

Christ & His Bride

Lesson #22

Laodicea: Why Are You Lukewarm?

Rev. 3:17

July 9, 2025

What is the greatest challenge facing the church today? Is it Christian persecution?

➤ Persecution is the fastest way to grow a healthy and vibrant church.

It is more than a curiosity that the church has flourished in persecuted areas while it is dying in the West. Lacking any visible external threat to our faith, many in the free world have lost any sense of the subtlety of the enemy and how he attacks.

We have grown careless and apathetic.

If you walked into the average church today and told them they needed a revival, they would be offended. If you encouraged them to get on fire for God, they would say, "Look at us and all we have! We are doing fine, and we need nothing!" The sad truth is some people get more excited about money in the bank than they do souls on the altar. They get more stirred up by a big number on a board than they do about sincere worship of the Lord. They are more blessed by what they have than by the Lord showing up and moving in a service!

Rev. 3:15-17 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold [invigorating, refreshing] nor hot [healing, therapeutic]; I wish that you were 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:

How Did They Become Lukewarm?

A. SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Rev. 3:17a BECAUSE YOU SAY, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing...

Laodicea was famous in its day for three primary characteristics.

1. *Finances* - Known throughout the Roman Empire as a center of banking and finance.

Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in 61 AD. The city, so wealthy and self-sufficient, rebuilt their city with their own resources, refusing an offer of aid from Caesar.

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote about this:

"Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources and with no help from us."

They took pride in rejecting Rome's offer of financial help and rebuilt the city far more beautiful than it had ever been and they did it with their own funds.

Note: They possessed material wealth and the arrogant, proud, self-sufficient attitude that goes with it.

Key: It demonstrated a self-sufficient attitude that would have detrimental spiritual results if carried over into their relationship with the Lord.

Key: When I trust in riches to gauge my happiness, I am in danger of becoming lukewarm and apathetic to the Lord. Warning: Danger Zone! He will vomit me out of His mouth.

2. *Fashion* - Renowned for the soft, black wool which was considered a luxury item and sought after for clothing and rugs. Laodicean factories made at least four different kinds of outer garments from this wool, garments that were exported to "department stores" all over the world. This export is part of what helped keep the Laodicean coffers full to overflowing.

3. *Pharmaceuticals* - The medical cult of Aesculapius, god of healing, was located here. A famous medical school in Laodicea produced a tablet sold all over the Roman Empire. It was crushed, mixed with water to form a paste which was rubbed into the eyes and was supposed to cure a variety of eye problems. People came from all directions to obtain this eye salve.

Lovers of Pleasure in Laodicea: Evidence reveals Laodicea had 3 theaters, a gymnasium, racetrack, lavish baths and shopping centers.

Laodicea Lucy:

Financial Abundance: Can make things happen now!

Can meet needs without relying on prayer, faith or patience

Eyes Closed: Self-confidence which is blinding the reality of her true spiritual condition.

Jewelry & Make-up: Masks her real condition by focusing on outward beauty rather than inward depth

Keys to BMW: In full control; in the driver's seat

High Heels: Gives the appearance of spiritually tall

Ray Stedman: "Laodicea was sort of a first century Bank of America, Macy's, and Mayo Clinic all rolled into one."

Note: A lukewarm person is more difficult to reach; he feels comfortable & self-sufficient.

Self-sufficiency is the death-knell of relationship with God for *independence of God is sin!*

Scripture records: Where men receive God's blessing they soon drift away from the very source of their blessing. Everywhere, the pattern of history is that of a revolving wheel:

1. Men suffer lack and affliction and turn to God.
2. God responds to repentance with provision and blesses.
3. Men glory in their condition of prosperity and grow cold toward God.
4. Judgment falls and the wheel goes around again.

Man seems unable to experience provision from God without misplacing its source as his own achievements which then becomes the focus leading to evil:

Jer. 9:23-24 The Lord says, "Wise people should not boast that they are wise.

Powerful people should not boast that they are powerful.

Rich people should not boast that they are rich.^[c]

²⁴ If people want to boast, they should boast about this:

They should boast that they understand and know Me.

They should boast that they know and understand that I, the Lord, act out of faithfulness, fairness, and justice in the earth and that I desire people to do these things," says the Lord.

Hosea 12:8-9 Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich! I have become wealthy! In all that I have done to gain my wealth, no one can accuse me of any offense that is actually sinful."

