

The Lukewarm Church

by Bayless Conley

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If you have your Bible, please find Revelation 1.

Lord, we ask You for understanding. Cause these hearts of ours to comprehend Your Word. Give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and Jesus, may You be glorified. Amen.

We have been doing a series on the seven churches from the book of Revelation. Seven churches that were in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. And we're going to look at the church of Laodicea today, but I want to back up into the first chapter and begin reading in verse 10. John, of course, has been banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he has this revelation from Jesus that he writes, which we call the book of Revelation. Beginning verses 10–20 of Revelation 1 NKJV,

¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." ¹² Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. ¹⁹ Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands."

The seven stars are the angels,' Greek word, messenger, thoughts that refer to the pastors.

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches."

Who is it that's speaking to the churches? Let me tell you who it's not. It's not the scrawny shepherd Jesus in the paintings with a stupid grin on His face and a lamb under His arm. It is the risen Son of God who has the keys of hell and of death. There's a golden band around His chest. His hair shimmers like the snow. His eyes are like flames of fire. When He walks, sparks fly. When He speaks, it is like the sound of a thousand Niagara's churning together, like all of the waves of the world crashing at one time. He has stars in His hand. A sharp sword comes out of His mouth, and His countenance is like the mid-day sun. My friend, the majesty of His person

The Lukewarm Church

and the authority of His words brook no argument. That is who is speaking to the Church then, and that is who is speaking to the Church today. We need to keep that in mind.

He's the one that's in the midst of the lampstands, which represent the churches. He's in our midst today. He sees everything. He understands everything. His scales are just. His judgments are just. His commandments and admonitions need to be heeded. The lampstand, I like the fact that the church is likened as a lampstand, set in the community to give the light of the gospel to those living there. To bring the influence of the King to where they are, but when that light is covered, and it's not shining, Jesus does something. He does everything He can to restore that church to where it should be. That's the purpose of these letters that were written to the seven churches. We pick it up in Revelation 3:14 NKJV. It says,

¹⁴ "And to the angel (or the messenger) of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.'"

You know, I was struck by that. The first thing He said was, "Write these things down." Revelation 1, He said, "Look, what you see with the things that are, and the things that I'm going to tell you that are coming, you need to write them down and send them. Not just tell them, but write it down. You do that, and the message will be preached the same every time. The message will faithfully speak every time. It won't be altered. It won't be watered down. I want My churches in every generation to be able to read it as I said it."

There was a guy back in the early days of the church. This would've been 37 years ago, maybe. He was 69. He'd just gotten married. His wife was 80. He came to see me one day after a Sunday service. He said, "Pastor, I got to talk to you. My wife is really upset." I said, "Why? What's going on?" He said, "Well, she was convinced that you were preaching to her in the sermon, that you looked right at her, and everyone knew you were talking about her, and you purposely embarrassed her in front of the whole church."

I said, "Look, please tell her and rest assure her that I wasn't preaching directly to her. Frankly, I don't remember seeing you guys in the congregation." I said, "I think a lot of people probably feel that way, that I was looking right at them." I said, "I was not and would never embarrass her. I wasn't talking to her specifically." I said, "Please set her heart to rest." He said, "Okay, so glad to know that. I'll tell her."

Anyway, a couple of days later, I get a call from her. She wants to come see me. Both of them come in, so I've got this 80-year-old wife, this 69-year-old husband sitting across the desk from me. She says, "My husband told me what you said." I said, "Good." She said, "How could you?" I said, "What do you mean?" Says, "He told me that you admitted that you did it on purpose. He told me that you were preaching directly to me and that you embarrassed me on purpose, and that everyone knew. Why would you do that?" I said, "That's not what I told him." I said, "Tell her." He just crossed his arms and smiled at me.

