***The Evaluation of the Laodicean Church

RV62-02***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 3:14-22, the letter to Laodicea, segment number nine. We have seen thus far in our study of this church, whatever its past spiritual condition was, that at the time that Jesus Christ was writing to it, it had fallen into a status of spiritual reversionism. They were believers who viewed themselves as sophisticated in relating themselves to the pagan world, by which they meant that they dealt with the pagans in a non-offensive way, so that they did not bring reproach upon themselves. They were, because of the surroundings in which they lived in that particular city, financially well-off. Therefore, they were not under a particularly great pressure to be looking to the Lord for material provisions for themselves or for their church and industry. In fact, they saw themselves as being particularly blessed of God, and being in particular favor with God because they were so well off financially. People often make that mistake.

It is evident that Bible doctrine was not as important to these people as sharing how they felt about things. They were therefore lukewarm for the intake of the Word of God, and toward the goal of building spiritual maturity structure in their souls. They were cool toward the Word, but they were hot for emotional binges. They blurred the lines that distinguished them from the unbelievers around them so that they wouldn't appear to be too fanatical. They avoided, thereby the offense of the cross of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus saw them in a totally different position than what they viewed themselves. He saw them as believers who were part of the royalty of God, who had simply degenerated into sophisticated regurgitation. Jesus Christ said that they stank. That was quite a shocking statement when this letter and this communication was read to this church. Remember, that that's what was done. All of these sophisticated people in the Christian community of Laodicea gathered in church. They said, "We have a direct communication from God through the apostle John, and we have a letter directly to our church." You could imagine the murmur of excitement and approval as these well-dressed people, in their well-structured surroundings, looked at one another, very pleased and very excited that God was showing another bit of favor by speaking to them in this communication.

Then when they began to hear what the Lord Jesus had to say, you can imagine the shock on their faces, and the absolute disbelief of what they were hearing. As they looked upon one another, they were appalled that Jesus Christ could have in any way thought the things about them that He was saying, when they knew that they were a sophisticated, elitist group of believers.

Well, the spiritual breakdown into reversionism expresses itself in a variety of ways. It seems evident here, as we read this letter, that in Laodicea, the reversionism expressed itself in large measure in a breakdown in that spiritual maturity facet known as the mastery of the details of life. The breakdown with these people came at the point of their material possessions. That was where the conflict came with what the Word of God had to say to them. They had wealth. That was evident. But what they did not have was the capacity to use that wealth for the Lord's glory, and to use it without self-degeneration. They were calloused in their souls because of their reversionism. They were calloused toward divine viewpoint truth. While they were parading as fine Christians in their comfortable churches; their well-furnished homes; their fine clothing; and, their social club contents, their lack of the mastery of the details of life made it easy for them to indulge their greed, and to compromise their integrity. That's what is happening in this church. They were indulging their greed, and they were compromising their personal integrity (their personal godliness) in the process.

So, what this congregation needed was to get a divine viewpoint picture of itself; to return to the pursuit of storing doctrine in their human spirits, instead of sharing their emotional ignorance; to begin peeling off the spiritual callouses from their souls; and, to restore the broken down structures of spiritual maturity within their souls.

**Their Self-Evaluation**

So, beginning at Revelation 3:17, we, first of all, see the human viewpoint evaluation of these people – the way that this congregation looked at itself. Again, it is being addressed through the pastor-teacher. In fact, the pastor-teacher himself is speaking here in behalf of the congregation. The Lord Jesus, in verse 16, has said that He would vomit them out of his mouth. Verse 17 begins with the word "because," which looks like this in Greek: "hoti," which is a conjunction which introduces the reason that Jesus Christ is threatening to vomit up the Laodicean church. This church, in other words, is faced with extinction because it misrepresents Jesus Christ, though it claims to represent Him, and because it dishonors His name. The Lord Jesus is writing this letter to alert these people as to what He is going to do if they do not correct this problem. They are misrepresenting Him, and their lifestyle and sophisticated culture, refined and well-heeled as it is, is one that does not represent the Man of Galilee.

