

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Chapter 3:14-22

Topic

Jesus tells the church of the Laodiceans that He will vomit them out of His mouth unless they acquire from Him certain priceless spiritual resources

Title

“The Hurl of Great Price”

Two words you never want to hear: Induce vomiting.

When I was a young warthog... “Induce vomiting” was a common suggestion on labels for things you shouldn’t have swallowed.

We always had in the medicine cabinet an emergency bottle of Ipecac Syrup. It was right next to the Mercurochrome, which was right next to the Iodine.

If you had those three miracle products, *you had a good chance of surviving childhood.*

Ipecac Syrup is no longer recommended. Research proved it not only ineffective but dangerous. If you want some, I’m pretty sure the bottle in my childhood home is still in the medicine cabinet. Along with Witch Hazel, Geritol, and Brioschi.

Throwing-up¹ can make things worse. That doesn't stop well-meaning folks from posting on the world-wide inter-web the best natural home remedies to induce up-chucking:²

👉 Drink Coca-Cola that has run out of its bubbles. Drink it every hour, which will make you sick and want to heave³. After you drink your Coca-Cola, drink mineral water as a follow-up to trigger regurgitation⁴.

👉 Gargle with egg whites.

👉 Expose yourself to disgusting smells.

(I hope you're not one of those who get nauseous just thinking about it. If so, *today might be rough*).

Best barfing⁵ in a movie, you ask? *The Exorcist*. Honorable Mention goes to Tom Hardy in *Venom*.

The church of the Laodiceans made Jesus want to vomit them.



"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will **vomit** you out of My mouth" (v16).

The Lord's nausea was triggered by their spiritual temperature. They were "lukewarm."

Jesus had not yet spewed⁶. He was hoping He wouldn't have to. He suggested a remedy for His nausea was for them to "be zealous and repent" (v19).

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Jesus Takes Your Spiritual Temperature**, and **#2 You Can Tweak Your Spiritual Temperature**.

#1 - Jesus Takes Your Spiritual Temperature (v14-17)

We've become familiar with someone taking our temperature before being allowed to proceed.

Jesus takes our spiritual temperature when we gather in His name.

Rev 3:14 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

The "angel of the church" is its pastor. He was the most likely individual read aloud to those gathered.

There is a subtle difference in this greeting from the previous six letters. Instead of saying "the church **in** Laodicea," Jesus calls them "the church **of the** Laodiceans."

It might be an Easter egg. Not the Cadbury kind, but the kind that is a hidden clue in a movie. The word "Laodicea" roughly translates into English as *self-rule*.

The Lord addressed them as their own masters rather than as His bondservants.

Jesus was going to give an eye-opening testimony about the spiritual condition of the people in this church. He was going to expose their hearts. Before doing so, He established Himself as an expert witness capable of such pronouncements.

You've seen movies and TV shows where they call upon expert witnesses. Sometimes the experts contradict one another. I just learned, for example, that bite marks are junk science.

No one could contradict the Lord. There is no junk science in His spiritual evaluations.

🔑 Jesus' testimony was from "the Amen." Think of it as having the final, authoritative word. Whatever Jesus says, it is "Word."

🔍 Jesus' testimony was from "the Faithful and True Witness." As "Witness," He sees everything, including the heart of man. His assessment of what He witnesses is "Faithful and True."

The "Beginning of the creation of God" cannot mean Jesus was created because elsewhere we learn He is Creator. Colosse was a city in the same region. In his letter to them, the apostle Paul said, "For by [Jesus] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him (1:16).

"Beginning of the creation" means that Jesus is the *origin* of Creation.

Is this a not-so-subtle clue as to false teaching in Laodicea? Had they begun to teach that Jesus was not very-God of very-God, but a created being? Can't say for sure. It fits with self-rule.

Rev 3:15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

We can't comment on hot, cold, and lukewarm without some enlightening background. This is going to blow your mind, but it is true.

Laodicea had almost no water sources of its own

According to one document, I read "No other city in the Lycus Valley was as dependent on external water supplies as Laodicea." They purchased water from Hierapolis and Colosse:

🔍 Hierapolis, about six miles away, was known for its natural **hot spring water**.

The baths of Hierapolis attracted citizens from all over the Roman Empire.

🔍 Colosse was known for its **cold water**. Located about eleven miles from Laodicea, it was situated at the foot of Mount Cadmus, which peaked at 9000 feet. Ice-cold snow-fed streams rushed down the mountain.

