saying, "I'll come in to you and start fixing stuff, and we're going to work on things." I want you to catch this; I want you to see this. This is your heavenly Father, and He is telling you that this kind of life is offensive to Him, but He is also your heavenly Father saying, "Man, if you'd just turn away from it and open the door, I'll come in." Then He says, "We're going to sit down and have a meal together."

He is not talking about any projects or saying we are going to work on this... He just says, "I'll come in, and I'll just be with you." That's how you get your fire back, by just being around Jesus. That's where it comes from, and He offers it.

"Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne. Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."

Your Father loves you. He's not saying this because He has given up on you. He is saying this because He hasn't and because He wants to sit down and have that kind of fellowship with you. And all you've got to do is turn, listen, and open the door. And He comes in. It's an amazing opportunity.