

Revelation Ch3v14-22 - Our Spiritual Need

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[0 : 00] So we're going to read Revelation chapter 3 on Wednesdays.

We've been looking at Revelation also and we've been looking at these particular messages from chapters 2 and 3 and we're going to be looking at the last one today.

So let's read God's Word. Chapter 3 starting at verse 14.

To the angel of the church in Laodicea writes,

Amen. Like the people you call us to be. We ask for your help because without you we have no good thing.

[3 : 50] Amen. So I wonder how would you describe the spiritual condition of this church?

If you were to set up your spiritual monitor indicator and place it around at various pews or chairs as they are, what would be your findings?

Would the little dial flicker towards weak or strong? Or would it go from rich or poor?

What's the spiritual condition of the church? Or let's make it more personal. What about you? What about me? Would you say you're in a healthy condition spiritually?

Or an unhealthy condition? Where would you be on that monitor? Well, starting in chapters 2 and all the way through to the end of chapter 3, we have a series of messages from Jesus to the church.

[5 : 02] And the purpose is to identify any weaknesses so that we can take corrective action and strengthen the church.

Because once we know where the cracks appear, we can firm up the foundations and we can be strong together as we live in this world.

You see, we might make our assessment, but the only one qualified to make an assessment is the Lord Jesus.

Look at verse 1. To the angel of the church in Laodicea write, these are the words of the Amen.

Jesus is the Amen.

Now, Amen isn't just a word that you attach at the end of your prayers. To indicate you're finished.

It's a declaration of certain undeniable truth.

[6 : 15] So when you pray a simple prayer like, Thank you, Jesus, for your love towards me. Amen. You're actually ending by saying, The truth.

And if you say Amen in response to somebody else's prayer, you are declaring, The truth. Yes, Jesus does love me. That's right. It's true.

Now, Jesus is the Amen. In other words, he's the declaration of God's truth. Everything he does and everything he says is true.

He is, look at verse 14, The faithful and true witness. The ruler of God's creation.

So what he has to say to us today through his word is absolute. It's certain. It's unquestioning truth.

In other words, we can't argue with it.

[7 : 21] It's not up for debate. In fact, the only right response is, Look at the end, verse 22.

Whoever has ears, Let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Listening to the Spirit is submitting to the word. It's to accept the assessment of Jesus So that we can, in response, Take corrective action And become the strong people that he calls us to be.

So what does Jesus have to say to us today? Well, we're going to see three things in particular that he says. First of all, we're going to see there's a loving rebuke.

Then there's a gracious invitation. And an eternal reward. So here we go. A loving rebuke.

Verse 15. I know your deeds. Now in nearly every other church that we read about in these messages, There follows a commendation.

[8 : 39] He goes, I know your deeds. And then list them out. I know your hard work. And how you didn't renounce your faith. And how you persevered in service. And how you served wonderful cups

of tea.

And had the best biscuits. And had a great welcome. And what a wonderful church. And how you are. But instead of a list of the church's strengths.

Jesus launches straight into a rebuke. Verse 15. I know your deeds. And here they are. That you are neither cold nor hot.

Now let's be honest. Now let's be honest. None of us find rebuke easy, do we? We don't like it when somebody points out our faults and our failings.

In fact, we probably get quite defensive and immediately push back and go, No, no, that's not me. That's not what I meant. That's not what I said. But this isn't about naming and shaming.

[9 : 41] This isn't about piling on the guilt and bashing you on the head. No, look at verse 19. Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline.

Jesus' rebuke is evidence of his love. He loves his church. He cares deeply for his church. A parent who doesn't discipline or rebuke their son or daughter doesn't care about their welfare.

But a parent who does correct loves their child. They want the best for them to grow in maturity. How much more then does Jesus, who died for us, love us?

His rebuke is evidence that we are deeply treasured by him. He exposes our weaknesses so that we can take corrective action and strengthen the church.

So what is his loving rebuke? Well, it comes in three parts. Here's the first part. First, he says, you are lukewarm.

[10 : 58] Verse 15, I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other. And one of the things I enjoyed on holiday was the lovely hot weather.