⁹ "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt;
I will make you live in tents again as in the days of old.

The Greatest Challenge To Any Church Or Individual Is Prosperity.

The church in our time: People who call themselves Christians but reflect our modern culture of materialism, consumerism, self-sufficiency, do-your-own-thing kind of independence and individualism, religiosity, and apostasy.

II Tim. 3:1-2,4-5 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

For men will be lovers of their own selves...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Osteen: God wants us to prosper financially, to have plenty of money,
to fulfill the destiny He has laid out for us.

Quote: Faith is not speaking into existence what we want.

It's believing and obeying what God wants.

Spurgeon: The very church which the world likes best is sure to be the one which God abhors.

How Did They Become Lukewarm?

B. SELF-DECEPTION

Rev. 3:17b *you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,*

➤ They do not have a clue as to their condition.

Jesus' Diagnosis: *You Are In Need Of Everything.*

A. You are WRETCHED: Greek word [talaipwros] which comes from the word talai meaning "to bear, undergo" and pwros which means "hard, callous."

They were wretched in the sense that they were bearing severe calluses on their soul, hardened against the truth.

Note: A hardened heart will keep you from perceiving spiritual truth.

B. "MISERABLE" means "pitiable." "POOR" is beggarly.

He becomes the object of extreme pity, like a beggar. Begging for crumbs to fill his hunger or craving. The real pity is that they were like a drunk in the cold; they could not feel their condition. Those who try to find happiness and security in the things of the world are like beggars trying to exist on crumbs.

C. "BLIND" -without spiritual insight or discernment. Lack of Biblical perspective

Traits of Spiritually Blind

1. They place burdens which God did not require. [Matt. 15:1-20]

Acts 15:10 Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

2. They remove burdens God did require. [Rev. 2:20-24]

Rev. 2:20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

3. They cause others to fall in the ditch with themselves.

Matt. 15:14 They are blind leaders of the blind.

And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

Truth: Religious blinded minds are blinded because of self-righteousness and lack of the truth.

Rev. 3:17 Christ, as the True and Faithful Witness, describes the condition to which they were blind and totally insensitive because of their lukewarmness, a condition caused in part by their

1. FAILURE TO DESIRE GOD'S WORD

I Pet. 2:2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

2. FAILURE TO KNOW & RESPOND TO THE WORD:

I Thess. 2:13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Veiled Heart & Blinded Mind - It is a tragedy for a person to have blinded eyes, but infinitely worse to have a blinded heart. No one willfully chooses to be sightless,

➤ but SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS IS A PRODUCT OF THE HUMAN WILL.

Seeking happiness in the treasures of the world is at heart, an eyesight problem,

➤ a problem of blindness or poor spiritual eyesight.

D. You are "NAKED:" Greek word *gumnos* > It meant (a) to be totally without clothes, or (b) to be poorly clothed, dressed in rags. Though they were rich, and manufactured and wore expensive clothing, and made eye salve, they were, spiritually speaking, in pitiful condition.

We may flatter and deceive ourselves, but He sees and He knows us as we really are.

He knows our true spiritual condition.

The key to identification of the Age Of Laodicea: Lukewarm, Deceived and Spiritually Blind.

a. Diluted Word - Only when the gospel became so watered down that it no longer contained a message of salvation could Laodicea arrive in full force in the institutional churches.

Tozer: Christianity and God's Word has been so watered down until the solution is so weak that if it were poison it would not hurt anyone, and if it were medicine, it would not cure anyone.

b. Twisted Word - Christian leaders twist God's Word to conform to their own pet theories. Few followers are any the wiser because of the Biblical ignorance that prevails in "Churchianity."

c. Biblical Ignorance - Most members of churches today do not know the plan of salvation or the fundamental teachings of the Bible. Christians claim to believe the Bible is God's divinely inspired Word, and His inerrant message. Yet despite this, we aren't reading it.

A recent research study found only 45% who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40% read their Bible occasionally, once or twice a month.

Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they *never* read the Bible.

Consider: Because my Pastor told me so will not work as an excuse
when you stand before The Creator someday.

Rom. 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ
according to My Gospel.

II Pet. 3:16-17 There are some things in those [epistles of Paul] that are difficult to
understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist and misconstrue to their own utter
destruction, just as [they distort and misinterpret] the rest of the Scriptures.

