

Be Either Cold or Hot

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's good to be with you guys, good to worship with you. It looks like a lot of our members are traveling for Thanksgiving, but you guys are here. I hope that doesn't mean you didn't get to have a good Thanksgiving meal and time with friends and family.

And if you have a Bible, please open with me to Revelation chapter 3. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you one that you can have and use. Revelation chapter 3.

We've been going through this series for a couple months now, and we're in chapter 3 today, the last letter of the seven letters to the churches that Jesus writes.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Father, you are the God, the ancient of days, the God of all truth.

Your word is truth, and your son Jesus is the faithful and true witness. And so, Lord, today we want to hear from you.

[1 : 28] We want to be adjusted by your perspective. We want to submit to your commands. So we humble ourselves before you.

Minister to us by your word in your spirit. Make us a church that is zealous for you, for your glory.

Fill us more and more with your spirit. We plead with you in the name of Jesus.

Amen. If you are able, please stand and join us as I read through Revelation 3, verses 14 to 22.

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea, write, the words of the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

[2 : 44] I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing. Not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich. And white garments, so that you may clothe yourselves, if any shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. So be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

[4 : 12] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. If you have been a Christian for a little while, you have probably been taught at some point that all sinners are equal before the eyes of God.

Or maybe you've heard it said this way, that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. This is an important truth, because the Bible does say that there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

God makes no distinction between sinners, because all of us have fallen short of God's standard, and all of us need to be justified by God's grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

So imagine comparing two sinners in their level of sinfulness, like comparing two people's heights. For example, Connor.

You guys know Connor? Connor Failure? Is he here? He's not here. He's a little bit taller than me. He's like six foot four. I'm like five foot four on a good day.

[5 : 23] So like I said, he's just a little bit taller than me. If you want to be a stickler for details, he's quite a bit taller than me. But if you look down on me and Connor from a thousand feet up, we're basically the same height, right?

I mean, that's the difference, because you're so much higher up that everybody down here looks diminutive. That's what it's like for God to look at sinners. We all fall so woefully short of God's perfect righteousness that our relative righteousness or our relative sinfulness really doesn't matter in terms of our standing before God.

Whether you broke one law or whether you broke a thousand laws, you're still a lawbreaker. As James 2.10 says, for whoever keeps the whole law but fails at one point has become guilty of all of it.

In terms of our legal standing before God, all sinners are in the same boat. We are all headed to hell apart from God's gracious intervention. That does not mean, however, that there aren't lesser sins and greater sins.

There is a gradient. For example, the Old Testament refers to idolatry and sexual immorality in particular as a great sin, which implies in some way that they are worse offenses than other sins.

[6 : 44] 1 Corinthians 6.18 singles out sexual immorality as a sin that is uniquely against one's own body because it does violence to a Christian's spiritual union with Christ because their body is a temple of the Spirit.

In John 19.11, Jesus says that the sin of betraying and handing him over to the authorities is a greater sin than Pilate's sin of condemning Jesus.

In Matthew 5.19 and in Matthew 23.23, Jesus clearly teaches that there are least of the commandments and weightier matters of the law, which prove that some of God's commands are weightier than others and constantly be a greater offense to break them.

I say all of that to demonstrate a simple point that not all sins are equal. Some sins are worse than others. Not in terms of our legal standing before God, but in terms of their relative weightiness.

Some sins are more dangerous than others. Some sins are more insidious than others. And the sin that is at the root of all other sin is pride.

[7 : 54] It was the first sin. Before Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they had pride in thinking that they can, quote, be like God, knowing good and evil.

They thought that they could be themselves the arbiters of good and evil in the place of God. They thought that they knew better than God what is actually good for them.

C.S. Lewis famously wrote in his book, Mere Christianity, that the essential vice, the utmost evil is pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that are mere flea bites in comparison.

It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind. End quote. And if I may take that one step further, among the various kinds of pride, there is a particular type of pride that is especially stealthy and therefore dangerous among Christians, and that is spiritual pride.

Jonathan Edwards warns of it in this way. The first and worst cause of errors that abound in our day and age is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of Christ.

[9 : 24] It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit to darken the mind and mislead the judgment. Pride is the main handle by which he has hold of Christian persons and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces to clog and hinder a work of God.