Blistering hot. And opening up your bottle when you're really thirsty and taking in a drink. Oh, there's nothing worse than a bottle that's been sitting in the sun.

It's disgusting. Give me a cold drink or a hot drink. But don't give me that tepid, lukewarm stuff. You don't go down to the shop and buy warm tea, do you?

It's either iced tea or hot tea. Or if you're a bit posh, a frappuccino or a cappuccino. Well, says Jesus, that's what the church tastes like.

When I put you in my mouth, there. Verse 16. Because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth.

[12 : 14] The spiritual condition tastes so bad, it would make you feel sick. Oh gosh, that's all a bit harsh, isn't it?

It might be true of the church in Laodicea, but I mean, that's not me. That's not this church, is it? Well, let's read on.

Not only are we lukewarm, we are self-sufficient. Whoops. The reason why the church tastes so bad is because they live as if they're self-sufficient.

Look at verse 17. You say, I'm rich, I've acquired wealth and do not need a thing. We see being self-sufficient as something to be pursued and to be prized.

If you can get to the point in life where you are financially stable, that's a sign that you've made it, that you're a success. My mortgage is paid off.

[13 : 25] My pension is doing well. My savings are safe. I do not need a thing. In fact, I'm doing so well, I no longer have to ask God for anything.

Isn't that what we want? I mean, why be a burden to God and have to ask him for things? In fact, maybe God has blessed us so much, rather than have any kind of needs, I can meet everybody else's needs.

If someone's in need today, in need of assistance, just ask me. I know we're living in a cost-of-living crisis, so I'll pay your electricity bill.

I'll fill your car up with petrol. And if any of our mission partners or anyone in the Court Carry Project, if they need a handout, no problem. I've got the resources to help.

I'm rich. I've acquired wealth. I do not need a thing. Is that what you pursue and prize?

[14 : 34] Well, it seems the church in Laodicea had become so prosperous that their financial self-sufficiency has become their spiritual self-sufficiency.

They've looked at their bank account and go, I like what I see there, and they've immediately translated as, I'm doing spiritually well.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. Money and wealth is not wrong. It can be good to make money and use it for the blessing of others and the building up of his church.

Scripture encourages us to work hard, make a living. It commands us to give and to care for the poor. In fact, the people of Carigoline Baptist Church, you know what, let me say this, you are extremely generous financially.

Anytime we've come up with a need for people overseas, people have given more than I've ever expected or imagined. Our financial health is excellent.

[15:45] We're doing so well as a church that we're wanting to appoint an assistant pastor and be able to afford to do it. Thank God for generous giving.

Thank God for people like you who give so well. But the danger is our financial self-sufficiency can become our spiritual self-sufficiency.

In other words, our financial health can have a disastrous effect on our spiritual health. We are not just lukewarm and self-sufficient.

Perhaps we've become spiritually poor. Look at verse 17. You say I'm rich, I've acquired wealth and do not need a thing.

But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

[16:53] Now I'm sure we've been listening to the same news and getting the same feeds in our social media and we're concerned about the cost of living crisis.

We've had the conversations, haven't we? We've reflected and thought, how is this going to affect me and my family? Maybe you have checked your bank balance, done the sums and taken action, decided, well, we're going to use the car less, not take so many trips.

Or maybe, as in our case, it's not spending 15 minutes in the electric shower. You do the calculations and you say, it's all right, I've worked it all out, we're going to get through this.

Because the pressure to be financially strong and secure is right in our face. That's what everybody tells us. In fact, it can be so strong that we can lose our focus and end up spiritually poor.

We might breathe a sigh of relief that we were able to pay our electricity bill, but at the same time, we've forgotten all about Jesus. We can pride ourselves that we've survived the crisis, but at the same time, we've lost our love for Jesus.

[18:20] Verse 17. Let's turn it into a question. The end of verse 17. Is it possible or that you do not realise that perhaps you've become wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked?

You see, the sign of a healthy church is one that actually knows their needs. Rather than celebrating material fullness, what we see is our spiritual emptiness.