One water was naturally *hot* 🥵 at its source; one water was naturally *cold* 🥶 at its source. By the time either arrived in Laodicea, *it was lukewarm*.

We normally think that being “hot” is something good, and to be desired, and being “cold” is something bad, and to be avoided. “Cold” can be a good thing. It was a special treat to drink icy-cold water 💧 at a time before there were any means of refrigeration.

The bigger picture that Jesus was drawing for them was that of a banquet. He will famously say He is at the door, knocking, **to share supper**. (v20).

Jesus was talking temperature in the context of sharing supper with them.

Rev 3:16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Lukewarm food can be deadly.



If hot food, or cold food, sits out too long at room temperature, it can allow bacteria to grow to dangerous levels that can cause severe illness.

Think how much worse this was in ancient times. Just ask Alexander the Great. He died in Babylon at 33yrs of age. Doctors at the University of Maryland studied historical accounts of Alexander’s symptoms and death. They say he died from typhoid fever caused by *Salmonella typhi*. It can be found in “raw or undercooked eggs, raw milk, contaminated water, and raw or undercooked meats.”

The US Department of Agriculture calls it “the Danger Zone.” It’s the range of temperatures (40° - 140° Fahrenheit) in which cooked food sits out for longer than two hours. During that period, bacteria can grow rapidly.

I made a delicious Avocado Egg Salad last week. Properly stored, egg salad will last for three to five days in the refrigerator. Egg salad should be discarded if left out for more than two hours at room temperature.

Other foods must be heated to a certain temperature to kill existing bacteria. Meats, for example.

I believe that this is what Jesus had in mind when He said they were neither hot, nor cold, but had become lukewarm.

The Laodiceans had assumed a toxic lukewarm temperature by preferring to be out in the world.

This might be a good time to address the issue of whether the folks in the church of the Laodiceans were saved.

In Laodicea, we'd say that the majority were unsaved. It shouldn't shock you. Many so-called churches are led by, and attended by, nonbelievers.

The minority who were saved in Laodicea could also be addressed this way on account of their preferences for the things of this world. Commentators talk about what they call "Nominal Christians," who take on the characteristics and habits and pursuits of the world, so much so that it is hard to distinguish them from the average nonbeliever. They might not be doing anything sinful, but their heart is in the world.

We too quickly interpret ourselves out of a verse. If this letter were *only* directed toward nonbelievers, we could ignore it. We'll see at its end that, like all six previous letters, it is for everyone who has "ears to hear."

Room temperature food that has been out too long; and food not thoroughly cooked; makes you **blow chunks**⁷. Jesus wanted to sup with them, but He might **ralph**⁸ on account of the lukewarmness in Laodicea.

We see them too long out in the world in v17:

Rev 3:17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked -

🔍 "Rich" means *rich*. They had plenty of money. Too much money.

🔍 "Have become wealthy" is better translated as *increased with goods*. They used their too much money to buy more-and-more of this world's goods. They invested heavily in the world, not in Heaven.

Rich people who surround themselves with the comforts of this world trust in the *external* rather than the *eternal*. It's easy to begin to think you have need of nothing.

Maybe we're not rich or wealthy or increased with goods. *We can still want to be*. The love of those things, the love of the world, will just as quickly 'lukewarm' us as actually having riches, wealth, and goods.

You're familiar with eating-disorder sufferers who look in the mirror and, even though they are dangerously thin, see themselves as overweight. Jesus held up His mirror to the church of the Laodiceans to show them they were "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." They saw themselves otherwise, but spiritually they were blind beggars so wretched and miserable that they didn't even have clothes to wear.

Jesus is the only expert witness on the condition of the human heart. His Word is the mirror we look into to be shown, and to hear, His testimony. It isn't to find us guilty. It's to lead us to grace.

#2 - You Can Tweak Your Spiritual Temperature (v18-22)

The church of the Laodiceans made a classic blunder, the most famous of which is... "Never get involved in a land war in Asia."

Their classic spiritual blunder was thinking that worldly success, wealth, and comfort signify God's favor. It too often leads us away from Him.

The Lord meets us where we are at. We should love Him for His condescension to us. Jesus spoke to the rich church of Laodicea like a financial adviser.

Rev 3:18 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 eye salve, that you may see.

He counseled them to "buy." Trouble was, the things Jesus listed could not be purchased.

There are three more things that you need to know about the city of Laodicea:

1. It was noted for its many banks.
2. They manufactured a medicinal eye ointment.
3. They bred and raised sheep with unusual black wool and were noted for the garments made with it.