Spiritual pride is the main spring, or at least the main support of all other errors. Until this disease is cured, medicines are applied in vain to heal all other disease. It is by spiritual pride that the mind defends and justifies itself in other errors and defends itself against light by which it might be corrected and reclaimed.

The spiritually proud man thinks he is full of light already and feels that he does not need instruction, so he is ready to ignore the offer of it. Because of the nature of spiritual pride, it is the most secret of all sins.

There is no other matter in which the heart is more deceitful and unsearchable, and there is no other sin in the world that men are so confident in. The very nature of it is to work self-confidence and drive away any suspicion of any evil of that kind.

There is no sin so much like the devil as this for secrecy and subtlety and appearing in great many shapes that are undetected and unsuspected. If you think that's a bit hyperbolic, it's not.

[10 : 45] Jonathan Edwards is not alone. Many teachers, pastors, theologians throughout church history have said this very thing. Spiritual pride is difficult to detect because it is by its very nature self-concealing.

It's like pancreatic cancer, which has the highest mortality of all the major cancers. One of the main reasons for its deadliness is that pancreatic cancer is nearly impossible to catch early.

The pancreas looks like a comma that's like fallen on its side. Some of you guys are doctors. You guys know what I'm talking about. And it's like nestled. It's cupped by the small intestine, and it's like hidden behind the stomach, the upper abdomen, and then it meets its tail.

It ends in the spleen. So it's like it's hidden, surrounded by, and hidden behind all these other internal organs so that pancreatic tumors are impossible to see or feel during routine medical exams.

And so the only way to find them, to detect them, is by imaging tests like ultrasound and CT scans and MRI scans and PET scans. But people with pancreatic cancer usually don't sign up for those imaging tests.

[11 : 58] Why? Because in its early stages, pancreatic cancer is what some doctors call the silent disease because it often has no presenting symptoms in its early stage.

So it's only when it's advanced beyond cure, often when it's harder to treat, that pancreatic cancer becomes detected.

And that's why it's so deadly. That's what spiritual pride is like. Spiritual pride is self-concealing, which is why it is so insidious.

The devil often uses it to beguile, as Jonathan Edwards said, those who are zealous for the advancement of Christ. And what we learn here in Revelation 3, 14 to 22, is that once spiritual pride has taken root in the heart of a zealous believer, it saps the zeal right out of him.

It makes him lukewarm. And that's what we see in Jesus' letter to the church in Laodicea. And that's why we must be vigilant against the creeping effects of spiritual pride.

[13 : 05] And this is the main point of our passage this morning. We must repent of our lukewarmness and be zealous for the Lord Jesus so that we might enjoy our communion with him.

I'm gonna first talk about the author, the sender of this letter, Christ, who is faithful and true. Then secondly, I'm gonna talk about the condition, according to Jesus' evaluation, the condition of the church in Laodicea, that they're neither cold nor hot.

Third, I'll talk about the command, Jesus' command to be zealous and repent. And then lastly, I'll talk about the reward that Jesus promises to those who obeyed, communion, riches, relationships, and rule that we get to share in Christ.

So let's first talk about Christ, the author and sender of this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. So far, in all of the letters, Jesus introduced himself in a way that was particularly suitable for the situation that the church was in on the ground.

So why does Jesus introduce himself in verse 14 as the amen, the faithful and true witness? The beginning of God's creation. The general pattern in Jesus' letters to these seven churches in Revelation 2-3 is that after saying, I know your works, Jesus then goes on to list their works that he knows.

[14 : 22] Sometimes they're good works, sometimes they're bad works, usually a mix of both. And then after sharing his commendations and then corrections, Jesus issues his command, and then he gives them the promise of reward.

But here in verse 15, it kind of doesn't follow that usual pattern because after saying, I know your works, there is no commendation whatsoever. Laodicea and Sardis are the only two churches that receive no commendation and receive only corrections from Jesus.

And Laodicea is even worse than Sardis. It's probably the worst church on this list because Sardis at least had a few people, according to Jesus, a remnant who had not soiled their garments.

A few, there was a faithful few in Sardis, but there's no mention of such a faithful remnant in Laodicea. They're all together, naked, and in need of being clothed with the white garments of Christ's righteousness.

