

Rev 25-11-23a

Greetings, welcome to Sunday morning at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 23rd of November 2025 and we continue our study in the book of Revelation. We're resuming here in chapter 3, verse 14.

We are beginning to look at the Laodicean Church. We began last time and we will move forward with that. A very powerful message here from the Lord Jesus.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, how grateful we are for this time of fellowship, of encouragement, of supporting each other in prayer and in the common goal of understanding your word better and living more fully in the light of the Lord Jesus and his example, his provision for us, granting to us the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable us to remember what we have learned and put it into application and to live in your strength and by your power. We pray that our study this morning will contribute to that goal.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Reading our passage, beginning in chapter 3, verse 14, to the angel or messenger of the church of the Laodiceans write, these things says, the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot.

I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich, I have become wealthy and have need of nothing.

And you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich, and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed. And anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." You will remember that in our launch of the study of this church, this area addressed by the Lord Jesus, this was a city that was very self-sufficient.

The Laodicean area housed many businesses. It was a financial center. It was a great crossroads.

And the rebuke is scathing, because what they think of themselves is the exact opposite of what they are. The town had access to water from Hierapolis, which was sort of a twin city. And there

were hot springs there.

They continue to be hot springs. Turkey is trying to harness the geothermal energy from that area. And it continues to be a source of hot water.

But it ran in a channel from Hierapolis to a cliff opposite Laodicea. And by the time it got there, it was lukewarm. It was also full of mineral deposits.

And so this cliff over which the water spilled was encrusted with calcium carbonate. And this ended up being kind of a smelly area. The girls took a little history tour of Claremont.

We used to have mineral baths or radium baths, they called them. And when we first moved here in the 1960s, and would visit even before that, Claremont, especially on the east edge of town, had kind of a smell. And it was the sulfur that was in the water.

So this town, Laodicea, 40 miles south of Philadelphia, not too far from Colossi, if you look at the map, was on the banks of the Lycus River, which is a tributary of the Meander River. We get the word meander from the twisting nature of that water course. Hierapolis was six miles away.

You could imagine trying to send hot water in the open six miles, and what would happen to the temperature of it by the time it arrived. Laodicea was midway between those hot springs and the cold waters that were obtainable in Colossi. You will remember when Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians, he said, Epaphroditus is carrying two letters, and you should read their letter, and they should read yours.

And the other letter was to the Laodiceans. I and others believe that the book we call Ephesians is actually that letter. You look at the similarity and the complementary nature of Ephesians and Colossians, and that relationship becomes evident.

It was a highly commercial and financial center, very successful. They have excavated and found remains of a theater, aqueducts, baths, a gymnasium, and a stadium that can be seen to this day if you visit. It wasn't positioned to be very defensible militarily, so they generally would compromise or try to remain neutral in conflicts.

It was a city of longstanding churches. The church there was probably founded by Epaphras in Colossians 2.1. The suggestion is that Paul had not actually been there personally, although he sent the Colossian letter to them. You can see that in Colossians 4.12-14. It appears that these letters were designed to be circulated, and they would have circulated among these churches, which are not far apart.

Most of them are within 40 miles of one another. Paul wrote 1 Timothy from Laodicea. As you may recall, 1 Timothy 6.21 indicates this.

Of course, the time of Paul was about three decades before the current epistle is being sent to them via John. You will remember that they are warned to be more diligent in fulfilling ministry

if you read the Colossian letter, which was to be shared with them. Colossians 2.1, Colossians 4.16-17. It was a city of merchants, bankers, and gold refiners.

The counsel that the Lord gives them that we looked at last time is particularly pertinent and has a lot of traction because this was the heart of their distraction, if you will. There were roads leading from Ephesus and Smyrna. Caravan trade.

They went as far east as the Yellow River in the Punjab by the China Sea. There was a lot of wealth that flowed through this city. Why is this important? Look at where we are in the United States of America.

Despite some of the setbacks and failed leadership and problems that we have, we are a prosperous culture. We're a prosperous nation. We have very little abject poverty that cannot be remedied if someone is just willing to go avail themselves of it.

A lot of the homeless are homeless by choice because they are unwilling to avail themselves of the surplus, the spillover from the full cup that we have in our communities. There was also in this town textile manufacturing. Of course, the United States exports so much to other nations of what we manufacture.