God, in other words, really had nothing to do with what was going on in the Laodicean and church in many respects. This is just as it is true today that, with most of the religious activity today, God has absolutely nothing to do with it. Most of the religious activity which claims to be associated with God and which claims to represent Him, does no such thing. God has nothing to do with it. It takes an intelligent Christian to realize, when he listens to very impressive and very large groups like, say, the Roman Catholic Church or the Mormon Church, that God absolutely has nothing to do with those groups. They are religious activities; they use religious words; they use biblical words; and, they even use the Bible, but God has absolutely nothing to do with Roman Catholicism, that harlot church, nor with Mormonism or any other cult group.

Now, that's a terrifying thought when you realize that it covers such vast numbers of the human race. Then when you add to that the religions of the world: the Muslim world, Islam; Hinduism; Buddhism; and, all of the contrivances of the human mind, and that those supposedly represent a supreme being, you know that God has nothing to do with those. They represent a supreme being. All of them do. But it's a supreme being that wants to substitute for God – the god of this world: Satan. And that god, Satan, is well-served by these religious groups.

So, what Jesus Christ is saying, is that just because you call yourself a church; just because you go through certain functions that a church is supposed to do; just because you talk about the Bible; or, even just because you are born again, that does not mean that "I am part of what you are doing, or that I am associated with what you claim I am associated with."

So this little word "hoti" is introducing the reason that Jesus Christ wants to make it very clear to this church that He is going to rub them out of existence. He's going to cut them off. The reason is because, "You say." Here, we hear the voice of the pastor-teacher speaking for the congregation. It is the word "lego" Greek. This is the word for a verbal statement which stresses the substance of what is said rather than the words used. The Lord Jesus is concentrating upon the claims that they are actually making. Jesus says, "I'm going to quote you on exactly what you're saying, and I'm going to show you the contrast of what you are with what you are claiming. In the Greek language, this word is in the present tense, which means that they continually held this opinion about themselves – that they are about to quote. It's active voice, which means that this is their own conclusion about themselves. It wasn't what somebody else was saying about them and misrepresenting them. This is what they confidently claimed about themselves. They really believed this to be true about themselves. It's indicative mood, which indicates that we have a statement of a fact.

"Lego" emphasizes the substance of the Laodicean statement. The substance of what they were saying was that they were fine Christians who were being blessed materially by God because they were such fine Christians. What they had was a totally false picture of themselves because of their reversionism. They had destroyed all the divine viewpoint frame of reference in their directive mind. They were in the dark, and they had no basis of looking at themselves and seeing themselves as they were. They had no basis for judging themselves. Every time they looked into the spiritual mirror to see what their condition was, it was like a distorted mirror at a carnival, and they got an image of themselves that was something totally different.

Have you ever gone to one of those Disneyland places where they have one of these mirrors that makes you look skinny? Certain people just love to look in those mirrors, and it gives them a terrific lift to stand there and look at that mirror. I've seen people stand, and they look sideways, and this way, and they look there, and they smile at themselves, and they walk back and forth, and they just look terrific. But that's not the way they really look. They've got a distorted picture. That's what has happened here at Laodicea. These people are going to say some totally unbelievable things about themselves, and they're gross in comparison to what Jesus Christ is going to say the truth about them really is. So, the word "lego" is kind of interesting. The Holy Spirit said, "I want you to concentrate not on the words." Words are fancy things that people use to sort of cover their tracks. I want you to get behind the words, and I want to look at the substance of what these people are actually claiming.

"Because you say, 'I am.'" This the Greek word "eimi." "Eimi" is the verb to describe their status quo. It's present tense. So, it states what the Laodiceans were regularly claiming about themselves. It's active. This is what they were saying themselves (the whole church). It's indicative. It's a statement of fact. What were they saying about themselves? They were saying, "One of the things we like about ourselves is that we're all a bunch of plutocrats. We are rich." The Greek word for "plutocrats" is "plousios". This is the word for material wealth. These people in the Laodicean church had no hesitancy of saying, "We are rich." They would greet one another at the church and say, "Hi, rich person." They would say, "How are you, wonderful rich person?" They were happy to go around calling attention to the fact that they were rich.

Anytime you call attention to the fact that you're rich, you also call attention to the fact that you're cheap. People who are cheap like to flaunt their riches. People of quality do not flaunt their riches. The fact that they have considerable material wealth comes as a shock to you because it's so low key, if that is a spiritually-discerning godly person. That should be a clue to you. Somebody who has material wealth and flaunts it is a person you want to steer clear of. If that person lets you know that he's got it, you know he doesn't have it where it really counts. If you're smart, you'll start backpedaling away from that person. You know them; I know them; and the world is full of them.

