

Don't do Life without Christ

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[0 : 00] So Revelation chapter 3, page 1239. There's also an outline that you might find helpful in the pew sheets as well. For those who are just visiting us here today, we've been working our way through just the first few chapters of Revelation where Jesus sends letters to some churches in ancient Turkey.

And last week we heard about the church in Philadelphia who was being faithful despite persecution. And it was an encouraging message to hold on. And Jesus gave all these reasons to keep holding on to their faith.

This week it's a bit more of a warning because this church doesn't seem to be doing as well as last week's church. So why don't I pray for us and then we'll get into it together. Let's pray again.

Father, we pray that you would help us this morning as we come to your word. Father, we pray that you would help us to put distractions aside and to focus on what your word says.

And by your spirit, help us to live it out in our lives. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if I said the sentence, I cannot live without...

[1 : 12] I wonder what you would put there. For most kids, it's screens, isn't it? I cannot live without screens. For teenagers who are bigger kids, it's a particular screen.

It's phone. They cannot live without their phone. For me, it is coffee. I don't know if you're the same, but I cannot live without coffee. In fact, there's lots of people in the world who cannot live without caffeine, whether it's tea or coffee.

And there are all these memes online about it, like this one, me without coffee. So not doing so well. And then me with coffee. All is right in the world.

I don't know what it is that you cannot do life without. But as we come to the church in Laodicea, the last of the seven churches, it seems they're trying to do life not without caffeine or coffee or tea, but without Christ.

We saw it a little bit in the children's talk down in verse 17, where because of their prosperity, they're saying they don't need a thing, including Christ. But doing life without him leads the Laodiceans to becoming lukewarm before him, which is point one in your outline and verse 14 in your Bibles.

[2 : 25] Have a look there in your Bibles. To the church, this is Jesus speaking, to the angel of the church in Laodicea write this. These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Now, before we get to the lukewarm bit, Jesus introduces himself as the Amen. These are the words of the Amen, which is a bit of an odd way to talk about yourself. You don't normally say, hi, I'm Amen, do you?

But the word Amen just means I agree. And so when someone leads us in prayer and we say Amen with them at the end, we're saying we agree with that prayer.

And so Jesus seems to be saying he is God's Amen, the one who agrees with what God says. And that seems to be the case because he goes on to describe himself as the faithful and true witness to God as well.

In other words, Jesus is the one who always agrees with God. What he says is what God says. And so already it's a little bit foolish to try and do life without him because it means we're ignoring what God says.

[3 : 37] But more than that, Jesus is the ruler over God's creation, verse 14. The church down the road from Laodicea was a church in Colossae. We have the letter in our Bibles, the letter of Colossians.

And when Paul wrote Colossians in the Bible, he actually told the church down the road at Colossae to show the Laodicean church the letter as well. And so the Laodiceans would have heard Paul write things like this about Jesus, that he is the image of the invisible God, the exact representation of him.

And notice that all things have been created through Christ and for Christ. He is before all things and in him all things hold together, which means he is the one who knows how to live life in this world.

He's got the instruction manual on the best way to live. I'm not sure why that static's happening. Anyway, we'll push on.

If he's the one who created it, the one in whom all things hold together, then he knows what makes sense, the best way to live in life. And so again, it's rather foolish to try and do life without him because it means we're not doing it without the instruction manual for life.

[4 : 57] Nor do we have any assurance when we face him as the ruler of creation after this life. But that's what this church decided to do. And we'll see how in a moment.

But Jesus first warns them about how serious this is. For it means they've become lukewarm before him and about to be spat out by him. Have a look at verse 15 to 16.

I know that your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth, he says. Now I used to think that lukewarm here meant half-hearted. And so it's kind of like this scale, you know, hot is being on fire for Jesus.

You know, little lukewarm is being half-hearted towards Jesus. And cold, well, you're cold towards Jesus. You don't want anything to do with him. But that doesn't really make sense about why Jesus would say he wishes people were hot or cold.

[6 : 02] Jesus doesn't want anyone to be cold towards him. He wants everyone to believe in him. And so really what's going on is this kind of scale. Hot is good. Cold is good.

But it's lukewarm. That's gross. And not at all for Jesus. It's worse than being half-hearted because they're about to be spat out. And if you go with the coffee and tea idea that I started with, when you think about it, you know, hot tea is soothing.