This is well known throughout the world. It's one of the reasons our current president is able to broker and use trade and tariffs and such as leverage because so much of the rest of the world has become dependent on our exports. We as a nation are in many ways, and as a culture in many ways, like Laodicea.

It is easy to be inured to our spiritual needs when we are so materially blessed. This can be true individually as well as culturally. In particular, there was a strain of sheep that had been bred in Lycus Valley that were noted for the quality of their black wool.

This was unusual. Sheep are generally white, but this cloth and carpet that was manufactured from this black wool was particularly desirable for its unusual qualities. They also had a famous school of medicine there that was known for this ophthalmic ointment, which was a mixture of oil and collyrium powder that was available locally there.

Aristotle describes this as Phrygian powder. Phrygia is that region. Earthquakes destroyed Laodicea around 60 to 62.

There was a major earthquake and a series of aftershocks that just practically leveled the city. The Roman government offered to assist in rebuilding, but the wealthy citizens of Laodicea said, no, we will do it ourselves, and they did. They did not want to be beholden to Rome.

They pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps, as it were, and they rebuilt. This was well within the living memory. That was in the time of Paul.

Paul had not yet been executed. This is 30 years earlier. You think about the 1990s in our

memory.

It's not that far long ago. Tacitus talks about this in his Annals, that Laodicea refused Roman help and used their own resources to rebuild. Self-sufficient.

We can easily begin to feel self-sufficient in our material life. There are times, of course, when we feel a bit strapped or get behind, but we're never in the distress of mind, generally, that can happen in countries where there is genuine poverty. The rest of the world seems to be just now waking up to the oppression and the persecution of Christians in other parts of the world, such as in Nigeria.

That has come into the news recently. We have seen this in the past. It was just hard to get anyone to pay any attention to it.

It's now being publicized. When the Lord Jesus writes to this church, He is really writing to us in certain aspects, in certain areas of our life. We've seen each of these letters addresses an aspect.

It doesn't completely define us. We can both be prosperous in some areas, and we can be experiencing hardship and persecution in others. So this particularly addresses the dangers of becoming comfortable and saying, I have what I need and losing that sense of need.

We discussed that on last Sunday. So the Lord Jesus exhorts them. We have already talked about His introduction as the amen, the faithful and true, and you can see throughout Scripture the pertinence of this label of the truth.

As early as Revelation 1-6, we saw John celebrating the Lord Jesus, who has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Amen.

Although we're very familiar with this word as the termination of our prayers, it isn't that common in Scripture, but we found it at the end of verse 6. And in verse 7, behold, He is coming with clouds. Every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him, even so. Amen.

In verse 18 of chapter 1, Jesus says of Himself, I am He who lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of death.

He has the key of David. He has the keys of Hades and death. The Lord Jesus has been granted authority to open and close many things, including the door to the eternal future.

This harks back to His identity as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. You can go back, there's a raft of passages. I'll just give you one.

Isaiah 65, verse 16. He who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth, and he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth, because the former troubles are forgotten and because they are hidden from my eyes. The God of truth.

Amen means true, truly, verily. John 14, 6, of course, you're well familiar with. I'm the way, the truth, and the life.

Can't come to the Father except through the Lord Jesus. The message of the cross in 1 Corinthians 1, 18 through 22 is foolishness to those who are perishing. I think we all have people in our periphery who just don't think relationship with God is something devoutly to be wished.

They think the whole notion of salvation and the things of Christ are foolishness. And if you try to listen with fresh ears, I thought about this a lot. Suppose you didn't have a biblical background.

Suppose you came to faith right now and you had had no previous exposure. Listen to how some of the terms sound that we use and we take for granted. There is a Holy Spirit.

There's God the Father. There is blood atonement. There is sacrifice required.

It would sound like hocus pocus. And the terms that we are so familiar with, if you hear them with an outside ear, can sound very strange. Because of that, people say, what are you talking about this Holy Ghost that floats around? And you've got some Father God, some old gray-haired bearded figure up in the sky sitting on a throne and demanding all kinds of things.

And he wants to be worshiped. And if you don't worship him, he's going to burn you forever in a lake of fire. The message of the cross, 1 Corinthians 1.18, is foolishness to those who are perishing.

But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. Because these things are true. And the reason they sound strange to the carnal ear and to the unregenerate mind is Satan has done a propaganda job.