These believers may have actually once been spiritual maturity structure type of believers. That may have been at the point at which God prospered them financially. But something happen, and it broke it all down. The Greek language has this conjunction "hoti," which is a word that you don't translate, but it is in the Greek Bible as a quotation mark. So, that indicates to us that the Lord Jesus Christ is actually quoting, and He's quoting in terms of the person He's referring back to, which is not the church as such, but he's referring to this masculine individual, the angel – the pastor-teacher. He is quoting him, and he is saying what he has taught this congregation. He is saying what the congregation, therefore, is saying and reflecting about itself.

So, the Greek Bible says, "Because you say," and then it has quotation marks, and He is actually quoting what they're saying: "I am rich. I'm just kidding you when I said they were going around saying that they were rich. They really were doing it, and they were directly making that statement. This word "plousios" is an adjective also, which means that it modifies something. It is saying, "I am a rich (something)." And the rich something here would be, "I am a rich man. I am a rich pastor-teacher. I am a rich woman. I am a rich congregation." It's just an adjective describing the individual, so they were really applying this to themselves. But they were not going around singing, "If I were a rich man." In Laodicea, they were singing, "Since I am a rich man." Instead of the doxology, they began with that every Sunday morning: "Since we are a rich group." They knew it; they said it; and, they flaunted it.

The philosophy of the Laodicean church was: "You are what you have." That was it. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "You're a pile of regurgitation. That's what you are." The abundance of the details of life (material things) had crowded out the Word of God from functioning in their lives. Spiritual discernment in the directive mind had been blacked out with these people, so they are totally in the dark about themselves.

That should strike terror in the heart of any rational believer – that you could ever come to the point where you have so cut yourself off from the illuminating light of God's Word because you've become careless about learning it; careless about taking doctrine into your soul on a daily basis; and, worse yet, careless about being negative, neutral, or indifferent to what you have been taught. It should strike terror into your heart to realize that a darkness could settle over your mentality so that you lose all contact with spiritual discernment. You lose all understanding of what God has for you. That had happened in this church. They were gross, and they did not see themselves for what they were. That's really stupid. You just have to ask yourself: What material detail of life has ever sustained you and comforted you in a time of pressure; in a time of trial; in a time of temptation; or, in a time of sorrow? What material detail of life ever carried you through? You know very well that there is none. Yet, people exalt this, and make this their god.

Yet, the Bible has not been silent on this subject. The Word of God has been very carefully structured by God the Holy Spirit to keep us well aware of the tragedy that awaits the person who forgets how to handle the details of life. Let's look at a few passages. James 4:13-14 says, "Come now, you that say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain,' whereas you don't know what shall be on the next day. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away."

How many times have I heard people say, "As soon as I make the money, I am going to be able to help the Lord's work so much in this way, and this way, and that way. As soon as I have made this money, I'll be free to devote more of my time to the work of the Lord, and to invest my life there." I have seen them come right down through their lives, when they came to the threshold of their retirement, where they felt they had it all made, and then they died. The story of the rich fool and his empty new bonds was restructured all over again. I have seen it, and perhaps you have too.

You have plans of what you're going to do some day. I'll guarantee you that if, in the days of your modest means, you are not a faithful student of the Word of God; you are not a positive believer toward the Word of Truth; you are not building spiritual maturity into your soul; and, you are not investing your life in the Lord's work, you're never going to do it when you become wealthy. Just forget it. Stop lying to yourself, and please do us the courtesy of not treating us like fools – those of us who have some spiritual maturity and experience. Don't tell us that you're going to do it, because we know doggone well that's not going to happen. So, find some idiot, who has never been taught the Word of God, that you can play as a sucker, because godly people know that that is not true. You're going to have big plans for tomorrow, and you never come through because your life is so short. Why do you think you're going to have all that long to live; to make it; and, to invest yourself in such a way that there are rewards in heaven?

James 5:1 says, "Come now, you rich men. Weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are rusted and the rust of them shall be a witness against you. You shall eat your flesh, as it were fire. You have heaped treasures together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cries, and the cries of them who have reaped are entered into the ears of the land of sabaoth. You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton. You have nourished your hearts as in the days of slaughter."