She's devastated. I couldn't believe it. Now, if I had written it down and sent it to her, I would have closed the door to his alteration of the message. Actually, a few weeks later, I got a call from some of her siblings. They were up in age as well. They said, "Look, he's isolated her from all of us and turned her against all of us. We think that he's just after her money." And that may have been what it was all about. But Jesus said, "Look, write it down." In Habakkuk 2:2, it says, "Write the vision and make it plain that he may run that reads it." People, when they read and understand, will either run with or run from the vision, but they're going to run.

The Lukewarm Church

The same thing is true with the words that Jesus speaks to the church of Laodicea and to us today, and then He said, "These things, says the Amen." In other words, the final Word, Jesus, is the Amen. Nothing after it. His judgments stand. His decrees are non-negotiable. His wisdom is absolute. He is the faithful and the true witness. He's the final Word.

When the city's redevelopment agency tried to seize our property, actually locked us out of our property, and tried to seize it through eminent domain, we went into a legal battle that went on for years. We hired a really good attorney, and he said, "Look, Bayless, I'll represent you, but you need to understand something. In the history of our country, no one in your position, no one in the position of your church, has ever won a court case. Statistically, your chances are zero." Well, you know what? I'm glad that wasn't the final word. Jesus had the final word, and here we are.

He has the final word on your health. He has the final word on your family. He has the final word on your finances, and He has the final word on your future. He is the Amen. He has the final word on what is right and what is wrong, on what is good and what is evil, and what He's about to say to the church of Laodicea is true and can be relied upon. Just in case anyone wants to argue with Him, He adds this, as one translation puts it, "I am the origin, beginning and Author of creation, so please don't presume to have more insight than Me. I created everything, including you." We read in verse 15, Revelation 3:15-16 NKJV,

¹⁵ "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."

I want you to notice they were working. It's the same word works used in Titus for good works. The church was doing a lot of the right things. "I know your works," there was activity, but they were lukewarm in those activities. When He said, "I know," it literally means that He sees to the heart of things.

The Lord does not see as man sees. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." We might see someone that's putting on a good show, and we think, "Man, what a spiritual giant," but God sees to the heart of the matter. The Pharisees prayed long prayers. The Pharisees seemed to be zealous for God's law. They tithed down to the spices in their cabinet. To men, they looked like they were so spiritual and so close to God, but Jesus said they were like whitewashed tombs. Outwardly, they looked pristine to men, but inwardly they were filled with dead men's bones and all manner of corruption.

My dad passed away a few years ago. And he's one of these guys having gone through the Great Depression, it just did something to his psyche. He found it very difficult to throw anything away. If it was an empty paint can, do not throw it away. We can use that sometime. If it was a dried-up rubber band, he didn't want to throw it away. He just stuffed everything in his garage.

When he passed away, my sister and I had the job of cleaning out the garage. It took weeks, and I was looking in some old drawer, and I found one of Dad's harmonicas. I play harmonica a bit, so I thought, "Great," it looked great. To my sister, I said, "Look what I found." I went, took a big pull on the harmonica, and I breathed in a whole bunch of dust, and a dead moth went down my throat. My sister thought it was so funny. I didn't think it was quite so funny. I coughed for about 20 minutes, trying to get that dead moth out of my throat. Outwardly, it looked good, but inside there were dead things.

The Lukewarm Church

To the church at Laodicea, Jesus said, "You're lukewarm. I know your works, but you're not cold, you're not hot, you're lukewarm." We would say indifferent, apathetic, uncommitted, half-hearted, just going through the motions. Laodicea was a city in the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor, what is modern-day Turkey. There were a number of large cities there, wealthy cities there. There was one city about maybe 7 miles, more or less, away called Hierapolis, a wealthy city.

There was another city, maybe 10 or 11 miles away, called Colossae, another wealthy city. In between them was Laodicea. They were all wealthy, but Laodicea was far superior in wealth to them. It was a banking center. It was a textile center. There were theaters. There was a stadium, a gymnasium. They had over 4,000 shops in that city. It was a place for buying and selling and for trade, but Hierapolis and Colosse had something that Laodicea didn't have. Colosse was a resort town. It was nestled at the foot of the mountains, and during the hot summer months, people would flock there for the cold, refreshing waters. The snow waters would melt, and there would be rivers and creeks, and people would go there to be refreshed in the cold waters during the summer months.