If you listen to politics very much and listen to those on the right and those on the left and how each side will propagandize and exaggerate and associate the other side with the most extreme elements and the most far-fetched notions and in an attempt to make it sound strange and foolish. How could anyone believe that? How could anyone embrace that? And it's important. And this is an aside of application.

It is very important to separate views and policies from people. There are really wonderful believers. There are nice people who embrace views that are on the opposite side of the political fence or of the social fence.

And we are encouraged in modern media to vilify the person and say, what is wrong with you to believe that? God appeals to us on the basis of truth. He lets us know that although we may think we are fine, we are actually wretched. But this creates a sense of need and it comes from God.

God, the Holy Spirit, convicts the world of sin, of righteousness. And as soon as you establish those two things, sin is so far removed and so opposite from righteousness that that distance needs to be traversed. We need to move from sinfulness, from abject need for judgment to righteousness and to peace with God, to reconciliation, to hope of future relationship, sin and righteousness and judgment.

That is not our place. We speak the truth and we can represent what is right and what is true in love. But we are not.

We do the truth side. We do the word side. We don't do the Holy Spirit side to attempt to oppress someone or to insult them or to excoriate them or make them feel bad because of the views that they hold.

That's not our job. Conviction is the Holy Spirit's job. It is our job to simply speak the truth and to speak it especially to one another in love.

You don't want to represent a view that is so hateful that even if somebody figures out that it might actually be right, the people associated with it are so off-putting. I don't want to be in that group. I don't care if you are right.

You're nasty. You're hateful. Look how you treat other people.

Respect the person. God respects us even when we fail, even when we fall, even when we get headstrong and go our own way. We become apathetic and indifferent.

We're distracted. God respects us, especially those of us who are his children. And he appeals to us on the basis of truth.

Here are the Laodiceans and they're in a hurting shape. They think they're fine. They don't have a sense of need.

Jesus leads with, I am the amen. I am the true. I am the faithful witness.

I am witnessing to you truth. Here's something you don't know. You think you're well off, but you have a need.

This is an objective truth. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire. That's where he's going.

So 1 Corinthians 1, 18 through 22, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. The message, the truth is the power. Let the Holy Spirit do his work of bringing things to a fine point, of showing their pertinence.

We speak the truth. Verse 19 of 1 Corinthians 1, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. God does that.

That first person pronoun there is the Lord. I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. You communicate the truth.

I will let it percolate and do its work in the heart of the recipient. Bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. People who think they've got it all figured out, science and secular materialism have got it all done.

No. Verse 20, where is the wise? Where is the scribe, the scholar? Oh, you ought to hear the appeals to scholarship in a lot of these naysaying books about scripture. Most scholars conclude, many scholars believe, scholars have determined that's the scribe.

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Those who love to tangle with, even on spiritual issues and biblical interpretation questions, there are people who just like the fight. If they weren't arguing about scripture, they'd argue about something else. Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? God does that.

So that in verse 21, since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom doesn't know God. You can't science your way to God. It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

The Jews request a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom. It isn't a sign. It isn't wisdom.

It is the power of God. We've already seen the Lord Jesus introduced himself in chapter one as the truth and in John 14 as the truth. Psalm 89 verse 34 through 37.

Why am I quoting these? We should be people of truth. It's in the name of our group. It is by God's grace that we are able to learn and know the truth.

And its first and foremost application is to us. I don't want the Lord Jesus to have to come and tell me that what I think about myself is not true. That I am wealthy and have need of nothing.

And I don't know because I'm not really thinking about what I learned from the word of God that I have needs. I'm actually wretched. Wouldn't it be awful to be wretched and not know it? I've heard in the last two weeks, I've heard of, I think four different people who thought they were fine, began to have a little bit of symptoms, went to the doctor and discovered all four of these stage four pancreatic cancer.

Weeks to live. One of them, a classmate at the Naval Academy, in the same company as Ken and me, and with treatment, he can extend it to months. But you think you're fine.

A little bit of an issue, go in and you are in extremely dire straits. It's much more important to ensure that we are spiritually sound, that we are spiritually ready for the rapture, ready for the termination of this life and the inception of the next. That is so important.

Being willing to examine ourselves, to question our assumptions about ourselves. It is not

enough to go to a good church. I think we have a great church.