I have seen these wheeler dealers too, who have taken (literally) widow's funds to make progress for themselves, and they think that they are going to get away with something while they have prospered themselves at the expense of other people – of the sweat of other people's efforts.

1 Timothy 6:3: "If any man teach otherwise, and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and disputes: words of which come envy; strife; railings; evil suspicions; perverse disputings men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. From such, withdraw yourself."

Now that's divine viewpoint truth – men who think that gain indicates godliness. Some idiot who thinks that, because he has prospered financially, that God is blessing him. He is never stopping to think that the devil can bless him just as well. If anybody thinks, and even suggests, such a thing – that what they possess is an indication of divine favor, the Bible says, "Get away from that person, and have nothing to do with him.

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. Having food and raiment, let us be there with content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and the snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

There was a great deal of sorrow in the Laodicean church of one kind or another, you may be sure, because they had pierced themselves through because of their love of money and because of their misconception that their possessions signaled divine favor.

**God is Sovereign**

Matthew 6:25 gives us another warning: "Therefore, I say unto you, be not anxious for your life: what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body more than raiment? Behold, the fowls of the air, for they don't sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you much better than they?" Do you know what that is saying? That is saying that God is sovereign. And that's the problem with Christians and material possessions. They forget that God is sovereign, and that sovereign God is going to take care of you. He is going to provide. He is going to respect, and prosper, and carry your efforts through under His directions.

"Which of you, by being anxious, can add one cubit unto his stature. Why are you anxious for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field – how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin. Yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you? O, you of little faith." What is that? The sovereignty of God. It's not the sovereignty of man. In Laodicea, this letter gives us the overtones, as you will see, that these people were saying, "We're rich, and we're not only rich, but we're the ones who are responsible for being rich. We made ourselves rich. Our efforts; our hard work; our cleverness; our skill; and, our application has made us rich." What fools! The Word of God says, "Do not fall into the mistake of making man sovereign." You are not sovereign. All God has to do is slap you with an illness so that you can't work. A lot of us really deserve that. You will learn very, very quickly who gives you the physical capacity; who gives you the air to breathe; and, who gives you the functioning of your physical body to produce everything you need to have the energy; the brain capacity; the thought capacity; and, the motor capacity to be to able perform the skills with which God prospers you materially. If He pulls all that away, you will very quickly learn the sovereignty of God over the nonsense of the sovereignty of man in personal provision.

Verse 31: "Therefore be not anxious saying, 'What will we eat, or what shall we drink, or with what shall we be clothed?' For after all these things do the gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and all His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be, therefore, not anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself, sufficient unto the day as its own evil." How many times have you seen believers who will make moves that cost them spiritually so that they can advantage themselves materially? What fools!

It's tough to believe this verse, I'll tell you. It's very hard to say, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (His will and His service) and all these material things shall be added unto you." It's very tough to believe that that kind of a God is not going to let you down if you cast yourself upon that kind of a promise, and that you will not have to be anxious. This is a God, as verse 32 says, who knows it all. He does have the omniscience. He knows exactly where you're coming from; where you're going; and, what you need. He is the God who supplies and who provides grace. He is providing grace so that whatever you need, He provides for you to execute.

The Bible has been very clear. There is no excuse for these people in Laodicea to have fallen into this kind of a material trap. Their reversionism was the reason they didn't see it.

**Christ's Evaluation**

So, in verse 17, the Lord Jesus Christ says, "I'm going to spew you out of my mouth. I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth because you say 'I am rich." But that's not enough. That's bad enough that they said that. Then we have, "And," and this is the word "kai," a conjunction indicating that they said more. What they said more was that they were, "Increased with goods." The Greek word is "plouteo," which means "to get riches." And here is the boast which is implied here that they became rich by their own exertions; their cleverness; their skill; and, their merit. This is in the perfect tense, which indicates that they are saying that in the past, their efforts were applied in such a way that they produced the wealth that they enjoy in the present. It's active, which says that they are the ones who made themselves rich.

That is very striking in this word in the Greek. It is active: "I made myself rich." It is indicative – a statement of fact. And the reason they were stressing this ("Not only am I rich, but I am the one who brought myself into that position of wealth") is because they are equating their material wealth and their application to the possession of spiritual wealth, and to the possession of divine blessing. They are smug, and they they're spiritually blind in their possessions.