On the other hand, you've got Hierapolis. It was known for its geothermal springs. It had these mineral hot springs that were famous throughout the known world. Even Antony and Cleopatra came and bathed in those hot springs, and they were thought to have restorative healing powers. There was a large medical community in Hierapolis that employed those hot waters for the recovery of their patients.

Laodicea, not wanting to be outdone, employed and did something that had never been done in history before. They wanted running hot and cold water. So, at great expense and time, they actually built an aqueduct from Colosse to bring those ice-cold mountain waters down to their city. Simultaneously, they built a pipeline out of clay pipes from Hierapolis all the way to their city to bring the boiling hot waters of those geothermal springs so they would have both hot water and cold water.

The people waited for years while the project went on, thinking, "This is going to be wonderful. We're going to have those ice-cold waters in our city. We're going to have those hot waters in our city." But when the aqueduct was finished, and the cold waters came, they were no longer cold. They were lukewarm. When those hot waters from Hierapolis came, they were no longer hot. They were just tepid and lukewarm, and because of the minerals in them and because of the clay pipes, they picked up a disgusting taste. Historians say that when the Laodiceans tasted that water from Hierapolis, they literally vomited it out of their mouths. They spit it out because it was so disgusting.

My friend that is what Jesus is referring to. He wasn't talking about their salvation, but He was talking about their apathetic, disengaged hearts. It was displeasing and disgusting to the Lord. They were doing the right works. He said, "I know your works. You're doing all these things. You're having church, but there's no refreshing. Times of refreshing come from the Holy Spirit. You have no anointing from the Holy Spirit. You have no healing, no restorative things going on. You're My church in name only. You're going through the motions, you're doing the works, but people come, and they're not refreshed. People come, and they're not lifted. People come, and they're not touched. They're not restored. They're not healed. I'm going to vomit you out of My mouth." He said, "You are lukewarm. Outwardly, you're right, but your insides are wrong."

How many churches does that describe today? How many Christians might that describe today? Our words and our actions should be refreshing and bring restoration to people, but in Laodicea,

The Lukewarm Church

that was not the case. I didn't hear the gospel till I was in my 20s. Many of you have heard me talk about it. A 12-year-old boy came up to me in a park one day and talked to me about Jesus Christ. He was the first person that ever told me Jesus was alive. I didn't know that. He rocked my world. Because of that kid and his family, I ended up in a street mission where I gave my life to Jesus. We became friends.

I'm with the family one day. We go to a hospital to visit somebody, and we're talking to this person, and his mother says, "Oh, where's my son?" I go, "I don't know. I'll go to find him." I'm wandering around the hospital looking for this 12-year-old kid. I walked down this hallway, and there's a guy sitting on a bench outside of his room. All he has is his hospital gown on, and he's sobbing. I go, "Man, you okay?" He goes, "Who is that kid?" He said, "He walked into my room. I've never heard anyone like that. He told me that Jesus could heal me, and he told me this, and he told me—who is that kid?" I felt like going, "I know what you mean. He did the same thing to me." That's the way we should be as Christians. Our words and our life, they should have an impact. They should be lifting people and bringing the restorative properties of the gospel to them.

In 2 Kings, the story's told of the Shunammite woman whose son died. She went to Elisha, the prophet. Elisha said to his servant, Gehazi, "Look, take my staff. Go before us and lay the staff on the child's face." Gehazi went and did it, but nothing happened. We read later on why. Gehazi was unsanctified. Gehazi was full of greed, and he was full of lies. He did the right thing, but there was no power. He did the right thing, but there was no anointing. He did the right thing, but nothing happened.

I used to go to a church many years ago that was amazing. It was one of those churches where you just couldn't wait to get to a service. You just couldn't wait. You would never miss because you knew you were going to get something from God. You just always came away lifted. You always came away with new insight. Always came away changed or challenged. It was amazing. There was this just electric atmosphere when you got in there, but then something changed.