Ironically, however, the church in Laodicea is blind to their own spiritual poverty and nakedness. They say in verse 17, I am rich, I prospered, and I need nothing.

[15 : 35] Not realizing that they are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Here's an example of spiritual pride. The self-confidence and self-satisfaction of the spiritually proud person inoculates him against self-suspicion.

He says, I need nothing. Like an overconfident, complacent driver who doesn't bother to check the blind spot. Well, I've seen everything. And then switches lanes and then gets into a car wreck.

The spiritually proud person does not suspect that he can possibly be blind to something. The church in Laodicea does not realize that they are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

In fact, these words are the exact opposite of how the church in Laodicea would have viewed themselves. They didn't think that they were wretched or pitiable.

They said to themselves, I prospered, and I need nothing. They thought they were blessed. They thought they were enviable. They didn't view themselves as poor.

[16 : 43] They said to themselves, I'm rich. And this was, in fact, true, at least in a material sense. Laodicea was a prosperous banking center in its heyday, located at the junction of two important roads that made them a commercial success.

They were so well off and so self-sufficient that when a disastrous earthquake completely leveled the city in 60 AD, the Roman Empire, Rome, offered them disaster relief, and then they said, oh, no thank you.

We'll take care of it. We have enough resources. That reveals, that historical fact reveals both their pride and their wealth. They also didn't view themselves as blind.

Laodicea was a center of medicine and boasted a prominent medical school whose most famous graduate was Demosthenes Philoletes, an optometrist who wrote the book Ophthalmicus, which dealt with various eye diseases and is considered the most influential work of ophthalmology in the ancient world.

Laodicea was sought out for its production of the Phrygian powder and eye salve used to treat various eye diseases. So, no, Laodicean believers did not see themselves as blind.

[18 : 01] They saw themselves as the ones who make other blind people see. And yet, they themselves were spiritually blind. And finally, the Laodiceans did not perceive of themselves as being naked.

Laodicea was known for its textiles, especially the production of fine wool. They believed themselves to be well clothed with the finest wool.

They would have never imagined that they were naked. Yet, this is exactly what Jesus tells them. You are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked because they were spiritually all of those things.

Social success, material wealth, and physical health can feed spiritual pride. We can falsely assume that we are doing well spiritually when everything else seems to be going well in our lives.

Like the Israelites in Hosea 12, 8, they say, ah, but I am rich. I found wealth for myself in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.

[19 : 06] They're connected. The sinful human heart has a penchant for the prosperity gospel to presume that health and wealth and success are foolproof signs of God's pleasure and favor while sickness, poverty, and failure are signs of God's displeasure and disfavor.

But we see throughout Scripture that that is not necessarily the case. So in order to expose their self-deception and convince the church that thinks I need nothing, that in fact they are very needy, Jesus introduces himself to them as the amen, the faithful and true witness, the all-seeing one, the only one who truly has no blind spot.

The word amen is typically an expression of affirmation of faith that something that God has said will indeed help and let it be so. As far as I know, this is the only place where the word amen is used as a title for Jesus.

The word amen comes from the Hebrew verb that means to believe in or to trust in someone which in turn comes from the Hebrew word for God's faithfulness or truthfulness.

So the phrase the faithful and true witness is really an explanation of the title the amen. It says in Genesis 15, 6 that Abram believed the Lord or amen the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness.

[20 : 34] And what's going on in that passage? Despite the fact that his wife Sarai was well past childbearing age, in fact, post-menopausal, Abram nevertheless believed in God's promise that he would have a son through Sarai and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

And God delivered on that promise. That's how faithful or trustworthy God is. I've said this to you before, when you're faced with two options, an impossibility and the promise of God, you can bank on it that the promise of God will happen.

because God's word and his promise is more reliable than natural law, more reliable than logic, more reliable than common sense.

And Jesus is the embodiment of that faithfulness and trustworthiness of God. That's why he is describing in 2 Corinthians 1, 20 this way, all the promises of God find their yes in Christ.

That is why it is through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory. Because all the promises of God find their fulfillment ultimately in Jesus is through Christ that we can say amen to all of God's promises, trusting that not one of his promises will fall to the ground.