But that's not all. Again, the Greek Bible throws in the word "kai" ("and"), continuing to quote these people. They had something else to say: that "They have" ("echo"). "Echo" is a word for "possession." It is in the present tense – a constant state of possessing. It is active. This was the status of the Laodiceans Christians. It is indicative – a statement of fact: "That they have need." The word "need" is the Greek word "chreia." This is a noun which denotes "the lack of something. They have need of "oudeis." This is an adjective for "nothing." It's used here as a noun: "I have need for nothing." This is in the neuter form in the Greek, so it's indicating: "I have need for no thing at all – either material or spiritual." It's in the accusative case, which tells us that it's saying, "In no respect:" "I have need in no respect." You will notice that the negative part of this word is the strong Greek form for negative. It is "ou" – the strongest expression of the negative in the Greek language: "In no way: I have absolutely no lack of anything."

Now, that is really something. How many of you could be so bold as to say, "I don't have any need for anything absolutely whatsoever. I have it all, whether materially or spiritually." These indeed are people seeing themselves as having arrived. These people have really arrived, all the way: "I have need of nothing." At this point, the Greek throws in another "kai" ("and"). But this time it's the Lord Jesus Christ who is speaking. The Lord Jesus now gives the divine viewpoint evaluation of their condition. He says, "And know." The word know is "oida." This is a significant word to use, because this is the word to know something by discernment instead of by one's experience. The idea is that these people have no perception. And again, it is modified by the Greek negative "ou," the strongest negative. These people absolutely do not have any spiritual discernment. This is perfect tense in the Greek, but it has a present meaning. They never had a true picture of their condition. It is active voice. It's their personal status of ignorance. It's indicative – a statement of fact.

This word "oida" also, when referring to knowledge, as it does, refers to a knowledge that is complete and mature. The Laodiceans lacked any complete mature knowledge about themselves. The reversionist is so in the dark that he fails to see his own grotesque condition, and he seeks out his own kind to reinforce his perverted self-image. That's what is dangerous about dealing with a reversionist. That's what's so dangerous about dealing with a material reversionist. He always seeks out his own kind. And if you gravitate toward him, he will destroy your rewards along with his. When your capacity for discernment is blocked out by greed and visions of sugar plums dancing in your head of benefits that you are going to receive, you better be sure that Jesus Christ put those sugar plums dancing there, or you will pay for it forever. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "You think you're rich, and you think you don't need anything. But the thing that you don't know, because you have no discernment, is."

Then He uses the word "that." Again, this is the Greek word "hoti," which introduces the condition that has made them a stench in His nostrils: "You know not," and the personal responsibility is stressed in the Greek because it uses this personal pronoun "su:" "You, personally and individually, do not understand. This is right back on your shoulders that you are something entirely different. You are." Then, again, we have this status-quo word "eimi." This is the verb of what they really are. It's present tense. This is their continual status. It is active. This is their actual position. It's indicative – a statement of fact.

Then the Greek Bible introduces the word "the." It looks like this in Greek: "ho." It is put in there one time in this sentence. Then after it comes a series of adjectives: one; two; three; four; five. It goes right down the line, naming what they are. "You are the." And the first one is "the wretched one," meaning: "You are the wretched one; you are the miserable one; you are the poor one; you are the blind one; and, you are the naked one." It goes right down the line, and five times the Lord Jesus Christ hits them with an adjective that is introduced by this word "the."

**Calloused**

So, He begins. First of all, what is their real condition? That they are "wretched." The word is "talaiporos." The first part, "talai," means "to endure." The second part, "poros" (which we've been introduced to), means "calloused." So, this word means "enduring callouses on the facets of their soul" so that they are hardened toward the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he means by "wretched." They are hardened in their souls toward the person of Christ. That means that they are in a state of unhappiness. Are they ever going to go chasing everything under the sun to try to find some happiness? A good way to translate this is "pitiable." You are a pitiable one because you are insensitive to any leading of the Spirit of God.

