

1. Introduction

- a. Nothing positive said in contrast to the other letters to the other churches
- b. The church here was "sick" (He said they needed eye salve--Laodicea was known for making eye medicine)

2. Symptom

- a. We see the symptom of the problem in v. 15 and 16: spiritual lukewarmness
- b. What is spiritual lukewarmness?
 - i. It is contrasted with verse 19 ("earnestness").
 - 1. This Greek word means "zealous" (zēlos—an onomatopoeic term that mimics the sound of water bubbling over from heat)
 - 2. A lukewarm Christian is one without zeal for God.
 - ii. Other translations use the word "jealous" for the most part throughout the NT. Why does God want us to be "jealous?" Isn't that a bad thing?
 - 1. What happens when you're jealous of something? It means to set your love so intently-so focused on one thing.
 - 2. If you set your love so intensely on yourself, you'll always be jealous of other people who have what you don't have.
 - 3. But if you set your love so intently on God, you'll be so jealous for him. You'll want to give him your highest love. There will be zeal, intimacy, joy, wonder in your relationship with God.
 - 4. What's the supreme passion of your heart? Probably what you are most jealous about in other people
- c. The church in Laodicea had lost this zeal—If we are honest with ourselves, we know this is the condition of any average Christian in the world today.
 - i. It causes Jesus to say that their condition is so bad that it makes him vomit. It turns his stomach. It makes him sick to his stomach. He doesn't get angry at them. He says "you nauseate me" "you gag me" to Christians are lukewarm.
 - ii. He wants them to be either hot or cold (clarification: not what we usually think about in terms of "coldness" in the spiritual sense)
 - 1. Laodicea was the neighbor to Hierapolis and Colossae (Hierapolis was famous for its hot spa waters by the mountain, Colossae was known for its cold mineral water)
 - iii. But Laodicea had no water supply and the water was piped into the city—by the time it arrived at the city it was tepid and almost undrinkable
 - iv. Jesus is comparing the spiritual condition of Laodicea (lukewarm, disgusting) to the water supply it was known for.
 - v. Cold water is refreshing, hot water is soothing—lukewarm water is nasty and causes you to be sick

3. Sickness

- a. What is the underlying disease?
- b. It is not simply that they weren't fulfilling their obligations as a church.
 - i. Notice that Jesus doesn't criticize their lack of works or lack of attendance at church.
 - ii. And He doesn't criticize them for their deeds.
- c. The real sickness is found in verses 17 and 18.
 - i. We know that Laodicea was known for 3 things.
 - 1. It was a financial center (paid for their rebuilding on their own after an earthquake in 60AD and they were famous for this—not taking money from Rome for help made them proud)

2. It was a textile center (a producer of a famous, shiny high-end black wool)
3. It was a medical center (made ointment for eye medication).
- ii. This is why it is so important—so profound when Jesus picks on them in verses 17-18 by saying they are poor, naked and blind.
- iii. He's being bitterly ironic by taking the very things they were known for and showing how these are the very things which have made them lukewarm
- d. What is he saying?
 - i. He's saying that they are spiritually naked (sinners in need of grace), spiritually poor (unable to save themselves) and spiritually blind (unable to see their spiritual condition).
 - ii. He says to them that they need to realize they are sinners in need of grace. They are totally reliant on the grace of God to save them from sin.
 - iii. But wouldn't they have known this? They were Christians. They would have known that they need the grace of God.
 1. What blinded them to this is found in verse 17.
 2. They were rich, they were self-sufficient, and they were prospering. It is at this time that they are least transformed by the miracle of the cross. They are lukewarm to the beauty and joy that the cross should have given them.

4. Medicine

- a. What's the cure? How do we fix this underlying sickness where our comfort and security leads to lukewarmness?
 - i. In verse 18, Jesus "counsels" or prescribes like a doctor would.
 - ii. He says "from me". He is saying to the Laodiceans that if they rely on their own self—their works, their devotion, their pride, their comfort, their skills, their will—they will always be spiritually naked and blind.
 - iii. But if they go back to him for total reliance, they will be able to get out of lukewarmness.
- b. If we go to Jesus and Jesus alone to get these things he offers, what can we expect?
 - i. 3 things: suffering (verse 19), repentance (verse 19), love and fellowship (v. 20)
 1. Suffering: he will discipline. This is tough to hear. But it means that we might have to go through some level of suffering.
 2. Repentance: he's clear that we need to be open to change our lives to turn towards him.
 3. Love and fellowship: he offers deep fellowship with us. It's by his grace that, even though we make his stomach turn, he still offers to have a fellowship meal with us (the meal was a sign of covenant friendship at this time).
- c. How is this possible?
 - i. Because of v. 21—He conquered and gives us the right to sit by him at the throne
 1. He died so that he could conquer.
 2. He sits at the right of God because he conquered.
 3. How are we able to sit at the right hand? Because he conquered.
 - ii. Jesus offers us the same seat next to the throne of God. Why?
 1. How do we get white robes? Because Jesus was stripped naked before going to the cross.
 2. How do we get gold? Because Jesus lost his riches and became poor for our sakes.
 3. How do we get salve for our eyes? Because they blindfolded Jesus, beat him, and said "Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?" Luke 22:64
 - iii. If we see Jesus on the cross and resurrected and rely only on this, it will change us from the inside—it will be our source of joy, excitement, wonder—to think of this miracle all for our sakes because of his love for us.
- d. He was just willing to suffer for what he believed, he actually did suffer so that you and I can either be lit hot by thinking of it or cooled with refreshment by knowing his love for us