[21 : 54] That's why Jesus introduces himself this way, the amen, the faithful and true witness. He's telling the church in Laodicea, I am the true and faithful witness.

my assessment of you is more true and reliable than your self-assessment. You think that you are rich, but I say that you are poor, so listen to me and repent.

What about the following phrase, the beginning of God's creation in verse 14? The phrase does not mean that Jesus is the first thing that God created. That's a heretical belief held by the Jehovah's witnesses.

They believe that Jesus is the preeminent creature, but that they nonetheless believe that Jesus is a created being. That's a grave, unbiblical error.

In Revelation 5, the four living creatures which represent all the creatures that God ever created, they fall down before the lamb, which is Jesus, and they worship Jesus.

[22 : 59] Jesus is clearly viewed in that scene not as one of the creatures that God created, represented by the four living creatures, but as the creator, as God, who is separate from them.

Moreover, later on in Revelation 19.10, John tries to fall down to feet and bow down and worship a mighty angel, and then the angel stops him and says, you must not do that because I'm a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testament of Jesus, worship God.

So then Jesus, the lamb of God, early in Revelation, accepts the worship that even a mighty angel is unworthy to receive because Jesus is far greater than a creature.

The word translated beginning here is a Greek word that can also be translated as the origin or the source or the ruler as it's translated in Luke 12.11 and Romans 8.38.

So then the phrase the beginning of God's creation is not saying that Jesus was the first part of God's creation, but it's saying that Jesus is the origin of all of God's creation and the ruler over all of God's creation.

[24 : 11] This is confirmed by what Paul says, the parallel in Colossians 1.15 where Jesus is called the firstborn of all creation. Once again, that does not mean that Jesus is the first being that God created.

How do we know that? Because verses 16 to 17 which follow immediately explains precisely why Jesus is called the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him and he is before all things and in him all things hold together.

This confirms our interpretation of Revelation 3.14. In a culture, in an ancient culture governed by primogeniture where the firstborns rule the household and inherit the father's estate, the expression highlights Jesus' primacy and rule over all of God's creation.

Jesus is not one of the creatures. He's the one by whom all things were created. He is the first mover, the originator. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything that was made. So why is Jesus highlighting that reality to the church in Laodicea?

[25 : 33] Because if you're wretched, you need the one who can make you blessed. If you're pitiable, you need the one who can show you mercy. If you're poor, you need the one who can make you rich.

If you're blind, you need the one who can make you see. If you're naked in your shame, you need the one who can clothe you and cover you with his righteousness. God had promised to create a new heavens and a new earth.

In Isaiah 65, 17, Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise. As it says in 2 Corinthians 5, 17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone.

Behold, the new has come. So Jesus clearly doesn't pull any punches here in this letter, but he's also comforting the church in Laodicea by reminding them that in spite of their wretched and pitiable condition, he can make them new again because he is the creator.

He's the one who the originator of the creation and originator of the new creation, he can make the blind see and the poor rich. Now let's look at the faithful and true assessment of Jesus, the faithful and true witness in verses 15 to 16.

[26 : 55] I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

This is their condition. Neither cold nor hot. Sometimes people mistakenly think that being hot here represents being passionate, being on fire for Jesus, and then being cold represents rejecting Jesus altogether.

If that were the case, these verses would be similar to what God says to the Israelites in 1 Kings 18-21. How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him.

But if Baal, then follow him. But there, in that context, God is exposing the hypocrisy and two-faced nature of Israel's worship and allegiance. He's telling them that in fact it is not possible to serve both Yahweh and Baal and that they must make a choice.

But that's not what Jesus is saying here in Revelation 3. Here in verses 15 to 16, being cold and hot are both good things. The choice is not between one bad option and one good option, but between two good options.

[28 : 16] Jesus says in verse 15, would that you were either cold or hot. Jesus would prefer, Jesus would be happy if the church were either cold or hot. If being cold represents completely rejecting Jesus, I don't think he would present the two options this way as if both were acceptable.

Laodicea was located near two other ancient cities, Hierapolis, Hierapolis, and Colossae. All of them were in that same region of Phrygia in Asia Minor, modern Turkey.

And why is that significant? Because Hierapolis was famous for its hot springs, which were great for relaxing and healing baths. And Colossae near the mountains had access to cold, pure, refreshing water that came down from the mountains.