Let me warn you therefore, beloved, that knowing these things beforehand, you should
be on your guard, Lest You Be Carried Away by the error of lawless and wicked persons and
fall from your own [present] firm condition [your own steadfastness of mind].

Truth: Mix God's perfect unchanging Word with man's fallible, ever-changing opinions =
"theological Jello." You cannot stand on theological jello.

Spurgeon: Beware of those who say there is no hell, and who declare new ways to heaven.

Luke 12:16 Then He said to them, "Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed
because one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

Luke 12:17-21 He then told them a parable:

"The land of a certain rich man produced an abundant crop,

¹⁷ so he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'

¹⁸ Then he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will
store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to myself, "You have plenty of goods stored up
for many years; relax, eat, drink, celebrate!"' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'You fool!

This very night your life will be demanded back from you, but who will get what you have
prepared for yourself?'

²¹ So it is with the one who stores up riches for himself, but is not rich toward God."

Question: Are we blind to the effects of our own forms of greed?

Think how often GREED [laying treasures on the earth and desires for the good life]
negatively affects the body of Christ:

1. Greed tarnishes the testimony of Christ when business professionals compromise integrity and Biblical values to cut a less than honorable deal.
2. Greed shreds families when parents devote their best energies to dreams of the "good life" leaving little strength or time for caring for the spiritual well-being of their family.
3. Greed injures the church and ministry for the same reasons because people are so engulfed in the pursuit of position, power, praise, prestige, and pleasure that there is neither time nor energy to devote themselves to the Word, to ministry, or to liberal giving.

I Tim. 6:6-10 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing
into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with
these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare,
and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

I Tim. 6:17-19 As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be proud and arrogant and contemptuous of others, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but on God, Who richly and ceaselessly provides us with everything for [our] enjoyment.

¹⁸ [Charge them] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be liberal and generous of heart, ready to share [with others], ¹⁹treasuring up for themselves a firm foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. [Berean Standard Bible]

Treasuring up = #597 apothésaurizó = only use in Bible

Portrays the deliberate laying away of something valuable for future use. Paul uses it to redirect affluent believers from accumulating perishable wealth toward accumulating spiritual capital that endures into eternity.

Their present generosity becomes an investment that secures "a firm foundation for the future." The clause "so that they may take hold of that which is truly life" links present stewardship with future possession of eternal life in its fullest experience.

Theological Emphases

1. Eternal Perspective: The verb grounds Paul's call to generosity in eschatology.

- Earthly resources can be converted into imperishable riches.

Matt. 6:20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Luke 12:31-34 But [strive for and actively] seek His kingdom,
and these things will be given to you as well.

- Don't attempt to obey Jesus' command to seek in your own (old man) strength!
- You will fail and experience frustration.
- You will in effect place yourself under the yoke of legalism.

Command: Actively seek His kingdom...

- Present tense: continually, habitually seek > talking about direction, not perfection.

Key: The only way to obey this command to actively seek as our daily practice is:

- Daily dying to self and jettisoning self-effort and self-sufficiency to live the supernatural Christian life as we daily seek to be wholly controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Phil. 2:13 The Spirit is in us and is continually energizing us, giving us the supernatural desire and the supernatural power we need so that we might effectively, successively work out our salvation in fear and trembling. [New Living Translation]

- We must learn to depend on the Spirit's power to enable us to work out what He has worked in. The difference? Self-effort versus Spirit energization!

This is a process which we need to practice, daily seeking to be filled with [controlled by] the Holy Spirit [Eph 5:18+] so that we might continually walk by the self-same Spirit and then [and only then we will not carry out the desires of our flesh [Gal 5:16+]. We will need to be sensitive to those thoughts, words and action in our life which quench the Spirit [I Thess. 5:19+] or grieve the Spirit [Eph 4:30+] lest we "short circuit" our Source of power.

Luke 12:32 Do not be afraid *and* anxious, little flock,

for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Christ hammered home the kingdom truth that there is something significant beyond the grave. This truth guided His view of this life. From Christ's perspective, it made little sense to invest your life only in things you will not be able to take with you.

Luke 12:33-34 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide money belts for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing *and* inexhaustible treasure in the heavens, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- It affirms the continuity between this life and the next.
- Acts done in faith now reappear as reward in the age to come.

