

Study Nine: Revelation 3:14-22

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

- These titles for Jesus cause me to think of what He said just before his crucifixion:

"As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but *the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.* I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say" (John 12:47-50).

- Jesus was so obedient that He only said those things that the Father told Him to say. In addition, He said them in the way that the Father told Him to say them.
- It is not only important what you say, but how you say them. **"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:6).**
- How has your speech been lately? Are you saying the things you feel prompted by God to say? Are you saying them in a way that makes what you have to say more acceptable to the hearer? As a public speaker, I ask God for the grace to speak His words in the way Jesus would speak them if He were here.
- The Bible has so much to say about our words, I don't feel the need to write much, but to include a few other passages and let them do the work.
- **"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).** This is what Jesus was doing to each of the seven churches in Revelation. He was speaking the truth to each church in love. Jesus never asks us to do anything He hasn't done.
- I stopped trying to speak the truth in love as often as I used to because I realized I seldom had enough truth or love to fulfill the intent of this verse. That has caused me to exercise a lot more grace where people are concerned.

- **“From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied. The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:20-21).** Those are powerful verses. My words have the power to give life or to take life away. Unfortunately, I have used words that take the life out of people all too often.

15 know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 Because you are lukewarm-- neither hot nor cold-- I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

- When I think of cold, I think of Saul before his conversion on the Damascus road. He was about as cold as a non-Christian could get! Yet the Lord apprehended him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.
- God is not “turned off” by sin. In Exodus, He revealed to Rahab the harlot who the spies were before she left her life of prostitution. Hebrews 11 contains many accounts of imperfect people whom God used.
- Jesus earthly ministry produced many stories of hot and cold sinners with whom Jesus got along very well. It was the lukewarm Pharisees that caused Him the most aggravation.
- My point is that the Church often avoids those who are “cold” or in sin, but God doesn't. In fact, Jesus said in these verses that He prefers people who are at an extreme as opposed to those who are lukewarm, who are neither good saints nor sinners!

17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

- This verse contains the worst spiritual condition to be in: To think you are in a good place with God when you are not. That is the epitome of being lukewarm. Jesus expects us to assess our situation accurately and not hold onto a false sense of spiritual security or superiority.
- John wrote, **“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives” (1 John 1:8-10).**
- It is only those who realize their need for God's grace who receive it on a regular basis. Jesus told a parable to this affect in Luke:

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about

himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

- I try to spend some time regularly confessing my sins to God. Maybe that is just a part of me from my Catholic upbringing. I do not wallow in my sins, but I try to be conscious that I am needy before God, needy of His grace and forgiveness.

18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

- Jesus is the Counselor. He can assess our situation and give us direction that can help us escape. As unhappy as He is with this church, He gives them a way out. God *is* merciful! He is patient desiring that none perish but that all come to a knowledge of the truth.
- He advises this church to buy certain things from Him. While God is full of grace, He requires that we pay some price for what we receive from Him. It may "cost" us our pride, dignity, way of thinking, or standing before people, but some price must be paid.
- He urges them to buy three things:
 1. **Gold**, which represents that which is durable yet malleable. This may represent His divine nature, available through the power of the Holy Spirit as Christ is formed in us. We are not gods, but we become like Him.
 2. **White clothes**, which is a standard of righteousness that we can never attain in our own strength, but only in the power of God. Remember, only the Holy Spirit can convict us of sin and only the Spirit can clothe us in the righteousness of God.
 3. **Eye salve**, which helps us see ourselves as we really are: in desperate need of God and His grace. When Ananias prayed for Saul, something like scales fell from his eyes and he could see again. I cannot trust my own vision and insight; I need help from God.

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

- Jesus loved these seven churches of Revelation. That is why He sent His words to them and disciplined and rebuked them where necessary. It is always a sign of God's love when He shows you the truth about yourself or a situation. If God ignores you, you are in serious trouble!
- Let's look at these verses that speak of God's love and discipline. Do any apply to you at this time?
 - ✓ **"Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty (Job 5:17).**
 - ✓ **Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony (Psalm 6:1-2).**
 - ✓ **My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in (Proverbs 3:11-12).**
 - ✓ **For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life (Proverbs 6:23).**
 - ✓ **And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees (Hebrews 12:5-12).**
- 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.**
- It seems that Jesus initiates fellowship and relationship with us. He stands at the door and knocks. It is my choice to open the door or not. How does He do this? By speaking to us. Notice he says, "I knock" and then "if anyone hears my voice." We "open the door" when we listen."

- God is always speaking. The question is: Am I listening? If God wants me to do His will, He must tell me what that will is. So in faith, I can count on God's desire to speak to me.
- God is an effective communicator. He speaks every language, but can also get His message through using circumstances, His word, or other people. How does God usually speak to you?
- **To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.**
- Jesus did not do what He did on earth simply by being God. He was a man like you and me and overcame by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. We will overcome as He did in the same manner that He did.
- We should never lose sight of the fact that Jesus was a man like us in every way except sin. He left us a legacy of how to please the Father and do His will. I meditate regularly on these passages:
 - ✓ **But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering (Hebrews 2:9-10).**
 - ✓ **During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:7-9).**
 - ✓ **Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).**
- I especially like the last passage. Because Jesus experienced my humanity, I can come to His throne with confidence that I will receive grace when I need it

most. Jesus throne is not to be feared but embraced! When you sin, it is time to run to God and not away from God.

21 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

- What is the Spirit saying to churches? Ask God in faith to let you hear and then trust that He will speak to you. By the way, how is journal coming along where you record what you believe God is saying to you?
- If you need help with being able to hear God, consider this passage from Isaiah, for God is able to open your ears to hear His word:

The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back (Isaiah 50:4-5).

- If you will not be rebellious or draw back, then the Sovereign Lord will waken and open your ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Amen.