It went from being amazing to being anemic. It went from life-changing to listless. It went from seismic to sedate, and I couldn't figure it out. You'd go in there and just nothing. You'd sit in the service and leave and nothing. If I got anything, I don't know what it was. Later on, I found out that the pastor who actually had become an acquaintance of mine had been in a long-term adulterous relationship with his best friend's wife. It went on for several years. He'd be up in the pulpit preaching on Sunday morning, then go get a cheap hotel room Sunday night and sleep with his best friend's wife. This went on for years.

That hand of blessing, the restorative, the rejuvenating, the healing, the refreshing hand of the Holy Spirit was lifted because of that. In his case, it was a sustained moral failure. In the case of the Laodiceans, it was something that's perhaps far more dangerous and far worse. It was pride. God hates pride. Pride turned heaven's most beautiful angel into a devil, and it'll do the same thing to you. We read in verse 17 of Revelation 3 NKJV Jesus said,

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."

They were blind to their true spiritual state. Members of a church doing the works, going through the motions, but He said, "Spiritually, you're blind. You're blind to your true state. You're miserable. You're wretched. You're poor." He said, "But you say, literally, you brag

The Lukewarm Church

about yourselves that, 'I'm rich.'" In the Greek language, "I am the richest. There's none richer than me, and I've gained wealth. Literally, I've resourced myself." The inference in the original language is, "We've done it ourselves. We didn't have any help. We've done this. It was our wisdom. It was our insight. It was our hard work. We have done this. We have accumulated this." No acknowledgment of God whatsoever.

It's like the parable Jesus told in Luke's Gospel about the rich man. It said he talked about his crops and his barns and his goods and his soul. He says, "Well, I'm going to say to my soul, 'Soul, you got many goods laid up for many years. Eat, drink, take your ease.'" But God said to him, "You fool, this very night, your soul will be required of you. Then whose will those things be that you've accumulated, that you've laid up?" If you're reading that short little story Jesus told, the guy said "I" six times and said "My" five times. I, I, I, I, I, my, my, my, my, my, no mention of God whatsoever.

It's like the billionaire who took his pastor out to his estate one day. He says, "Pastor, I just want to show you around. They took an elevator and went to the roof of his palatial home. There's a helicopter pad on top of it. The guy points out and says, "You see all that timber and that forest as far as the eye can see? I own it all. There's a sawmill on the other side of that hill; I own that too. Do you see all the cattle here? As far as you can see, that's all mine." He said, "You see this whole community, all these houses as far as the eye can see," says, "I own all that land. I'm the one that designed that community. That's me. I did that. This 20,000 square foot house we're standing on with a 14-car garage and a helicopter pad, there's not another home like it in the entire nation. I had it designed specially." The pastor looked at him and says, "You know what? You pointed in every direction except one.

We need to give credit and glory to God. But the Laodiceans, "I am the richest," they said, "I have done this." Now, it was a rich city known for its opulence. They more than likely were the richest church in the known world at that time. When the city was destroyed by an earthquake, the citizens of Laodicea refused imperial aid from Rome. They said, "No, we'll do it with our own means. We don't need you." It wasn't a matter of not wanting to be indebted to the government. It was a matter of pride. "We don't need you. We can do it ourselves. We are self-sufficient." That same spirit crept into the church. The same pride crept into the hearts of God's people.

I had a friend. He's been in heaven for many years now. He actually preached at Cottonwood and just brought a powerful word. Well, before I knew him, he pastored the largest church in one of the largest cities in the US in the Metropolitan Center. It was the largest church in the state there in one of the largest cities in the United States. The finest and wealthiest citizens of that city all attended his church, and he never stepped on anybody's toes. Always kept everybody happy. They loved his preaching.