I love our church, but it is what we learn and what we apply from what we learn that will equip us for every good work. So many denominational churches of my acquaintance are large, have ministries, and people like to wrap themselves in the flag of the glory of their church. Oh, we've got a ministry for this, and we have a class for that, and we've got a group, and we meet and we do this, we do that.

I am in a church that does a lot of things, mostly done by other people in the church, but I want that to kind of rub off on me, because I am a member of a church that does a lot of things. I think it is the fallacy of composition, because the church is doing great things. Every individual part of the church must be doing great things.

Not so. This is an individual message. Notice Jesus knocks not on the door of the church.

Why doesn't he say, Behold, I stand in Laodicea and knock on the door? And if anybody inside, anybody gets up out of a pew, anybody comes out of the group and comes and opens the church's door, that's not what he says. This is the door of an individual dwelling. If anyone hears my voice, hears my sound, phone can be voice or sound, and it doesn't say he's calling through the door.

He's knocking. If anyone hears the sound of that knock, there are times when you knock on the door and people recognize the knock. When I go see my mom and I knock on her door, I give the shave and a haircut knock.

And so she'll figure it's me. You can know someone by their knock. And if anyone hears that sound individually and arises and goes and opens the door, this requires action.

So many people think, well, and this has its roots in reformed theology, covenant, theology, Calvinism, that God does everything. All I've got to do is just wait for him to move. I'm just the puppet.

Oh Lord, pick up the strings. Why is it that Jesus doesn't just open the door and come in and say, where's the food? Oh, by the way, I brought it because you can do nothing. Here, I brought a lunch bag.

So I've just, I opened your door. I've come and sat down at your table. I'm spreading a, and now I'm going to spoon feed you because you can't lift your arms.

That's such a wrong view. When you look at scripture, Jesus stands at the door, knocks and creates a decision point. There is a choice.

Am I going to pay attention and hear the knock? Some people don't like Halloween, little kids coming, wanting candy. You don't like that. So they knock at the door and they're yelling, trick or treat.

You don't get up. You don't go because you're a Scrooge to mix my holiday metaphors. The individual has to get up, cross the room, go to the door, open the door and allow the Lord Jesus to come in and sit down and share a meal.

This goes all the way back to Abraham by the, by the Oaks of Mamre, prior to Sodom and Gomorrah. Judgment is coming. Are you related to God? Do you have fellowship with him? Does he share with you what he is about to do? I will say this as our closing thought, as we go to the break, I am so fascinated by that at the first coming of the Lord Jesus, there were people who were because of their faithfulness and because of their love for God, God shared with him as he did with Abraham, what he was about to do.

Simeon knew that he was going to live long enough to see the salvation of Israel. Anna knew she dwelt in the temple. That was her home.

And God granted a knowledge that he was about to bring the Lord Jesus in his first coming. So do you not think that the faithful will get a sense for his second coming? I don't see any reason why not. The Lord Jesus shared things with Peter and James and John that he didn't even share with the rest of his disciples because they were closest to him.

God says, shall I hide from Abraham? What I'm about to do? Abraham is friend of God rather than trying to parse all of the symbolism and decode 666 and the rest of it to see what's happening in history, draw near to God and he will draw near to us. And if there's something we need to know, God will share it with us. If we hear his voice, if we open the door and he comes in, what do you think we'll talk about at the table? Well, here's what's coming up.

Here's what's next. If you really want to know where we are in history, how close is the coming of the Lord Jesus, whether it is through our departure or through the actual rapture, standing on the ground and following those who have departed, draw near to God, cultivate spiritual life. I wouldn't want to know him just for that alone, but that is going to be a side benefit.

We will know what we need to know. We will see what's coming to the extent that we share God's heart, sit at the table and fellowship around this manna. It's individual.

It is personal. It is meaningful. And it is so wonderful to be that close with God.

Can you imagine what it must've been like to be Simeon or to be Anna, to be Mary or Joseph, to be actively involved in the, in the bringing about of God's salvation for Israel and for the world. It wasn't that they were hapless and got struck by lightning. These were people who took their faith so seriously that God could share his, his heart and his plan and his purpose with them.

And they didn't fall apart. They were ready to participate, ready to be recorded in the eternal pages of scripture as people who loved God and were called according to his purpose. That can be us.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll, we'll see how this suggestion

from the Lord Jesus, I counsel you. What does that mean?