They deposited gold into the many banks. Maybe you follow the stock market. Me, not so much. I do own one share in Disney. My dividend last year was \$0.98.

Jesus is a gold-broker. He can store up your rewards in Heaven where they are safe from theft and corruption.

He says here it is "gold refined in the fire." Jesus can make gold out of your trials. He's talking about what we might call Job-gold. Job said, "But He knows the way that I take; **When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10).**

Jesus next said, "buy from Me... white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed."

Laodicea, with its black wool, was a garment district. I'm sure the Laodiceans were clothed in the finest apparel. They could afford to visit their tailors, and have custom-made outfits suitable for every occasion.

None of their earthly garments, however, would stand a chance in Heaven. They'd all be disintegrated - leaving them naked.

The Bible uses clothing to illustrate your salvation.

When you get saved, Jesus takes upon Himself your filthy and inappropriate garments. He gives you, instead, His robe of righteousness. It's the only garment that is Heaven-approved.

Jesus next said, "... and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." A popular eye ointment known as Phrygian Powder was produced in Laodicea.

No amount of Phrygian powder would restore sight to the blind. But Jesus does - especially to the spiritually blind.

Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

This sounds like family discipline, does it not? There were believers in the church. They should be "zealous" to repent - eager to, and wholeheartedly, turning *to* God and *from* the world.

Rev 3:20 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.

Haters like to say that this verse should not be used for evangelism since Jesus was addressing a church. But the church was nearly all unsaved. It **is** an appropriate verse for *anyone*, nonbeliever or believer, in whatever spiritual state you find yourself.

If you are not a Christian, the sinless, risen, ascended, Son of God sends His Holy Spirit to knock on your heart, by grace freeing your will to open it to Jesus.

He's "knock, knock, knockin' on your heart's door" - and that means **you are being enabled to answer the knocking**. Open the door to Him. Don't be one who says, "I hear you knockin' but you can't come in."



As for His knocking on a believer's heart... I have no problem thinking of Jesus knocking on my heart's metaphorical door. His knocking can shock me into the realization I have kicked Him out, at least temporarily, while I self-rule.

Jesus knocks, and He will keep knocking. Knock... knock... knock... knock... knock.

Louder at times, too. Each knock is intended to capture your spiritual attention.

Today we surveil our doors with cameras. In those days, a knock on the door would be accompanied by the knocker identifying himself. Knock-knock... "It's Jesus. Thought I'd do a pop-in to let you know you're blowing it, and unless you repent, I'm going to *retch*⁹."

Jesus wants to "dine" with you. There are a *present* and a *future* application of this dining experience:

- 🔔 In the present, Jesus wants to have a relationship with you that can be likened to friends sitting down and conversing over a meal.
- 🔔 In the future, at His Second Coming, Jesus will dine with you as His bride in what is called later in this book, the Marriage Supper.

Rev 3:21 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.

It is the Christian who overcomes, *not* the overcomer who becomes a Christian.

You overcome the world by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Jesus was raised from the dead ascended into Heaven, and rewarded with a seat at the Father's right hand, from which He will return to rule the universe.

In Colossians 3:1 we learn that we "have been raised with Christ." We already share in His life, in His power. Our position is with Him, on His throne.

We will be physically raised from the dead or raptured, then rule with Jesus in the Kingdom on earth.

These self-ruling, self-sufficient, miserable, poor, wretched, naked, blind people are nevertheless promised they can rule with Jesus.

Not just that they might barely make it into Heaven; but that they will share a seat of honor.

You didn't see that coming.

Rev 3:22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Did they listen to Jesus? According to the Biblical Archaeology Society,

The church at Laodicea... became the seat of a Christian bishop, and a Christian council was held there in the fourth century AD. Archaeologists have discovered about 20 ancient Christian chapels and churches at the site. The largest church at Laodicea [called Calvary Chapel of Laodicea] took up an entire city block and dates to the beginning of the fourth century.

That is the way to repent.

Laodicea started as the church **in** Laodicea, but the pull of the world led them to be the church **of the** Laodiceans. They repented and returned to their original foundation.

Without sounding in any way puffed-up, we are a church **in**, not a church **of**. Let's remain that way by continuing in the Spirit, and by resisting the downward spiral of the world.

This quote attributed to Voddie Baucham might stir you as a believer: "No matter how good things get in this world, *it's all Egypt!* There will never be enough gold chains, fine linen... or anything else to satisfy the yearning [for Him] that God has placed in us."

If you are not a believer... Not saved... Jesus is knocking, and saying to you, "Let My love open the door."