One day after preaching to his wealthy congregation, he's in the back greeting them as they're leaving and shaking people's hands. One afternoon, they said, "Oh, pastor, great message. Great sermon, pastor. You did it again, pastor. Great message, pastor." He heard someone behind him say, "Even the devil likes your sermons." He turned around, and no one was there, and he realized Jesus had just spoken to him. He said, "I broke off from the line, and immediately I went down into the church basement. I got on my knees, and I wept." I said, "Oh God, what has happened to me? What has happened to me?" He repented, got his heart restored, and the next Sunday, it was a different story. Eventually, they got rid of him. They didn't want a pastor that would challenge them like that and make them very uncomfortable. But you know what? Part of the minister's job is not just to comfort the afflicted. It's to afflict the comfortable.

The Lukewarm Church

The Laodiceans were prosperous, and the Lord had no problem with that. He didn't rebuke them for that. The issue was their pride. There is an inherent danger that comes along with prosperity. It is this. It's very easy to transition your trust from God to your wealth. It's very easy to transition your trust from God to your things, and that's apparently what happened to these Laodiceans.

We're told the story of King Uzziah in the Bible. He reigned over Israel for almost 50 years. He built cities. He won wars. He dug wells. His livestock increased. He had vineyards. He stockpiled armaments. His fame spread. Then we read this in 2 Chronicles 26. It says, "His fame spread far and wide for the Lord gave him marvelous help, and he became very powerful. But when he became powerful, he also became proud, which led to his downfall." The New Testament, 1 Timothy 6:17 NKJV,

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

It's fine to enjoy the things that God gives you. If you prosper, you should have no guilt over enjoying the prosperity that God gives, but you should not put your trust in that wealth. Don't put your trust in the company you work for. Don't put your trust in your bank account or in your retirement. You keep your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We read on. Revelation 3:18 NKJV. He said,

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."

Now obviously, Jesus is talking about spiritual riches, that you may be rich. They were monetarily rich. They were rich when it came to goods, but Jesus said, "You don't know your state. You're actually spiritually poor. You're wretched in My sight. You're blind. You're naked. You're lukewarm. You go through the motions, but there's no power there."

Dr. Jesus not only accurately diagnoses the problem, He also gives the prescription to get well, and then He furnishes us with the necessary medication, but we still have our part. He said, "Look, I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire." The word counsel in the Greek language is a compound word. The first part of the word means "together." It means "union." It literally means "a joint undertaking." The second part of the word means "to advise, to deliberate, to resolve an issue." Jesus is saying, "Look, you need to come to Me. We're going to work this thing out. We're going to talk."

Now He'll tell us what to do, but we still have our part. We need to act upon what He tells us to do, but it begins by coming to Him. I love the fact that Jesus said, "Look, I don't want the shame of your nakedness to be revealed." Jesus doesn't want your business out in the street. Wonderful Jesus, He says, "Look, come to Me. Let's get this thing fixed. No one has to know what a miserable, spiritual state you're in. Come to Me. We're going to get you healed. We're going to get you fixed." The Bible says in Proverbs 17:9 NKJV,

⁹ He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.

The Lukewarm Church

Jesus wants to cover you. But the thing is, if we don't repent, if we don't come to Him and get it sorted out, eventually, our sins will find us out, and everybody's going to know. It will be exposed. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but it will be exposed. Jesus said, "Look, nobody else has to know. No one else needs to know. Come to Me now. Let's get your soul healed. Let's get your Spirit right. Let's get you fixed. I don't want you ashamed, and you don't need to be embarrassed."

When He said, "Buy from Me," it's interesting. The word buy, it's the root word for "market," and Laodicea was famous for its markets. Large cities usually had one enormous market. Some cities were fortunate enough to have two. Laodicea had four. These weren't like the little farmer's market we have in the parking lot here on Saturday mornings. These markets—one market took up acres and acres and acres of land between 4,000 and 5,000 shops in the city.

People came in droves to buy things in Laodicea, and Jesus is saying, "Forget about all those marketplaces. I'm your marketplace. Whatever you need, come to Me. You need wisdom? I've got it. You need healing? I've got it. You need holiness? I've got it. You need humility? I've got it. You need peace? I've got it. You need direction? I've got it. I am your market. I have what you need. Buy from Me."

