

Theme: The need for a revival.

Proposition: The lack of permanent religious enthusiasm in Christians demands a revival of true Christianity.

Scripture: Revelation 3:14-22

Text: Revelation 3:19b.

Sources: Abingdon Bible Commentary, pp. 1367-77.

Scripture: Rev. 3:14-22.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

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.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.

He that hat an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Text: Revelation 3:19b.

be zealous therefore, and repent.

Introduction:

1. This passage addressed by the writer to the Christian Church at Laodicea.

2. Nature of the city of Laodicea:
a. Great and rich.

(1) Even to the point that it disdained the help of the emperor when it was destroyed by earthquake in 60 A. D.

(2) It was a banking center, famous for the manufacture of black wool, carpets, and clothes, and had a flourishing medical school.

3. The writer of the letter emphasizes that he is speaking with the authority of Christ (v. 14)/

4. His message to the church of Laodicea said several things, of pertinence to us today, here.

I. Success in moneymaking is not the best proof of the higher qualities of citizenship, or of Christianity.

1. The wealth of the city, the energy that had made it a center of trade, did not conceal from the eye of the faithful and true witness the lukewarmness that was fatal to the highest side of human nature (v. 16).

2. What was true of the city was true of the church. There was money enough to support its enterprises:

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it was popular and well supported, for it did not set too high a standard of social or commercial life.

3. Religious enthusiasm was characteristic of the natives of Phrygia, around the city, but Laodicea was a Greek city and was above all that.

a. The church adopted a spirit of accommodation and of broad toleration, and was entirely self-satisfied.

b. Proud of its prestige in the city, of its apostolic traditions, of its generosity and wealth, it had need of nothing (v. 17) in its own eyes.

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II. The absolute rejection of religion is preferable to the half-hearted Laodicean expression of it.

1. There is hope for the outsider, but for the Christian who is so only in name, who is content with the comparative warmth of a religion which is neither hot nor cold, there is expressed the divine disgust.

a. Dante at the gate of Hell heard "sighs with lamentations and loud moans." Vergil explains that this was the fate of "those who lived without praise or blame," that these Laodicean neutral souls were driven from heaven and the depth of hell does not receive them.

b. In this message it is made clear that the wealth and self-sufficiency of Laodicea are of no

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avail, though by them the city was rebuilt after the earthquake.

III. There is a gold refined of fire (v. 18), but it is not paid to the man who compromises with his soul.

1. The church that is rich toward God does not boast about it.

a. Let Laodicea buy (but "without money and without price") the golden gift of a new heart of fellowship with Christ, for that means the white garments of the spiritual bodies, wherewith the righteous shall be clothed ~~when~~ the wicked remain disembodied, and that gift brings with it the vision of the things that are unseen and eternal.

(1) Of how much more value are these than the boasted riches or the glossy black clothes or the eye-salve which in the fame of men made the city renowned.x

IV. Though the rebuke to the city is severe, it is from one whose love inflicts the discipline of suffering to win them back.

1. So let them be zealous (the tense implies that fervent enthusiasm must be a permanent element in their Christian character) and change their mind.

2. This appeal is made more intimate by the picture of Christ knocking at the door of the individual heart (v. 20).

a. How courteous for the Lord of the world to stand at the door not presuming to enter until he is invited. Francis of Assisi said "God is always courteous and does not invade the privacy of the human soul." He who hearkens and opens will find Christ both guest and host, and will indeed find a feast there. The common meal is in the Orient the symbol for confidence and affection.

V. As the Church at Laodicea, we have become lukewarm and need reviving.

1. In our churches, even in revivals, so-called, we count noses too much and spiritual condition too little.

2. We are too confident that we can cope with all situations alone.

3. We trust our material possession too much.

4. We are too interested in ourselves and not enough so in others.

5. To solve any of these, we need the fervent enthusiasm to bring back and install among us the Spirit of Christ.

Conclusion: The lack of permanent religious enthusiasm in our church demands a revival of true Christianity.

Preached at

Leftwich July 16, 1944

Salem & Co., Aug. 18, 1946

Q. & Co. - Sept. 8, 1946

~~Huntington~~, Ave. - 7/29/48