***The Laodicean Church – To Die is Gain  
  
Colossians 2:18-19  
  
COL-462***

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We direct your attention now this morning to the Word of Truth: "The Error of Angelic Worship," number 19 in Colossians 2:18-19.

**The Prize**

The apostle Paul, in Philippians 1:21, sums up what he means by the "prize," in Colossians 2:18, where he says, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize.” And we've been looking at the content of this prize – what it means to be a church-age believer. It is so easy, even for people who are well-taught in the Word of God, to let this slip by them – what it means to walk in the power of the Spirit of God, and what it means to let God make you a winner in time and in eternity. To every church-age believer, this grace gift of a life of power in God has been given. It is the first part of the prize during our lifetime.

That's what Paul means when, in Philippians 1:21, he says, "For me to live is Christ." The Greek word for "life" here, we pointed out to you, refers to the essence of the physical life. My living is what he's talking about. It connotes a quality of a Christlike life. Paul said, "I go through my life, and Jesus is doing the living. And it connotes a quality of holiness. And it connotes a quality that is different from the world.

It is amazing to me how easy it is for Christians to start looking just like the world. They live just like the world. They talk like the world. They dress like the world. They look like the world. They go to the things of the world. Their big buddies are people in the world – their close friends. And it never seems to bother them that that is kind of leaving the Lord Jesus Christ outside the door of your life.

This quality of life that Paul refers to is, for him: “To live is Christ.” This is the physical life within the grace-age, spiritual, power-system triumph over the sin nature; over the world; and, over Satan. It is the state of blessedness, physically, of a believer in temporal fellowship with the Father. It's walking along with the satisfaction in the soul.

That's no small thing. Many Christians are very distraught, many Christians are very dissatisfied. Many Christians fret all the time. They're under stress. They're stressed out. It's not an uncommon phrase. When we're in that situation, that is not Christ living in us. The standard of the Christian's physical life is the Lord Jesus.

Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and delivered Himself up for me." Now, that's a nice verse. It's a very inspirational verse. It's a verse of great meaning to say that my life is Christ living out His life through me. But how to do that, and to be willing to do that – now that is something else. But that's what the apostle Paul is talking about – the prize that we have.

Paul himself says that for him, the living was Christ. He was storing the Word of God in his human spirit. He kept the filling of the Holy Spirit active by remaining in temporal fellowship. He could say, "Christ lives in me. And God, consequently, led him. God spoke to him.

I was thinking about this as I was driving along this week, and a phrase hit that my mind. You might want to write it down: "God speaks to us." How? "He speaks to our mind." And I thought, "That's it." He speaks to our mind. We've said that it may be intuitive. We struggle for words. He does not speak to our ears. We don't hear Him. But He does speak to our minds. That's the communication. When the Lord Jesus Christ is in temporal fellowship with you, He speaks to your mind. The result is that you have divine guidance, which is the finest guidance you can find anywhere. But most Christians keep turning the set off, so they can't hear God speaking to their minds.

When we say that Christ speaks to us and He leads us, this means that the thoughts that we get, when we're in His fellowship, come from Him. Consequently, there is guidance in life. There is decision-making. There is a reminder when we face breaking a moral law. There is a caution when we are going to undermine our prize in the grace way of life.

**To Die is Gain**

The other part of the Christians prize, in Philippians 1:21, is after dying, at the end of the lifespan. That's what we look at this morning: "To die is gain." This is a wonderful quality indeed, as much as to live. The word "die" gives us a clear idea of what he's talking about. It looks like this in the Greek. It's the Greek word "apothnesko." This word means "to die." It matches the previous word that Paul used: to "live." He gives the alternative to the Christian's living style. He says, "My living style is Jesus Christ guiding my mind. And I respond to it, and I have the mind of God that conducts the business of my life. This word refers here to the physical life of the Christian, and it is a very strong word, because it's made up of two words. In the Bible, when you make put words together, and make them a compound word, it emphasizes the idea that's being spoken. The first part of this word here means "to go from the outer edges of something," and the second word means "to die." So, together this word means "to die off." It doesn't mean to cease to exist. It means for the soul and the spirit to leave the body. When that happens, a blood transfusion won't help you, or anything else. The body dies. The body is kept alive by the soul and the spirit. So, "apothnesko" is a strong word that means: "completely cut off from the physical life."

So, we know that Paul is talking about is what imminently faced him in the hands of Nero – that he was going to be judged (condemned). And eventually he was, and his life was snuffed out. This again is in the Greek language in such a way that it means "*the dying*." This happens to the Christian's body, and there is no word "is."