But Laodicea, removed from that cold water from the mountains, which by the time it was transported to where they are, would be heated and be lukewarm.

And Laodicea also didn't have access to the hot springs of Hierapolis. They had to pipe that water in, and by the time it got there, it was tepid, lukewarm.

[29 : 31] And having to drink that lukewarm water was a sore spot for this otherwise wealthy and proud city. And Jesus is mentioning that reality to drive his point home.

You know that that lukewarm water that you have to drink every day that makes you want to puke? that's what you are like to me because of your spiritual lukewarmness.

Hot water is relaxing, cold water is refreshing, but tepid water is just meh, right? I was just at a restaurant recently that served our family lukewarm water.

I don't know, it was like literally lukewarm. I'd never been served that in a restaurant before. And none of my kids wanted to drink it because it's gross. We had to ask for ice. Similarly, when you go to a cafe, menus have all kinds of hot coffees and all kinds of iced coffees.

When have you gone to a cafe and saw on the menu lukewarm coffee? I mean, nobody wants that. So Jesus is saying be either cold or hot.

[30 : 46] Be earnest and be fervent about something. The church in Ephesus that we saw earlier in chapter 2 had theological discernment and so they rejected the false teachers but they had no love.

The church in Thyatira had love but they had no theological discernment and they tolerated false teachers. These churches were not perfect but they were fervent about something.

They were eager and earnest about something. loving and loving and being compassionate toward your neighbors then do that.

Even better, do both. But be earnest and fervent about something because the church in Laodicea had no strength and no commendable attributes.

They're good at neither being hot nor cold. They're a bland mediocrity in every way. A lukewarm tepid water is good for nothing. So Jesus issues a severe warning in verse 16.

[32 : 08] Because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold I will spit you out of my mouth. The word translated spit here is actually most commonly means to vomit. There's another Greek word that means to spit and that's not the one that's used here.

The Greek translation of Isaiah 19.14 uses that same Greek word here used in Revelation 3.16 to refer to a drunken man staggering in his vomit. So Jesus is saying you are nauseating.

You make me sick. Make me throw up. The church in Laodicea is on the verge of being rejected. They're about to the light the fire of the spirit on their lampstand is about to go out because of their lack of zeal.

Why do I think lukewarmness here is a vivid picture of their lack of zeal? Because of Jesus' prescription in verse 19. Be zealous and repent.

Jesus commands the church in Laodicea to be zealous precisely because they are lukewarm. Neither cold nor hot. That brings us to my third point the command be zealous and repent.

[33 : 22] It says in verse 19 those whom I love I reprove and discipline so be zealous and repent. It's so gracious of Jesus here to say this before giving them the command to say those whom I love I reprove and discipline.

this is a church that makes Jesus want to puke. It's a church that has nothing going for it. It's a church that has zero thing to commend and yet to that church Jesus says I am reproving you because I love you.

I know these things are hard to hear church in Laodicea but I want you to know that I am disciplining you because I love you.

you've got nothing lovable about you and yet I love you because you are mine. The Lord disciplines those whom he loves says in Hebrews 12 a father disciplines the son the child that he loves that's why I think even though the church in Laodicea is on the verge of ceasing to be a true church they are a true church because Jesus reproves them because he loves them because as we saw earlier in Revelation 1 they still have the golden lampstand their lampstand is one of the seven golden lampstands before God's throne and they have an angelic representative in heaven that's why he's writing to the church to the angel of the church in Laodicea

Jesus doesn't want to spit them out Jesus doesn't want to vomit them out so this warning serves to preserve them to bring them to repentance so that that would not happen be zealous and repent the word zealous used in verse 19 refers it's used throughout the Bible it refers to the church in Corinth's readiness or their eagerness to give financially for the relief of the poor Christians in Jerusalem in 2 Corinthians 9 in 2 Corinthians 7 11 the word zeal is parallel to earnestness and refers to the believer's godly grief and repentance from sin in John 2 13-17 Jesus is turning over tables and driving out the money changers from the temple because it says quoting Psalm 69-9 zeal for your house will consume me because Jesus was consumed by zeal for the house of the Lord which should have been a house of prayer and not a house of trade so to be zealous is to be eager and to be earnest to be intensely serious to be dedicated to something but don't get me wrong by zeal