Hot coffee is invigorating. Even iced tea is refreshing or iced coffee is, well, that's invigorating too. It's got more caffeine. They're both good, aren't they?

But if you've ever had a tepid tea or a lukewarm coffee, it's gross, isn't it? I mean, have you ever, you know, you've had your cup of tea and you've let it go lukewarm and then you kind of taste it? It's gross, isn't it? Actually, this morning when I did this at nine o'clock, I forgot to change the water from the seven o'clock service. It was even grosser. But that's the point, right?

[7 : 13] And history seems to back this up because Laodicea, as I said, was situated near the Lycus River and up the road from Colossae. And it was in a fertile valley, which is what the green part is there.

To the north was Hierapolis, but it didn't have much water from the Lycus River. I've actually boldened and emphasised the river so you could see it. It wasn't that full. Apparently, the flow near Laodicea was minimal and it would often dry up.

And so it wasn't a great source of water. And so what the city did was they actually piped in cold water from Colossae through pipes. And you can see the rows of pipes, well, the remnants of them today.

Here are the two rows of pipes that were piping in cold water from Colossae. But Laodicea also, this is a bit of a close-up of the pipe. Laodicea was also known for its medical centre.

And so it would also pipe in hot water from the healing hot springs of Hierapolis. And that's the pipeline that would bring that water in. You can still visit the hot springs of Hierapolis today.

[8 : 21] I was talking with someone from 9 o'clock who's been there, put his feet in the water. He said, yeah, it was nice and warm. There's all this calcium in it, which is why the cliffs, as the water overflows, the cliffs go white from calcium.

And there's a thermal pool that tourists still swim in today. Of course, the problem with piping in the healing hot water from Hierapolis or the refreshing cold water from Colossae is, by the time they both get to Laodicea, one's cooled down, one's warmed up, and so they're both lukewarm and dirty from the pipes.

And so Laodicea was known for its lukewarm, dirty water, which really was only good for spitting out. That's what this church had become. Gross, about to be spat out or rejected by Jesus. How? How did this church become like this? Well, because they now were doing life without Jesus. Point to verse 17.

Have a look at the first part of verse 17. He says, you say to me that I am rich, or they just say to everyone, I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.

[9 : 35] Verse 17 actually starts with the word because. Because. So it's giving the answer for why they have become lukewarm. And here it's they trusted in their own prosperity, their wealth, which then led them to self-sufficiency.

Notice the word I. I am rich. I have acquired wealth. The NIV misses the other I. I don't need a thing. And this self-sufficiency then in turn led them to do Christ, to do life without Christ and just on their own.

It's why wealth can be so dangerous. Money in and of itself is, you know, neither good nor bad. It's how it's used, isn't it? But it can trick us into thinking we can do life by ourselves.

So we don't need Christ anymore. And it's easy to imagine this happening in this particular city because it was rich. It was the wealthiest city in Western Turkey.

Their wealth came from a textiles industry where the sheep, the fertile ground meant the sheep produced this glossy black wool that the whole Roman Empire wanted and so bought lots of.

[10 : 48] They also had a fashion industry and produced a tunic called the Trimita which became famous. All of Rome's celebrities, it was the must-have clothing item.

In fact, people from Laodicea became known as those from Trimita because that's how famous it was. Here's a kind of example of what it might look like without the sunnies. I don't think they had sunglasses back then.

Ladies, you can even buy one today from a store called Trimita, actually. But more than that, they also had, as I mentioned, a famous medical school that produced two famous medicines, an ointment for the ears and a salve or cream for the eyes which Jesus will refer to shortly.

All this and plus more made it incredibly wealthy. They even had a banking system that traded with gold. In fact, it was so wealthy that when an earthquake destroyed it in 60 AD, Rome offered financial help to rebuild and they said, nah, don't need it.

The Roman historian Tacitus writes, we've still got his writing today, he says, Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources and with no help from us in Rome.

[12 : 00] Can you imagine? We had an earthquake last year, didn't we? Not a big one. But maybe, you know, there's cracks in your house. The state government says, we will give you a million dollars to redo your house.

And then you go, nah, don't need it. Keep the money yourself. How wealthy would you have to be to say that? But that was Laodicea. And again, prosperity deceives us into self-sufficiency, thinking we don't need a thing from anyone else.