**Miserable**

Secondly, "You are the (what He calls here) miserable ones." The Greek word looks like this: "leeinos." This means to be pitied. This is a shocking idea for the people in Laodicea – that they were to be pitied. They thought that they were to be envied. This word is used one other time – in 1 Corinthians 15:19. That is the only other time God the Holy Spirit chose to use this word, where He says: "If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." We are pitiable. We are to be pitied. We're in a pitiful condition. If there is no resurrection, and the only thing that Christianity has of value is for us to survive now, then we're in a pitiful condition. He said, "That's what you people are. You are reversionists, and a reversionist is a pathetic sight." It makes one sad to see himself in his complacent spirit or disorientation. And remember that a reversionist is a Christian. It is sad to see a Christian who has broken down on the mastery of the details of life. It is sad to see how pitiful he can act. But he goes around in arrogance and confidence and with a sense of elitism. You are the miserable one. You are the wretched one, because you're calloused, so you're unhappy. You are the pitiful one because you are insensitive.

**Poor**

"You are," furthermore, "the poor one." You can just hear the gasps in that congregation when the pastor read this. You can just see him reading, "And you are the ..." And he almost hesitated a moment: "The poor ones," because this word "ptochos" means "beggar." It refers to a beggar type who lacks the desire and ability to care for himself. It carries the image of one who is cringing, and who cowers. He is fawning. Can you imagine? "You people think you're so wonderful. You think you're so sophisticated. You think that because of your money, you move in good circles; you eat in the nice restaurants; and, you have everything that that money brings you. But you're a pitiful, cowering group in the sight of God. Your boot-lickers."

The Laodiceans were in a state of abject spiritual poverty, and they had no desire to correct it. They looked bold and arrogant and worldly wise, but inside, when the pressures came, they were cowardly beggars. They could not stand up in the face of Satan. No matter how large their bank accounts were, they were still beggars. The Lord Jesus is saying, "You have the money, but you don't have the capacity to use it. You've got the money, but you don't have the capacity to enjoy it. You've got the money, but you don't have the capacity to use it for the Lord's glory, and therefore you don't have anything. The result is that you're on a frantic search for happiness. You're trying this; you're trying that; and, you're trying this."

I knew a man who was a very rich man. His mother told me one time, "He has everything in the world, but he is a pitiful man, because he's only happy when he has come up with a new deal, and when he's sitting down, and he's putting numbers on paper, and he's figuring out a new deal, and he's got visions of some new operation. And very often it falls flat on its face. The rest of the time he's unhappy. He runs around looking for new deals to find happiness. We live in this huge house. We have all these cars, and we have all this wealth. He's looking for happiness." And he was a Christian, and he was pitiful. He was a beggar – just a "ptochos." And that's humiliating.

**Blind**

Furthermore, in this intellectual community, these people in this intellectually oriented church considered themselves certainly to be in the know. I imagine that the next word stuck in the throat of the pastor-teacher like a broken chicken bone before he was able to read it, because the Lord Jesus throws in another "and:" "And you are the 'tuphlos' (the 'blind one')." "Blind? What do you mean, blind? We are a knowledgeable group. We go to the library. We're educated. We're informed. The community views us with respect. They even ask our opinions about things." But they were blind to the thing that was important: their own spiritual condition; and, their own spiritual status. These Christians viewed themselves as being people of great insights. There are a lot of Christians who think they're people of great insights. They often make this mistake because they've been around churches for a long time. Yet, they're the dumbest do-dos on the face of God's earth when it comes to spiritual discernment. Some of them are dumb in spite of spiritual opportunity to know better. It was because of their own carnality and their negative volition attitudes.

These people were blind, and, of course, their blindness was a result of that "mataiotes" condition that we read about in Ephesians 4:17-19 – that emptiness (that vacuum condition) that develops from negative volition in the soul, so that into the mind is sucked in all the false human viewpoint standards of the world that darkens the soul. So, these people who thought they were in the know, because of all of that human viewpoint trash doctrines of demons, and all the points of view of society, were ignorant. They were darkened. They were blinded. The Lord says, "You are the blind one."

**Naked**

Then comes the crowning blow as the Lord Jesus Christ evaluates them. He says, "And you are something else. You are the 'gumnos.'" You are "the naked one." These people had the best that the Neiman Marcus local store in Laodicea could produce. They had the best. They weren't going around wearing Robert Hall clothes. They were buying the really big stuff. They were buying the stuff that was made by Robert Hall, but had the Neiman Marcus label in it. But they really had the stuff. They didn't mind walking around, as they talked to people, to sway their coats back and forth.

I got a suit one time at a sale at Neiman Marcus. It was a nice suit. I used to have a great time talking to people, and holding my coat out, and they could see that Neiman Marcus label. I could see them gluing their eyes on it, and all the dumb ones would then think I knew something about the Bible, because I had that Neiman Marcus label. They thought I was really something. They often didn't know that I had only maybe 15 cents in my pocket, and it was all a big show.