[36 : 35] I'm not just referring to mere emotional fervor people have different upper and lower registers of emotions and so a person's emotional expressiveness is not necessarily an accurate indicator of their zeal so what then is an accurate indicator of their zeal English pastor J.C. Ryle from the 1800s helpfully describes Christian zeal in this way I think we have the quote to show a zealous man in religion is preeminently a man of one thing it is not enough to say he is earnest hardy uncompromising wholehearted fervent in spirit he only sees one thing he cares for one thing he lives for one thing he is swallowed up in one thing and that one thing is to please God whether he lives whether he dies whether he has health or whether he has sickness whether he is rich or whether he is poor whether he pleases man or whether he gives offense whether he is thought wise or whether he's thought foolish whether he gets blame or whether he gets praise, whether he gets honor, whether he gets shame.

For all this, the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing and that one thing is to please God and to advance God's glory.

If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it. He is content. He feels that like a lamp he's made to burn and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him.

Are you a man or are you a woman who is consumed with the one thing? But one thing I do.

Paul said, forgetting what is behind but straining toward what is ahead so that I may press on toward the goal for the price of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[38 : 47] The one thing. One thing, David prays, I have asked of the Lord. One thing that I will seek after that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

It's the one thing David sought. As Jesus tells Martha in Luke 10, 38 to 42, you are anxious and troubled about many things but one thing is necessary.

And what's that one thing to sit at the feet of Jesus? And here's a telltale sign that you're losing your zeal.

Look at verse 17. You say, I'm rich. I prospered. And I need nothing. That's the telltale sign.

Self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency. Spiritual complacency. That's the telltale sign of lukewarmness.

[40 : 02] When was the last time you clung to Jesus because you realized your desperate wickedness and your dire need for his mercy?

When was the last time you fell upon your knees in prayer because you realized that your utter weakness and complete helplessness and Jesus is all-sufficiency?

Jesus says in John 15, verse 5, I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.

A zealous branch that bears much fruit is one that abides in Jesus and depends on Jesus, knowing full well that apart from him, she can do nothing.

If you catch yourself saying, I'm rich. I prospered. I need nothing. Remember the height from which you have fallen and repent.

[41 : 22] Note that drinks default to becoming lukewarm. If you want to stay cold, you need to keep the drink in the fridge or you need to keep putting new ice in it.

If you want water to stay hot, you need to keep it on the hot plate. As soon as you remove it from the source of the chill or the source of the heat, it quickly becomes tepid room temperature water.

This is why we must not be slothful in zeal but be fervent in the Holy Spirit. As it says in Romans 12, 11, we need to keep the fire burning and keep the ice freezing by abiding in the source, the origin of God's new creation, Jesus, who gives us the Holy Spirit.

Listen to Jesus' counsel to us in verse 18. I counsel you to buy from me, gold refined by fire so that you may be rich and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

Note how Jesus is systematically breaking down everything that the church in Laodicea took pride in. Their wealth, their wool, clothing, their eye salve.

[42 : 45] Jesus wants them to acknowledge their spiritual poverty and come buy from him gold refined by fire. True riches, heavenly riches that will not be burned away in the final judgment.

Jesus wants them to acknowledge their spiritual nakedness and instead of their wool garments to put on the white garments of Christ to cover their shame. Jesus wants them to acknowledge their spiritual blindness and instead of boasting in their eye salve to get the spiritual eye salve that only Christ offers and the only cure to spiritual blindness.

Let me ask you, what are the things that you take pride in that you are tempted to depend on, to lean on for your sense of well-being?

Is it your youth and beauty? Is it your intelligence?

Is it your emotional awareness and social coolness? Is it your athleticism, physical prowess?

[43 : 58] Is it your wealth or success in the world? Or is it your academic or family pedigree?

Brothers and sisters, we're in a dangerous place in the world. We're in one of the wealthiest cities in the world, one of the most highly educated cities in the world. There's so many things that you can point to that you can take pride in.

But don't, don't, don't derive an ounce of your assurance, an ounce of your confidence from any of those things.

Because to the degree that you rely on those things, that much you will not be relying on Jesus. And you'll be farther away from him. Cling to the one thing.