First, He said, "Buy gold refined in the fire," which, among other things, is a metaphor for faith. In 1 Peter 1, it uses that same language, talking about faith. Talked about obtaining white garments, referring to holiness and sanctification. Then He said, "Anoint your eyes. Get eye salve from Me. Anoint your eyes so that you can see." Interesting study. Laodicea, believe it or not, was a center of ophthalmology in the day. They had created something called Phrygian powder, and it was known throughout the ancient world. People came from all over to have this Phrygian powder applied to help restore their sight. They were famous for it. Jesus is saying, "You guys may know something about restoring physical sight, but if you want your spiritual insight restored, you need the anointing of the Holy Spirit. You need to come to Me. I'm the only one that can restore that for you."

I love the fact that immediately when Jesus talked about cold and hot and lukewarm and eye salve, they were things that the Laodiceans all personally related to. Did you know that Jesus speaks the secret language of your heart? If you're a carpenter, He'll talk to you about woodworking. If you're a dancer, He's going to talk to you about stretching and exercise. If you're a businessman or a businesswoman, He's going to talk to you in a language that you understand. Jesus will talk to you in a way that you understand. He talks to fishermen about fishing. He talked to the Laodiceans about things that they understood. In verse 19 of Revelation 3 NKJV, He said,

¹⁹ "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent."

When Jesus corrects us, it's out of love. It's not out of anger. In fact, the word chasten does not mean punish. It doesn't mean that at all in the Greek language. It literally means "to educate." "As many as I love, I will correct them and educate them." It's the same word used to educate a child, to bring that child to maturity, or to help them fulfill their ultimate purpose and to bring them to a place of fullness in their life. That's what the Lord wants to do to us. He wants us to reach our potential. He wants to educate us.

He said, "Be zealous. Don't wait for this. Do it now. Be zealous and repent." Repentance, it's a good New Testament word. The first word in John the Baptist's ministry began with the word repent. The ministry of Jesus began with the word repent. On the day of Pentecost, the word

The Lukewarm Church

repent Jesus said to all of these churches, “Repent, repent, repent.” It’s an inward change of heart and mind that results in an outward change of direction. That’s what repentance is. It’s not just feeling sorry. A lot of people feel sorry for their sins. They feel sorry about the consequences in their lives and other people’s lives, but being sorry is not repentance. Sorrow may be part of repentance, but just feeling sorry that’s not enough. Repentance is when you change your mind, and then your behavior reflects it. Until it’s reflected in your behavior, it is not repentance. In verse 20 of Revelation 3:20 NKJV, He said,

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.”

We most generally hear that “I stand at the door and knock” in connection with the invitation to be saved. I think that’s okay. It certainly applies, but that’s not what’s happening here. This is not Jesus knocking on the door of a sinner saying, “Be saved.” This is Jesus knocking on the door of His church.

What a picture. Jesus is on the outside of the church, wanting to get in. Think of that. Jesus is knocking on the outside of the church, wanting them to open the door and let Him in. When I was 17, I decided I was going to go to a church service. It was Christmas Eve, and I thought, “Oh, people go to church on Christmas Eve,” so I went to this local church. I had quite long hair at the time, and I remember going up Christmas Eve, and the priest met me in the doorway. He looked at me and said, “You’re not welcome here.” He said, “We don’t want your kind here. Get off the property now.” I said, “Okay,” so I left. I didn’t know the Lord then, but I’m sure the Lord was thinking, “Bayless, don’t feel bad. They won’t let Me in either.”

He stands at the door and knocks, and He said, “If anyone hears My voice—” That’s how He knocks. It’s His voice. He speaks to you. He speaks to your conscience. Some of you, He’s already talking to you. You know He is. He’s already pricked your conscience. That’s how He knocks. He speaks to you with His voice. And He said, “If anyone hears My voice and opens—” Meaning it’s not just an invitation to go to church. It’s individualized. “If anyone,” He’s talking to you. He’s talking to me.