And this attitude of the city that we can see there crept into the church. And so even Christians didn't think they needed Christ anymore. And hey, they may not have needed anything physically, but they sure did spiritually.

Because look at the rest of verse 17 at how Christ describes their real poverty. He says, but you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

How's that for a reality check? You see, their spiritual condition without Christ was horrific. You try and do life without Christ, trusting in your own prosperity or self-sufficiency, and you'll end up like that.

[13 : 17] You see, we're not meant to just start the Christian life by trusting or believing in Jesus. We're not meant to start doing that and then stop and then swap to our own prosperity or our own self-sufficiency.

No, no, we're to keep trusting in Christ and his resources to help us through life. And so, Jesus now counsels them to come to him for those resources, to find true prosperity that lasts an eternity.

See verse 18? He says, 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 or cream to put on your eyes so that you can see.

In our first reading that Trevor read for us, God counseled Israel to come to him and buy without money so here Christ counsels Laodicea to come to him and buy without money that is for free and

to buy three things that would have resonated with them at first to buy gold not from their banks but from Jesus so that they'll be truly rich.

That is trust in Jesus to become spiritually rich now and physically rich later in the world to come. follow Jesus in this life and store up treasure in heaven as Christ said where thieves cannot break in share markets cannot crash and death will never take.

[14 : 58] A guy in a Bible study group shared with us last week he's here today actually how he has sadly lost two friends both in two weeks and both of them were wealthy people and he made the comment to our group he said it reminded me that you just can't take it with you it's true isn't it no amount but sorry the gold that you can buy from Jesus you can take with you so to speak here is real prosperity that lasts eternity second Jesus says buy from him a white garment rather than the trimeter to cover their shame and nakedness and as we saw with Sardis a couple of weeks ago these white robes are the dress code for heaven it's the clothes you need to get into heaven and they're made white not by being washed in Omo or coal power you remember but later on in Revelation being washed in the blood of the lamb that is they're the trust in Jesus' death that it paid for their sins so they could have forgiveness they're the trust in his death at the cross so that they might receive that white robe that dress code to enter heaven no amount of money can ever buy the white robe we need only Christ can give it when we put our faith in him and third they are to buy a salve or cream not from their medical school but from Christ so that they can truly see in life in other words they are to trust in Jesus and his word in the Bible so they can truly see how to live well in this world he is the ruler of this creation remember he knows the best way to live so they can truly see what's important in life so they can see as Jesus sees now I don't think our church has become lukewarm or gross before Christ but we relatively speaking compared to the rest of the world we live in a pretty prosperous city and this sort of attitude from the city can often creep into the church often slowly consciously and unconsciously that is sometimes we're not even aware of it and so it's worth pausing to ask ourselves are we doing life are we trying to do life without

Christ are we trusting in our own prosperity or self sufficiency rather than Christ and the resources he has for example what brings us peace in life is it knowing we have a healthy bank balance or if you don't have a healthy one is it wishing you had a healthy balance bank balance and then everything would be okay or is it knowing that Jesus is Lord so everything will be okay he's in control what is it that brings us true peace what are we trusting in more or when we who do we rely on more to solve problems in life ourselves or Christ I'm not suggesting by the way we don't do anything to address issues we have in life or use the resources that are available to us if you've got a health problem you go and see a doctor right if you've got a job problem you go and see a recruiter if you've got a school problem with the kids you go and see the teacher they're all great gifts from God but the question is at what point along the process do we pray and ask for God's help do we pray as a first step or as a last resort and I reckon the time it takes us when we have the problem to the time we pray is a bit of an indication of whom we're trusting in to solve the issue isn't it or do we look who do we look to to keep us on track in the Christian life again is it our own resources or Christ and his resources like his word his spirit his church I know people who used to come to our church regularly things life was getting difficult COVID came back a couple times haven't been back much since life got even harder with the kids and work and so on I chatted once to them and they said that they think they'll be okay and after all they can read the Bible and pray on their own at home and that's true and we want to encourage that but if you stop meeting together with God's people and encouraging one another and get those weekly reminders to spur you on and so on you think it's going to encourage them to read the Bible and pray at home more or less it's going to be less in fact I know it is and now I'm not sure where they're at here is someone a family who is seeking to trust in their own self-sufficiency to make it to glory rather than Christ and his resources Abraham Lincoln once wrote this he said intoxicated with unbroken success we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of relying on God's preserving grace too proud to pray to the God that made us but we need his grace to help us in life don't we we need his strength we're not meant to do life without Christ and if we do it without him it can make us lukewarm and gross before him and so if you've started to do that if you're seeing yourself drifting away from