But note the irony of Jesus' command. He just told the church in Laodicea, you're dirt poor. You got nothing.

[45 : 18] And then he tells them, I counsel you to buy from me. Gold refined by fire, so that you might be rich. How's a dirt poor church supposed to buy gold refined in the fire?

Remember our call to worship from Isaiah 55. Come. Everyone who thirsts come to the waters. And he who has no money, come buy and eat.

Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear and come to me. Hear that your soul may live and I will make with you an everlasting covenant my steadfast, sure love for David.

We can buy heavenly food and heavenly riches and gold refined in the fire without money and without price because Jesus has paid the price.

[46 : 31] The penalty for sin is death and separation from God and we were all once slaves to sin and not a single one of us could afford that ransom price to secure our freedom but God paid that price in Jesus Christ, his only son on the cross because he died for our sins and was raised from the dead.

We were like that. Imagine like a homeless orphan just walking along the street and on Thanksgiving Day and he looks into a well-lit house in their dining room and there's a beautiful family and they're enjoying a sumptuous feast and then he's looking longingly but he cannot afford it.

He has not a penny to his name. He has no family and God the Father took his son make him take our place so that we can be brought into his family adopted as his children so that we can enjoy a heavenly feast without any money, without any price because he paid the price.

and look at the amazing promise that Jesus gives us in verses 20 to 22, the communion.

I wish I could spend an hour on this. I'm just gonna have to wrap up here. It says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.

[48 : 29] The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne. This is why spiritual pride, the lack of zeal, the complacency, self-sufficiency is such, it's such a grievous sin because it closes the door on Jesus.

Instead of abiding in Jesus and deriving our strength and life from him, it closes the door on Jesus when we say, Oh, I don't need that.

I got everything I need. This is why Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 is so eager to boast in his weakness.

See, this doesn't make any sense if you don't understand this reality. He asked God, pleaded with God to take away some kind of weakness that he was wrestling with and God refused to take it away from him and instead God said to him, My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, Paul says, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ and I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for when I am weak then I am strong.

[50 : 01] strong. That's why as Christians we boast in our weaknesses. Hear all these things that I am weak at.

Hear all these things that I cannot do that I'm not good at. Hear all these things in which I have suffered. Hear all these ways in which I am ridiculed and persecuted.

Hear all my weaknesses. Let's boast in them because when I am weak then I am strong because then in all those weaknesses Christ's all sufficiency meets us.

In all our weaknesses Christ's fullness meets us so that he becomes all in all. Don't you want that communion with him?

Look at how intimate this picture is. Table fellowship in the ancient world especially but even in our day implies intimate relationship. You don't get a random stranger out on the street and invite them to your house for a dinner.

[51 : 08] You invite your friends to dinner. Jesus is offering his friendship which is remarkable because he is the king. I will come eat with you.

You could eat with me. Amen. Amen. Amen. This is not speaking of unbelievers needing to open the door of their hearts to receive Jesus.

He is talking to a church here. In what ways through your own self-sufficiency and in your pride are you shutting the door on Jesus instead of opening up your weaknesses and letting him come in.

And if we do that, he says, the one who conquers and endures to the end, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

This is a promise for the future, the ultimate fulfillment of this, but even now those who put their faith in Jesus get to reign with Jesus. Ephesians 1.21 teaches that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named.

[52 : 36] And then shortly thereafter in Ephesians 2.6, it says that God raised us up and seated us with Jesus in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That's our lot.

You get to reign with Jesus at the right hand of God the Father, reign with Jesus who has all authority and dominion and power and rule. Compared to that, how poor is Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos?

They're dirt poor. Compared to that, how weak and powerless is Joe Biden, Xi Jinping, and Vladimir Putin?

How weak, how powerless. Do you see the kind of power, kind of wealth, the kind of privilege we've been offered in Jesus?

Let's claim that by being weak and humble, being zealous, abiding in Jesus.

[53 : 54] Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.

Father, we repent of our lukewarmness, but we dare not try to manufacture or produce this zeal with our own willpower, for we know that it comes from you.

So we pray now, because we need you. We need you to make us burn hot for your glory. Make us a church that is about the one thing to know and love you, to serve you.

Oh, make us zealous. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.