We've had a lot of discussion in our time about the meaning of the word "is." Well, the word "is" does have some significance in the Word of God, because in the Greek language, if you want to emphasize something, you don't put a verb in there. So, there's no "is" here. The Greek just says: "The living – Christ; the dying – gain.

Now, in Greek, it stands out on the page. And the emphasis is something really tremendous – I die; now what? I gain. And boy, do Christians miss the point on this Greek word, because the Greek word is "kerdos." "Kerdos" means a profit. It is something you have invested, and you made a profit on. A lot of you people can relate to that. You love to make investments, and you like to get a "kerdos." You like to get the word back that your investment is making profits for you. And that's good.

Well, it's the same in spiritual matters. Paul says, "The living for me, in my physical life on earth, is investing myself as the Spirit of God speaks to my mind – investing in the things of God for my eternal reward. I'm investing myself for heaven. Paul says, "Don't look only on the things below, but on the things above." Oh, what a sweet little phrase that is. How Christians love to use these little phrases that are so true in testimonies. But to do it – ah, that's something else. Come tomorrow morning, and the alarm clock rings, and you get up, how much is going to be invested in the things of eternity that day? And how much will be just cranking out the routines of ticking off your lifespan. You need to be making an investment for eternity? You will think many times during the day: "I'll make an investment in this. I'll buy this. I'll go here." And you're always investing, but for eternity? How much seriousness will that be? Well, it's up to you. You are your own priest.

However, Paul says, "For me, in the dying, there is going to be big returns. When I get up there, and they kick that computer in (in heaven), I am going to be amazed at the wealth of treasure that I'm going to enjoy for all eternity.

There is an enjoyment in heaven that will not be the same for every Christian. It will vary to the extent of your faithfulness in following the guidance of the Lord in fulfilling your mission. There are things he wants you to do. There are things He wants you to give. There are things He wants you to say. And your faithfulness is not forgotten in the Lord's presence.

**36 Things that you Take to Heaven**

So, when Paul says, "For me, the dying is gain," it means he's going to enter heaven. Yes, there are 36 things that every Christian receives immediately – instantaneously, at the point of your salvation. You'll have to get the tape if you want to go into the details on it. There are 36 magnificent things that you receive instantly. Christ is in you. The Holy Spirit is in you. You are placed in Christ. The Spirit of God is guiding you. You have all the relationships of the church-age. There are 36 distinct, different things that happen to you. And all of them are to secure you in an eternal life in heaven; a blessed life on earth; and, a rich life for all eternity.

You take all those 36 things to heaven with you, but there's something else that goes as well. Death is not a maximum gain for every Christian. Every Christian has not invested in developing spiritual maturity. So, his living was not Christlike. Consequently, a life has been frittered away.

**The Judgment Seat of Christ**

2 Corinthians 5:10 points out: "We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body." That is, they're going to check that this is the investment you made, and here's the gain. Here's the profit. You made an investment in eternity. You made an investment in your future. And here's the profit. It's just like on the stock market. You can invest in the futures, and make stock payments and purchases on the basis of where a stock i going to go. And if it does, gain can be very great. Well, here," God says, "We will check that when you get there, and we'll see what kind of futures you bought up. And according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

So, the Paul, when he speaks here about himself, this is not often what Christians frivolously, and in a very shallow way, mean when they stand up and say that "to die is gain." They mean they're going to gain heaven. Well, that's true. You are going to die as a Christian, and gain heaven. But that's not all that's behind this, because Paul said, in the first part: "The living: Christ in me – the hope of glory. I obeyed Him. I made it my business to be His servant, and to go about doing my call in His service."

Then Paul said, "Therefore, the dying is a big gain for me. It is a big gain for all eternity: treasures in heaven. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 is a passage you know well, about some people suffering loss; and, some people enjoying gain. Luke 9:23-25 also touches on that. This is the cost of discipleship. "Jesus was saying to them all, "If anybody wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross (his mission from God of service), and follow Me." He's not telling you to go out and suffer: "For whoever wishes to save his life (that is, not to waste your lifespan) will lose it." Most Christians do that. They lose their life. They fritter away their lifespan: "But whoever loses his life (that is, you're not doing the things you'd like to do, perhaps, but you do the things that God needs you to do). Whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Do you want to save your life for something? For all eternity? How about that? Or lose it now? The opportunity is what he's talking about.