Is Jesus on the outside of your life wanting to get in? He didn’t say, “If anyone opens the door,” He said, “I’m going to come in, but I’m going to make you pay. I’m going to punish you.” That’s not what He said. He said, “You open the door. I will come in and dine with him.” It refers to the evening meal that was reserved only for family and for the closest of companions. Jesus said, “If you’ll repent, if you’ll open the door, you will have instant restored fellowship. I’ll come in, and I’ll sup with you.” Instant restoration. Instant fellowship. “I’m not going to make you pay. I’m not going to punish you. I’m going to come in. We’re going to share sweet fellowship and intimacy and companionship.” What a Savior. Final verses. Verses 21–22 of Revelation 3 NKJV,

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. ²² “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ’ ”

“He that overcomes,” infinitive verb form in the Greek language, meaning “the one that continually overcomes.” There’s always going to be obstacles. There’s always going to be challenges to overcome. Somebody says, “Can you just pray the devil will leave me alone?” I can pray that you’ll die. That’s the only way that’s going to happen. As long as you’re in this earthly life, you’re going to have challenges. You have an adversary. The devil, who walks

The Lukewarm Church

about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, resist him steadfast in faith, and he will flee from you.

The Christian life is one of constant overcoming. There's always going to be challenges. There's always something to overcome. We're to fight the good fight of faith, but the good news is we don't have to face those things on our own. He will be with us. Here, the obstacles that they needed to overcome were pride, self-sufficiency, apathy, lukewarmness, and being half-hearted about the things of God.

Is Jesus right now on the outside of your life, knocking and wanting to get in? He doesn't want to expose you. He wants to restore you. It's a call to the church. We're going to pray about that in a minute, but I just feel I want to give an invitation for salvation. First of all, you may have come with a family member or friend or maybe by yourself today. You may be anywhere listening to me right now. This service goes out all around the world. You may be sitting on the edge of your bed in a hotel room right now, and you've just done some shameful things. You need to know Jesus loves you. He sees you.

I was with my grandson Sawyer last week. We went to the store to pick up a few things, some groceries, and we're driving, and there was a homeless guy. Looked like he was passed out on the street. We parked, took groceries, took him some water, and just went and knelt down next to him. Gave him some groceries, something to drink, and just said, "Look, you need to know God sees you, and you're loved by God. I don't know what all your issues are, but you're not unseen, and you're not unknown to God. You just need to know He sees you and He loves you, and He's not mad at you. In fact, He loves you so much that He died in your place."

The Bible says, "Sin separates us from God." The Bible refers to that state of being separated from God as spiritual death. Doesn't mean to cease to exist. It just means to be cut off from the life of God. We were meant to walk with Him and talk with Him, but sin separates us from Him. Well, the wages of sin is death. God, in His mercy, sent a substitute, His Son Jesus died for us, bore the penalty of our sins on the cross, and died a horrible death.

We will never know the fullness. It was more than just what took place physically on the cross, my friend. Isaiah 53 says, "His very soul was made an offering for sin." I don't think through the eternity of eternities, we will ever fully understand the depths to which Christ went to lift us, but He did it. The price has been paid for you. He's been raised from the dead, and now He stands before you with His arms open wide. Says, "If you'll come, I won't turn you away. Doesn't matter what you've done or what you've failed to do." He says, "I love you, and if you'll put your trust in Me, I will save you. I'll redeem you."

The invitation is to everyone. Just maybe bow your heads and close your eyes for a minute. If you've never asked Jesus Christ into your life, just say these words after me and I think we all know any parrot can be taught to pray a prayer. It's not just mouthing the words, but it's tying a sincere heart behind them. If you do that, if you mean it, and speak the words to God, He'll hear you. Just pray it out loud, say,

Oh, God, I come to You now. Thank You for loving me so much that You would send Your own Son to die for my sins. Jesus, I believe You died and that You were raised from the dead. I confess You now as my Lord and Savior. Wash me clean. Give me a fresh start. I put my trust in You. Amen. Amen.