Rather than declare, I don't need a thing, we desperately shout out, I need Jesus. We need to be so careful that our material wealth does not blind us to our spiritual health.

physically, we can be well housed, well insured, well clothed, prepared for any financial crisis, but at the same time, we have become spiritually poor.

Is that us today as a church? Is that me? Have I become spiritually poor? Have I become spiritually poor? Well, how are we going to change these things around?

[19:52] Well, not only is there a loving rebuke, there is a gracious invitation. Look at verse 19. Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline, so be earnest and repent.

Repentance always means turning back to Jesus. And Jesus shows us how to do that. Listen to his gracious invitation.

There's two wonderful invitations for us today. Here's the first. Jesus says, buy from me.

Buy from me. Verse 18. I counsel you to buy from me. Well, how can we buy anything?

I mean, we've just seen that we are spiritually poor. But that's exactly the point. We buy from the Lord Jesus with our spiritual poverty.

[21:03] The currency that Jesus accepts is emptiness and brokenness. we come with nothing else but our desperate, needy self.

You see, this is the amazing grace of Jesus towards us. He invites us and he says to us today, come to me as you are. Right here, right now.

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

I, says Jesus, will give you spiritual riches and eternal home and eternal blessings forevermore. I will supply you with spiritual clothes.

I will cover up all your guilt and all your sin with a robe of my righteousness. I will give to you spiritual eyes so that you will be able to see the emptiness of self-sufficiency.

[22 : 27] and see in Jesus the beauty of all sufficiency. You see, this is an invitation not to come and get things or an idea or a philosophy.

This is an invitation for us today to get Jesus. He's what we need. In Jesus we experience all the spiritual resources that we need for life and death and for all eternity.

buy from me. Come with your spiritual poverty and exchange it for glorious riches. Jesus.

In fact, Jesus not only invites us to come to him, he desires that he come to us. Not only does he say, buy from me, but he says, eat with me.

Look at verse 20. Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. Now it's interesting to note, isn't it, who is pursuing who here in this relationship.

[23 : 44] Where's Jesus? Jesus is on the outside, knocking on the door because he wants to meet with us.

He's saying to you and I today, let me in. Now very often we think of this verse as speaking to unbelievers, but remember this is speaking to believers, to the church.

Let me come back in. You see, this is what self-sufficiency does. It pushes Jesus out of our lives.

He no longer becomes our need. We don't need him. We can live without Jesus, so he's on the outside. Now amazingly, Jesus doesn't walk away in a huff, does he?

He doesn't do a strop and go, that's it, you don't want me, I'm out of here, I'm not talking to you again. If you want me, well then you'll have to come back and talk to me.

[24 : 53] Isn't that how we react in our relationships with each other? No, Jesus hasn't gone anywhere. He's there knocking on the door.

Listen, Jesus is calling your name. Can you hear him? He's speaking your name. Look at verse 20. I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with me. Meals have kind of lost their significance, haven't they?

For us at least. Eating has become nothing more than just a refueling exercise. Stuff as much as we can in as quick as possible so we can get on and do other things.

We even eat on the run. We don't have time to sit down. But in the first century, and for Jesus as he's speaking, to sit down and spend time with people and to eat with someone was a sign of deep friendship and acceptance.

[26 : 10] It was the way of renewing fellowship with somebody where you had fallen out. And that's what Jesus is saying to you today.

What a wonderful picture this is. he's knocking on the door. He's calling your name. Johnny, I want to come in.

I want to sit with you. I want to eat with you. I've come to renew fellowship with you. Let me in.

In fact, I want you to experience spiritual resources in all their fullness. I want you to enjoy a meal with me and to receive from me.

Look, let's not beat about the bush. We can all get ourselves in a desperate mess, can't we? Our sin pulls us away from Jesus.

[27 : 16] We listen to the messages about financial security. we've got to sort ourselves out, but we just get pulled away. And we think, I've got to do something, I'm going to change, I'm going to make things different.

What do I have to do to make Jesus give me what I need? What do I have to do so that Jesus is going to accept me back again?

Well, the problem is we can never ever do enough. In fact, our sin just reminds us that we need to start the whole process all over again.

No, there's another way. Do you hear his gracious invitation? Jesus comes to us. Jesus is the one taking the initiative. He always does.