In verse 25, Paul then puts this question: "What does a man profited if he gains the whole (as rich as Cresus, and gold like Midas) but you lose and forfeit your life?" That's crazy. OK, so you have things, and they're all going to be left behind. But what you invested for God – that you'll take. And please, don't charge out of here and get enthusiastic. I know that I'm an inspirational, charismatic, preacher-speaker type of thing, and you just can't keep yourself down after I get through. But the Bible says, "Don't ever make a commitment to so something of God, and then not keep it. You were in big, big trouble. Just keep your mouth closed. Do not get carried away emotionally. But if you commit, then do it. You'll be better off for all eternity. So, be very careful about charging out with some enthusiasm of what you're going to do for God. He speaks to your mind. You speak through your mouth accordingly. And you carry through. And He will care for you, and you will remember it, as He will, for all eternity. So, you have to be careful about these commitments that are a way of lying to God. You don't want to do that.

Furthermore, this time is going to be a wonderful experience for everybody. We take all 36 things to heaven with us. But we also take whatever level of spiritual maturity. . . And we take all of the rewards that we are entitled to, of the good works we have committed in our mission. All of that will go to heaven with us. But this verse is not an invitation to try to find an early death. Christians do die in different places, under varied circumstances – at different ages. And death itself may not be something very pleasant, it certainly isn't to anticipate. And a spiritually-oriented Christian is not focused upon death. He is focused upon living. The death will take care of itself in time.

However, there is an exhilarating gain. And "exhilarating" is the word to the individual believer. When he does die, if he leaves with a mature spiritual maturity structure in his soul, he's at the prime of his spiritual life and he's nobody's fool. And that includes, most of all, his emotions. Almost all of Christendom today plays on how people feel, and how enthusiastic they are. It is all touchy-feeling, and that's why it's very hard to find expository pulpits, because that requires people to look in the face of God, and their mental ears, hear what He says. And now they have to act. That's not very happy for some people, because they want to be what they are, and they don't want to be disrupted. But the Word of God makes it very clear that He is aware, and there will be an accountability, and it can be an exhilarating thing, or it can be a loss. And emotions are not going to take you there.

I came across a splendid little book this past week that I've read through rapidly. It is one of those genius little books of somebody who sat down and, after a great deal of research among churches, and being at the heart of them. The gist of the book was that you can't find expository preaching. So, all of these big churches, in one way or another, are playing upon how people feel; playing their emotions; and, making them feel wonderful. And the more carnal you are, and the less sensitivity you have to the Holy Spirit, that's what you want to get. And do you know what you'll get? You'll get nothing. You'll have a good time now, and it'll be just all gone.

I was in a service one time, and there was a lot of this little playing on people's emotions, and people were really very high, but there was nothing of the Word of God. There was no explaining of: "Hey, look at this verse; this is what God has said; and, here's what it means. There was nothing to hang your hat on, but it was very exciting. And it was a very simple little group. And I remember a lady coming up to me and saying, "Didn't you just feel the spirit here this morning?" And I did a terrible thing. I said, "Well, I thought I smelled something that was very suspicious. Is that's the spirit you mean?" I said that because people are really getting high on nothing.

So, when Paul says, "When I go up there. I'm not only going to take the 36 things that are given to me as a Christian in the church-age, and I'm not only going to take my spiritual maturity. All of that is gain – all of that is eternal. But I'm going to take a wealth of blessings for all eternity.

I had a call that I documented in our letter we had this week. It was from the daughter of the man who was my spiritual father. The man who, if he were able to walk in here again (he's been here a few times), he'd be so pleased to look here. He would recognize his fingerprints all over this place, because he made an investment in the life of a little kid in his church – me. And the result was, one step after another, of guiding, and directing, and orienting to the things of God, and to the ways of God. And it was nice to hear from his daughter again. I knew her when she was a baby at San Marcos. She didn't know me very well then. But when I got that card, I couldn't help thinking of the chain of events that were triggered, and the good works that were done in my life, and the life of a lot of other young people who are willing to be receptive, and who were open to the Word of God, and who were open to the vision of being something more than just another clot out there in Christendom. And I thought, "Here he is in heaven. And the clock of his rewards is still clicking off. Everything is done around here, everything in this ministry has its roots deeply in what he began through me, and what he invested in one little kid, and where that went on. And he and his wife were aware of that. They knew what it was to have ups and downs of how people respond in a congregation.

