



CONQUER

Dec 7, Conquer Series

Laodicea: The Convinced Church

Revelation 3:14–22 (ESV)

To the Church in Laodicea

14 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.

15 “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!
16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. **17** For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. **18** I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. **19** Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. **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 eat with him, and he with me. **21** The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. **22** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”

The last of the seven letters is to the church in Laodicea. If we could put one word on this

church, it would be **convinced**. They are especially convinced. It's the conviction they hold that will threaten their relationship with Jesus.

Laodicea was a city that was famous for several things.

Wealth.

- This was the Wall Street of Rome. And that made it one of the wealthiest cities in the world.
- In 61AD an earthquake leveled a number of cities in Asia, including Laodicea. Laodicea was *the one* city that refused any money to rebuild. They were affluent enough (and independent enough) that they financed their own rebuilding program for the entire city.
- The church in Laodicea is a case study of the traps the church can face when it's in the middle of an affluent society. What happens when you have so much that you need nothing? Not even God?

Black wool.

- The sheep that grazed around the area had very soft, violet-black, glossy wool. The city produced outer garments that were sought after all over the entire Roman empire.

Health care.

- Specifically ophthalmology. People from all over the world came for treatment for their eyes. They produced a certain eye salve, a powder only made in this region and shipped around the world.

Bad water.

- Laodicea had to pipe water in. It had two sources to do this. One was a town a few miles away where there were famous hot springs. The other was the city Colossae, not too far away, that was known for it's cold pure water. Laodicea built aqueducts to route both of these sources of water to their city.
- The hot water from the springs and the cold water from Colossae would travel across the aqueduct and by the time it reached Laodicea it was lukewarm.
- One commentator said it this way, "*Luke warm water can only serve as an emetic.*" *Emetic* means *it causes vomiting*.

A church.

- It's possible that the church was planted by the preaching of Ephaphras. (Col 1:17)
- In Colossians chapter 4 (4:12-13, 16) Paul tells the people in Colossae to read their letter to the church in Laodicea. And also that they are to read the letter he sent to them.
- Laodiceans is a letter we don't have. What would Paul have said to them? We don't know.

- But we do know what Jesus said to them. Of all seven letters, Laodicea receives the severest condemnation. Of all the seven churches, it's only to Laodicea that Jesus has nothing good at all to say.
- Look at it in verse 15. He says, *I know your works: you are neither hot nor cold.* He's pointing to the bad lukewarm water they are well aware of. *Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot (you're not good for healing purposes) nor cold (you're not refreshing to anybody around you), I will spit you out of my mouth.*
- These believers in Laodicea are so distasteful to Jesus that they have become an *emetin* to him. He has nothing good to say here. Everything he says is negative. And scathingly so.
- What kind of hope could there possibly be when you just make Jesus want to hurl?

I want to show you two things today: First, *the condition* these Laodicean believers were in that made Jesus have such a visceral response. And second, at *the prescription* that Jesus gives these people that are giving him the gag reflex.

The condition.

- In verse 17, Jesus quotes the believers in Laodicea. They say about themselves: *I am rich! I have prospered! And I need nothing!*
- The implication here is that the nothing they don't need includes even God.
- What a conviction that is. You can put the dots together for where that kind of conviction came from. Here is a wealthy society. A healthy society. A self made society. An independent society. And people inside the church have absorbed those same characteristics.
- This conviction about themselves that they are so self reliant, has, knowingly or not, led them to have **contempt** for Jesus himself.
- If you have **contempt** for someone, they won't be in your life for long.
- The statements that these believers in Laodicea are making show nothing but contempt. In this case, they're looking down their nose and rocking superiority over Jesus himself.
- See the sweet irony as they make this claim. In the opening line, Jesus calls himself *the Amen*. In the Old Testament, God was called the Amen.
- When do you shout Amen? It's when some truth is declared. *Amen!*
- So Jesus says, *I'm the Amen. I'm God's truth.* Then he doubles down and says *I'm the faithful and true witness.*
- Then, this is the gut punch...*I am the beginning of God's creation.* The word beginning means *source*. It means *origin*. Read it that way: Jesus is the *source* of God's creation. Jesus is the *origin* of God's creation. IOW: Jesus is the creator of all that is or ever will be in God's world.

- How rich is it, that contemptuous people here declare they don't need anything, and they do so with the very mouth that has been given to them by the source, the origin, the creator of everything that is.
- View God with contempt like that, and you won't have a relationship with God for long.

- You think you're rich, you think you've prospered, you think you need nothing, but you don't realize the truth. Jesus, the true and faithful witness, tells them this: *You are wretched and pitiable*. And the three words that cut the most here are *poor, blind, and naked*.
- Wall street downtown has made you believe you're rich. You're not. You're really poor.
- The eye center has made you believe you can see. You can't. You're blind.
- The fine wool garments you have on make you feel clothed and covered. You're not. You're really walking around naked.
- You've looked for salvation in everything else. Despite your clothes, your cash, your 20/20 vision, when you come before God you are actually absolutely naked...you can't cover yourself. You are absolutely poor...you don't have true wealth that lasts. And you are absolutely blind...you can't see reality.
- The salvation you think you have in those things can only be found in God. You need his grace. There is no other way.
- The way out of contempt is **connection**.

The Prescription here that is all about connection.

- Vs 18 says *I counsel you* which means *I prescribe*, and he prescribes:

Grace. The salvation you're after and the salvation you need is by grace. Get it. Grasp it.

- Get *from me* a gold that can't ever fade, and the white robe of righteousness, and spiritual sight.
- Don't skip over the little phrase, *from me*. Get it, buy it, *from me*. The *from me* is very important.
- Remember how independent these people were. The earthquake came and they didn't need help from the outside. Jesus says you can't have that same attitude with this. All this salvation has to be from me. I'm the only way you get what you need.
- What's gold? It's status before God.
- What's a white robe? It's an acceptance before God.
- And what's the eye salve? It's the healing that we're after before God.
- Everyone of us is looking for these things. We know we're not what we ought to be, so we look for a way to cover up and clothe our nakedness. We work hard. we worry about how we look. We worry about our career track. All of these things become our garments and our gold.

- Jesus says it will never give you what you think. It will just lead you away from me. Even into contempt for me.
- If you're looking to anything else but me for your worth and value and salvation, then you're just a hair away from being naked, being poor, and being blind.
- The only garment, wealth, and sight that can never be lost is what I give. Buy from me. It cost me everything to be able to give it to you, and it's yours for the asking.

Help.

- It's probable that the way we connect with Jesus the most is through suffering.

Love

- This is the most condemning letter, but also the most tender and loving.
- You nauseate me! But I love you! I see your life and there's nothing good. But that does not change my loving purposes for you. I'm am absolutely committed to you.
- I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him.
- In this day, to be invited into someone's home and to eat with them was about the highest way to say to them, I love you.
- This is an invitation to fellowship given by Jesus. Just let me in. And we'll eat together.

Reign.

- To those who conquer, to them I will grant to sit with me on my throne. The throne I got when I conquered.
- Why are we invited to rule the world with him? Because he earned it.
- Every single thing he did, he did for you.
- You get clothed because he was stripped.
- You get rich because he was poor.
- You get to see because he was blind.
- He connects you to the only salvation that can ultimately save.

What do you do for someone who gives himself wholly for you?
You give yourself wholly to him.

God, let us see clearly today the convictions we hold. That they will lead us to one of two places. They will lead us to have contempt for our Savior and his church. Or our convictions will lead us to connect with our Savior and with his church. May it be the latter for us, God. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Amen.