Christ kind of making it just a Sunday thing rather than an everyday thing then we're to repent and be zealous for Christ point 3 verse 19 those whom I love I rebuke and discipline so be earnest and repent he says Jesus has just called these Christians in Laodicea wretched which is a pretty full-on

rebuke isn't it but he does it because he loves them and he disciplines those he loves it's hard to know how he disciplines them here it could be just a stern warning or he might work through some sort of suffering I remember a lady from an old church was in hospital and she told me how she got talking with a person a patient next to her and she mentioned that she was a Christian to this other lady and the other lady said why would God allow my suffering and this Christian lady rather cheekily said well maybe he's trying to get your attention suffering happens because we live in a fallen world but sometimes

[21 : 37] God works through that and uses that to cause us to depend on him in fact I was talking with someone about that just yesterday and he was saying how he's gone through some real tough times in life but God has used those to force him to depend this person depend on God more and more and as a result his relationship has grown as a Christian God may break our success in life to force us to rely on his grace but he does it because he loves us and isn't that what we as parents aunties and uncles do when we're child babysitting the kids or when we've got our own kids don't we discipline them because we love them and we want what's best for them and what's best for the church at Laodicea and what's best for us here at HDD is to do life with Christ to be zealous for Christ the word in verse 19 earnest is literally zealous but we don't like that word zealous too much do we you know it kind of sounds a bit extremist a bit like an unloving activist or a religious terrorist now of course we're not to be anything like that but we are to be lovingly different which may mean we look a bit extreme to our world when they find out you still go to church isn't that a bit extreme these days or you read you believe the

Bible about that topic isn't that a bit over the top you pray every day isn't that a bit fanatical we are to be zealous for Christ and do all of life with him and that may mean we look a bit extreme to our world but it won't look like that to God it's actually what's best for us to help us because he loves us and if we've been trying to do some of life without Christ then we're to repent we're to stop and turn back to him because he's waiting to come back to us have a look at verse 20 he says Jesus says 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 that person and they with me that idea of eating together was a sign of fellowship of restored relationship and this is a pretty well-known verse amongst a number of churches and it's often used to help non-Christians believe in Jesus to explain the gospel and so if you're not a Christian here today then can I say that Jesus is standing at the door of your life knocking he wants a relationship with you he wants to give you the certain hope of heaven if you would but only open the door by believing in him welcoming him into your life as your saviour who died for your sins as your lord who guides you in life for your good but while this verse is a great verse for non-Christians to hear it was originally written to the church to Christians to help us repent to know that while we may have done life without Christ from time to time while the Laodiceans have actually kicked Christ out of their house it seems Jesus is still at their door knocking wanting to come in and restore forgive put right how kind and gracious is our saviour

I mean if someone cuts us off in life we're very tempted to cut them off back you know going to buy a Christmas card today not for that person I'm not cut off the Facebook page or whatever it is these days but not Jesus he's always standing ready to forgive and restore now and even give us the right to rule with him later see our last two verses he says to the one who is victorious the one who does life with him keeps trusting in him 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 whoever has ears let them hear what the spirit says to the churches for us who trust in Christ rather than our earthly prosperity or our self-sufficiency Jesus will give us the right to rule with him which means ruling over the world to come and when you rule over the world it means you have it it's yours you have authority to enjoy everything and so when you think about it the whole world that's more prosperity than you can poke a stick at isn't it and so you won't miss out by doing life with Christ now we'll gain the world later I don't know what you can't do life without whether it's screens or phones or for me my morning coffee sorry I lied my morning two coffees not four two but more than all that we're not meant to do life without Christ so let's pray we wouldn't let's pray our gracious father we thank you for this reminder that we're not meant to do life without Christ and the resources he gives us and so help us we pray not to depend on our own resources but to keep looking to Christ and to you for your resources to help us keep trusting in Jesus through the ups and downs of life until you bring us to rule with him in that world to come father thank you so much for the fact that Jesus is always willing to forgive that he's our great high priest who's standing at the door knocking always ready to restore

fellowship help us when we fail to repent and to seek that forgiveness we have in him we ask all these things in his name amen