One time, shortly after the war, when I was visiting with him, it was very humbling for his wife to tell me that she and her husband had reminisced about the Chicago days of the little church, and she said, "As we think about all the people that came and went, and the things that were disappointing, and the things that were happy, one of the things we had to say was that it was all worthwhile. If we had nothing other than you, John, out of that mass of human beings." And this was very humbling to me to hear them say, "You have made that whole ministry of those years in Chicago gratifying." And you don't know what's going on now in heaven, but after you're gone, your good works continue.

So, the apostle Paul knew this. So, when he said, "The living – Christ. I'm a church-age believer. I'm not a poor, backward, hunkered-down guy under the Mosaic Law, or any system at all.

Oh boy, last night I had to drive out, about 9 o'clock, and there was our Hispanic friends down the street, with their Seventh Day Adventist Church, all coming out, and having a wonderful time. Boy, it was hard for me not to pull up to the curb and say, "Folks, I want you to gather around me. I want to talk to you about the Mosaic Law." Here, they have nothing. They are going to church on Saturday, because they're still slaves of elements of the Mosaic Law code, which was never designed to help anybody become spiritual, or do anything but show you how much you needed God to do something for you.

Well, remember that the gain is greater than you might think. Just think of, in your own life, the things that you have done, and that you have invested in in your life in spiritual ministries all over this campus. And you can't walk by, and not look and say, "That's still going on. That's still clicking off in eternal rewards for me. Boy, was that a good investment on my part. That was a really good "kerdos." That was a profitable investment. We walk through our lives forgetting that God is keeping the records. But you should take great satisfaction from when you have said, "I'll go with the things of the Lord, and I'll not quit fretting and worrying about eyes on myself, and let's go. I'm in your hands. You carry me through."

What I'm saying is that if you want to have a life which is gain, it is smart to leave this life in a maximum profit status with a spiritual maturity structure which is fully developed, so that you're steadily developing and growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you're functioning with God. He is speaking to your mind, and you are saying, "Amen." And you go for it. The result will be that you will find that there will be riches beyond your fondest dreams in heaven. It is smart to keep developing and serving.

Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we have a series of things that God wants us to do. Paul says, "We are His workmanship. We've been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

In Galatians 6:7-8, Paul again says, "Do not be deceived. God is not mocked." Christians are always deceiving themselves. They're always playing God for a fool, they think: "God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, this will He reap." You're not going to reap on your pretense. You will reap on your reality: "For the one who sows to his own flesh (satisfying the sin nature and the focus of this world), "shall from that flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit (the guidance of the Spirit of God to the Christian who is in fellowship), that spirit shall reap eternal life."

Then, there is the comfort, in verse 9: "Let us not lose heart in doing good. For in due time, we shall reap, if we do not grow weary." Now, that is very comforting. We have many occasions to be disappointed in people. We wonder what possesses their minds. Well, possesses their minds is spiritual insanity. We look at young people, and we see how pathetically disoriented they are, because they cannot rise to it. But others rise to it. What God has to offer, they go for it.

In Hebrews 6:10, the writer says, "For God is not unjust, so as to forget your work, and the love which you have shown toward His Name in having ministered and instilled ministering to the saints." He says, "I do this because I love Him."

I was telling Mrs. Danish the other day that when somebody is absent from some area of our ministry service. They need to remember that they are letting the Lord down. If you're supposed to be in some area of service, like some musical thing, or some teaching thing, and you don't make it for some reason or other, it isn't just the person in charge of that particular activity that you're being absent from. You're being absent from the Lord. And you only think on a human level, and that is foolish. If you are absent, it is the Lord that you're absent from. If you are not in this auditorium, but you're someplace else, doing something, while the services are being held, you're absent from the Lord. You're not just absent from all these people around you; that is, they're not the important ones. It is the kind of love you're showing toward the Lord. You say, "Gee, I can't go to church. There's this wonderful movie down at the Metroplex 24. I just have to see it. I can't go to church."

So, whom do you love? The Lord or "Black Hawk Down." Christians can be so crazy. They can be out of pocket, and they think on the human level. Don't do that. Don't think horizontally. Yeah, you do let us down. I know if you're not here for a musical performance that we need you in the music organization, yeah, you do let us all down, because it's harder for us to do it. But you need to look vertically. That's where you let things down. It's Christ.