But here in Laodicea, they had it all. They had the clothes and they had the refinements. And Jesus Christ said, "You're naked." You're just like the emperor. You're riding through town, and you're saying, "Look at my new gowns," and you're all looking at each other, and like the people of that town, you're all looking and you're saying, "Oh, what wonderful clothes the emperor has on. What a wonderful, wonderful garment has been made." And it took a little boy standing by and saying, "Hey, you don't have any clothes on." And then the cat was out of the bag, and all the Laodiceans were pretending that they really looked wonderful, and they complimented each other on what they were. But what they lacked, when Jesus said, "You're naked," was what Colossians 3:10 called upon them to have: "And have put on the new man that is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." Ephesians 4:24 says, "That you put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."

This is why in 1 Peter, where Peter describes what makes a beautiful woman, he makes a point of saying that it is not what she wears or how she arranges her hair and all that. It is qualities that are within – spiritual qualities of the soul that make her a beauty, no matter what her physical appearance may be, and no matter how poor in material value her clothing may be. That's the point here. These people had the money, but they did not have the clothing that really counts with God. When God looked at them in their Sunday morning style show, he said, "All I see is a bunch of naked bodies walking around here."

A spiritual maturity structure did not envelop them. Remember that the spiritual maturity structure is the Shekinah glory of God. The spiritual maturity structure symbolizes the Shekinah glory of God. Instead of walking around with that Shekinah of glory surrounding them, though not visible, yet exuding the beauty that that gives to those who have it, they were naked. So, only the believer who knows how to respond to doctrine can put on the garments that God will admire.

So, here is a pretty grim picture. Jesus Christ says, "Now, I'm going to quote you people. You say that, 'I am rich.' You say that you made yourself rich with your increase of goods, and that, consequently, you don't have need of anything as you see yourselves. But the thing that you don't know by spiritual discernment is that you are the wretched one; you are pitiful one; you're the poverty struck one; you're the blinded one; and, you're the outright naked one. That's what you are. None of those things conform to what you think you are."

It is a thing of terror. It is a terrible terror to realize that you can get into that kind of a condition and to get such a deluded viewpoint of yourself. You can start chasing the rabbits that Satan puts out before you that draw you away from being able to have the godliness; the holiness; the prosperity; and, the blessing that the Lord has for you. Not only now: He says, "I'm going to take care of you. My provisional grace will be there. My supplying grace will be there. My logistical grace – you may count on it. I will give you what you need. Even if you're the biggest stumblebum in My royal family, I'm going to give you what you need." And don't forget" that that's what "supply grace" means. It means that you will have what you need in your daily life. Everybody gets that. It isn't whether you deserve it or not.

Those who go beyond that in prosperity are those that God has been able to lead into a spiritual maturity structure so that they have the capacity for Him to pour surpassing grace to them. The super grace believer is really the one who gets it all. He's the one who's most effective then in the Lord's work. He is the one who can have money, and he can take it with him into eternity, because he knows how to handle it in such a way that he is investing it for eternity. And he has the brains to know that the investment is now. Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of salvation. It is not some time down in the future when plans are fulfilled in some other direction.

This brings us then to the very serious issue of what the mastery of the details of life is all about. How in the world can you have the kind of a house you should have; the kind of clothes you should wear; the transportation that you should have; the food that you should be eating; the entertainment that you should be treating yourself with; and, the possessions into which you should be investing your money? How can you be able to take these things, that are necessary, but which must be controlled, in such a way that you do not become the slave of them, but that you hold them lightly, and you trust in the God who gave them to you – not in the fact that you possess them? Your trust, and your interest, should be what can be done for the Lord's glory. You should not put your life down a rat hole, and squander what God has created you for, because you sell yourself out like a grubby Esau for somebody's bowl of porridge that is gone and will never be seen again.

That's what they were doing in Laodicea. They were a pitiful group of Esaus. They were living for the moment, and the Lord was terribly disappointed and grieved for them because of where they were heading. He gives them some advice. The advice is gracious. The advice is simply to turn around; get out of that hole; and, get reoriented. Historically, we know that they didn't do it. So, next time we will look a little closer at the issue of controlling these material things that can destroy us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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