Do you hear his voice? Buy from me. Eat with me. Come with your spiritual emptiness and brokenness and I will fill you with treasures forevermore.

[28 : 28] Not only do we have a loving rebuke and his gracious invitation but a promise of an eternal reward.

You see the big point here is this. The call upon our life today is to invest in our life spiritually even if that means financial poverty.

In other words, we are better off being spiritually rich and financially poor than being spiritually poor and financially rich.

Do you believe that? It's true. Look back to the church in Smyrna chapter 2 verse 9. They were the flip side of Laodicea.

Jesus says to them in verse 9, I know your afflictions and your poverty. They didn't have anything. Oh, they did.

[29 : 37] You are rich. They were rich in Christ. So what will it mean for you and I to invest in and prioritize our spiritual health?

Well, let me throw these out in very general ways. Maybe you're a younger person or consider yourself younger today. You're still in school or you're about to embark on your career and you have ambitions.

decisions. You're making choices and decisions about your job and your future. Well, let me say this. Make sure you prioritize mating with God's people.

Before committing to a career, be committed to your local church because they're going to be watching out for your spiritual health, responsibility and accountability, you will need it.

You won't survive without it. But maybe you're thinking, well, I'm a little bit further on than that and I'm thinking, well, how can I better my financial situation?

[30 : 54] How could I move up the ladder, maybe take on a bit more responsibility at work and increase the paycheck at the end of the month? Well, that can be good.

I'm not saying that's bad. But sometimes what we need is not more, but less. Not more hours and more pay, but less hours.

Sometimes we need to reduce things so that we haven't become so busy and flustered that we don't have time for Jesus. retirement.

Or maybe you're kind of at the other end of the scale and you're thinking retirement. Or maybe you already have retired. Time to cash in, isn't it?

Get that pension going, treat yourself, spend the kids' inheritance, oh, that would be nice. well, again, I'm not saying it's wrong to do any of these things.

[32 : 05] But watch out. Watch out that in your older age it doesn't grab you and consume you and you forget your spiritual love for Christ.

You see, the truth is none of us would ever make a decision that would compromise our financial health, would we? We're very careful about our monies.

But we all have a habit of making choices that compromise our spiritual condition. We do it all the time. Yes, this investment and prioritising our relationships with Jesus will be costly.

It may mean we don't get the career we want or the wage increase or that pension plan and that can be hard. And maybe you're thinking well I'm not sure I want to go down that road.

I'm not sure I'm ready to make those decisions. Is it worth it to throw my lot in for Christ? Absolutely.

[33 : 19] 100%. Don't believe me? listen to what Jesus says, verse 21. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne just as I was victorious and sat down with my father on his throne.

What a promise. It's out of this world. world. If we make Jesus our pursuit and prize, if we prioritise dependency on Jesus, you know what we will receive?

We're going to get to rule the nations with Jesus. We're going to sit in the place of all rule and power and authority as God's people. all that he is over, we will be over.

All that is his will become ours. Now, I don't know where you are on the calculations, but I don't think you can get a bigger reward or greater riches than that for all eternity.

Look, we can pour our life into financial security, we can strive for success and self sufficiency, we can reach the heights where we can say, I'm rich, I've acquired everything, I do not need a thing.

[34 : 57] Be careful. Listen to his invitation. he's calling your name. Buy from me.

Eat from me. Look upwards to your glorious reward. Invest in your spiritual health and you will be eternally rich.

Let's pray. Pause and respond. Lord, we are so quickly distracted and so easily deceived by other things, particularly financial resources and wealth.

Help us to prioritise you, to make you our prize and our pursuit in life. Knowing that in you are all that we need for life and death and for all eternity, that you are sufficient.

Help us always to say that apart from you, I have no good thing. Thank you thank you that we have rewards that are bigger and greater than anything this world could ever offer.

[36 : 56] Eternity with you, ruling with you, enjoying your blessings forever and forever without end.

thank you Lord for your blessings to us, for our financial resources individually and as a church.
Help us to use them for your glory, for your kingdom, and for the good of others.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.