Then, isn't it interesting that you get to the end of the book of Revelation; you're down to chapter 22; the whole Bible is ready to have the final period put on the page; and, look at first 12. In these final last moments, the last few verses of this whole Book of God, the final revelation, what should He stop and say? "Hey, I want to tell you this once more, Christians. Revelation 22:12: "Behold, I'm coming quickly (there's the rapture), and My reward is with Me to surrender to every man according to what he has done" – not according to what he said he was going to do, and not according to what he promised he was going to do, and not according to what his good intentions were – but according to what he has done. He says, "I am coming quickly," and boy, is that "quickly" getting quicker all the time: And My reward is with Me." Of all things, talk about the Judgment Seat of Christ!

Now, even with half of your brain tied behind your back, you should be able to see that that means that your investment in your life in God's service – that's number one. That's where it's all at, because the rewards are not here. They will be up there, and it'll be according to what you have done. That sends a little bit of a chill through me – what you have done.

So there it is. For me, the living is Christ; the grace power system; the Word of God; confession of known sin; staying in temporal fellowship; focusing upon what He tells me in my mind to do in His service; and, carrying through. Then the dying – yes, it's going to be heaven. That's a gain. But it's going to be an enriched heaven. It's going to be an enriched gain. You can do it either way.

**The Laodicean Stage of the Church**

That wonderful book of the Revelation gives us a peek into the future. It tells us about a group of Christians who did not understand this principle that the living is Christ, and He empowered through us. And then the dying is gain. They thought the gain was here. In Revelation 2 and 3, there are seven letters that the Lord Jesus Christ writes to churches which existed in western Turkey. They all existed at the same time. But they had varied spiritual condition in every church. They began with the Ephesus Church where the persecution was. It ends up with the one we want to look at here in Revelation 3:14 – the Laodicean Church. We see also that in church history, these churches also reflected the primary situations that exist at a certain point in time. Let's anchor, for example, beginning in the year 1900, when the Laodicean stage of the church kicked in.

The Philadelphia Church, which is a good church: the serving church; the investing church; the church true to the Word of God; and the church which is challenged by the liberal conflicts in the early part of the 20th century, with liberalism over the Scriptures. That Philadelphia church continues. We're part of that Philadelphia church here at Berean Church, because we take the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. And we know that there are people such that that's the only spiritual food they have. If they don't have that, they will not grow, and their lives will be useless. So, we understand that. However, at the same time, beginning about the year 1900, in kicked the Laodicean Church. It is the primary expression of Christendom today. This is what is all around us in churches now. So, let's begin to look at this.

**The Angel**

This is a church who forgot that dying is gain. They thought that the living is gain. And boy, were they wealthy. They had plenty of reason to think that. Revelation 3:14: "And to the angel." This word "angel," in these letters, is the Greek word "aggelos." God is dictating. The word "angel" is the recipient of His dictation, and the word "angel" means "messenger." Angels are messengers. But the concept of an angel is also just a non-angelic messenger.

**The Pastor-Teacher**

In this case, the "angel" is the pastor-teacher of the local church of Laodicea. And God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is giving him a message. This message is to be received by the pastor-teacher leader. He's the communicator. And he is to communicate it to his congregation. This fella has a very nice church. Things are really easy. One of the things they don't have to do is scrape for money. It is really a good-time church. And they have lots of programs, and lots of activities, but there is one thing they don't have. They don't have anybody explaining the mind of God to people – no expository teaching. They don't really need it. They feel that life is so good in Laodicea.

**Church**

Now, the Lord is addressing this pastor-teacher elder, and that tells us that this is an important office. The pastor-teacher bears authority from God to the degree that he is faithful to the teachings of the Word of God. The pastor-teacher is recognized as a place of authority by the local congregation. His authority stems from the fact that he's doing the job of explaining Scripture, and that he is true to the explanation of Scripture. He is not a liberal who is undermining the Word of God, and challenging the inerrancy of the Word of God, and the basic principles of salvation by grace through Christ. He is writing to the angel (to the pastor-teacher) in this church. This is the Greek word "ecclesia," and it means a group of people who've been called out from the mass of humanity to a special relationship with God. This calling-out again on the day of Pentecost and will end on the day of the rapture. This is a special group. That's why we say that the church is not related to Israel. The church has nothing to do with the Mosaic Law or any practices of the Mosaic Law. And if you learn that, you're going be head-and-shoulders above all of your friends. The poor Seventh Day Adventist friends down the street do not understand this, and they gather together in great sincerity on Saturdays. And, oh boy, if they're eve saved, are they going to be crushed when they stand before God, and see how poor they are in heaven?