II Cor. 5:10 For we [believers will be called to account and] must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, so that each one may be repaid for what has been done in the body, whether good or bad [each will be held responsible for his actions, purposes, goals, motives—the use or misuse of his time, opportunities and abilities].

2. Faith Expressed Through Works

- The passage presumes that those already "in Christ" will demonstrate their faith by beneficence [James 2:17].
- Good works become a stored treasure, not the currency of justification but the fruit that accompanies it.

3. Stewardship and Accountability

I Tim. 6:17 Wealth is pictured as a trust, not an entitlement.

Luke 16:9-12 Mismanagement squanders eternal opportunity;

faithful use converts temporal assets into lasting gain.

The lone New-Testament use of this verb [treasuring up] gathers the whole Biblical doctrine of treasure into a single stroke: voluntary, present generosity "stores away" a foundation that outlasts death. Instead of depleting resources, giving deposits that go beyond the reach of decay, ensuring that believers will "take hold of that which is truly life."

God's Word Calls Believers: Study & Know The Word Of God

1. Master the Word so you will not be deceived by any false teaching.

II Tim. 3:14-17 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [surrendering your entire self to Him and having absolute confidence in His wisdom, power and goodness]. ¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine [what's right], for reproof [what's wrong], for correction [how to get right; of error and restoration to obedience], for instruction in righteousness [how to stay right], ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete [perfect, mature], thoroughly equipped for every good work.

II Tim. 2:15 Study *and* be eager *and* do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing *and* accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.

2. A Command To Confront & Refute False Teachers

Titus 1:10-11;16 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

They profess to know God, but in works they deny *Him*, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

3. Know The Truth So You Can Confront False Teaching and Protect Yourself From It

Acts 20:28-31 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears

Planned Neglect: The saints in the Bible were eager to let God have His way in their lives.

They stirred themselves as soon as dawn touched the sky in order to worship Him and seek His leading.

Gen. 19:27 Abraham got up very early to stand before the Lord.

Gen. 28:18 Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

Ex. 34:4 Moses went early to meet the Lord at Sinai.

Joshua 6:12 Joshua did the same when he prepared to capture Jericho.

Judges 6:38 Gideon made his way at dawn to examine the fleece that he had cast upon the ground to discern Jehovah's will.

Job 1:5 Job arose very early to offer sacrifices for his children.

A noted young concert artist was asked the secret of her success with the violin. "Planned neglect!" "Years ago I discovered that there were many things which demanded my time. After washing breakfast dishes, I made my bed, straightened my room, dusted the furniture, and did a host of other things. I then turned my attention to violin practice. That system, however, failed to accomplish the desired results. I realized I had to reverse things. I deliberately set aside everything else until my practice period was ended. That program of planned neglect accounts for my success!" Put priority on daily Bible study and prayer, even if you must neglect some secondary things. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God!"

WARNING: Beware Of Self-Sufficiency! Pursue a vital, growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Do not lose your sense of dependence on God and the sense of your needing Him.

Gayle Rogers Foster: I want to tell you a story about me that could be a story about you.

I had no idea that I had a treasure buried deep inside of me.

I had encased it in layers upon layers of self-protection and self-sufficiency.

God took a hammer and smashed everything I had carefully made of myself. When He did, I thought my life was over. But I had no idea what priceless treasure He had placed on inside of me that I had covered up and buried. Brokenness was the only way to access it.

In the words of the old gospel song, "I lost it all to find everything." He hurt me in order to heal me. "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces, but He will heal us; He has injured us but He will bind up our wounds" [Hosea 6:1]. I had priceless treasure on the inside. I would never trade my old life for my new life. I wouldn't trade it for billions and billions of dollars. I would never take back what I previously refused to let go of.

There's a treasure buried deep within you. Open your hands and surrender everything you are holding dear to Him. It doesn't matter what it is, what He is willing and longing to give you is of infinitely more value.

C.S. Lewis: "The thing is to rely on God. The time will come when you will regard all this misery as a small price to pay for having been brought to that dependence. Meanwhile, the trouble is that relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing has yet been done."

Key: Purse it Daily! FROG = Fully Rely On God

Quote: Men will never worship God with a sincere heart, or be roused to fear and obey Him with sufficient zeal, until they properly understand how much they are indebted to His mercy.