This word, "Laodicea," refers to this particular town in the western part of modern day Turkey. And the local church that you attend, naturally, will impact upon your spiritual development, and it will impact upon your earning of rewards of heaven. In most churches, this subject is never even spoken of. People don't even worry about whether they are fulfilling some kind of a mission from God. That's why we tell you that there is a right local church for you to attend. Not just any church is OK for you. Consider yourself fortunate when God breaks through the mentality of your soul, and you say, "Ah! This is the place." And there is a right pastor-teacher for you that meets your need, and that will hold your esteem and respect for the authority of the Word of God. It's of monumental importance that you make that connection.

**Church Mavericks**

The church mavericks float around from one church to another. They're looking for kicks. They're looking for emotional cookies. And they go around from even these para-church groups – these other groups that meet totally apart from any larger groups. Those are kicky groups. Most of the time, they're very inspirational. They're very emotionally moving. OK, you get your kick, and then you come back.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Seminary, had great experience in dealing with Christians in local church communities. He used to be the pastor at what was then the First Congregational Church in Dallas, which was associated with the great C.I. Scofield, who wrote the Scofield Bible notes. Dr. Chafer had the privilege of being very close to Scofield. I remember one time in class, Chafer was telling us that he had met Dr. Schofield one day in downtown Dallas, and they were walking to lunch. And Dr. Chafer said, "Dr. Schofield, how are the Schofield Bible notes coming?" And Scofield looked at him, and said, "Last night, I finished." This Bible that religious groups have tried to destroy – people do not want you to buy Schofield reference Bibles, because they will guide you to the difference between Israel and the church; to the dispensational structure of Scripture; to the rapture; and, to the rapture before the tribulation. All these things are right there in the notes. And when you read a passage – boom! There's the explanation. It is the greatest reference Bible that's ever been written. Dr. Chafer, from his experience with men like Scofield, in his own experience, told us one day in class, "When you are pastor of a church, the way you appeal to people the first time they come in, is the way you will have to appeal to them the next time. "You should appeal to them on the fact that when they come in, you will explain the Bible to them. There will be an explanation of the Word of God to them, and they will know what God thinks, when they walk out the door, on that particular passage. They will come back for that, because you'll never run out of the need to feed upon what God things. But if you have entertained them with stories and jokes, and made them feel good, you can do that next time, but you'll have to be better every time. You'll have to give them a bigger dose to keep them coming back.

You would be surprised how many mega-churches are now focused with entertainment. It is like a miniature Six Flags over Texas. And some churches are even built and designed to be able to do things like that. It's entertainment. And those Christians who have no discernment, they eat it up. They just love it.

So, this local church in Laodicea was long on money, but short on explanation of the Word of God. The city of Laodicea was a great city in the western part of modern Turkey. It was 100 feet over the banks of the great Lycus River there. It was situated where three major commercial roads came together, which is why the city was so wealthy. Three major commercial roads, from all over the empire, came together, and they converged on Laodicea. So, it became a way-station for commercial activities. There was a military outpost there, so it was a major trade center. It became a center for banking and industry of one kind or another. It was a place of money-changing.

The city prospered from a black wool. They had a special kind of black sheep that produced a glossy, black, soft, wool that made lovely garments, which were desired all over the ancient world.

It also had a flourishing medical school. It researched compounds for various diseases. It produced an ear ointment for therapeutic value, and, as we shall see, people had a lot of eye problems (infections) in the ancient world. And they produced a powder called a Phrygian powder, with little tablets. You ground them up, and put it into water, and put it on your eyes. It was a poultice that had great healing power. It had a great medical school there – a terrific medical school. And it had this caduceus that the doctors have with the snake wrapping around the sign of the medical world. It had some warm springs there – warm springs that were really interesting, because it was lovely to be in, but if you drank them, you threw up. That really messes up the bath. It was nauseous.

Years ago, when we were on one of our trip camp, so took the kids down the wild rapids of the Colorado River. And we came to a place where the boatman signaled me that we were going to pull off, and we had three boats loaded with about 30 kids, and we moved off to the side, up a little tributary, where all of a sudden, the water turned blue – just blue. Now, we had been drinking out of the Colorado River, because it was crystal clear. And if you got thirsty, you'd dip your cup in as the pontoons were going along that you were riding on. And you could drink right out of the river. When we pulled off into this little side tributary, the boat guide said, "These are Warm Springs. You'll enjoy sitting in them. But if you drink this water, it'll make you nauseous, and it will create some other problems for you. So don't drink the water."

This is what you had here, interestingly, at Laodicean. It was a city that had so many wonderful things about it, and had these warm springs, but there was something about it that caused God to want to throw up. And next Sunday morning, we'll take a look at that.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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