



NEW LIFE

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“For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9)

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The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

*By Rev Mark Bates, Part 8 of 8 “The Seven Letters of Revelation”
Adapted from TABLETALK from Ligonier Ministries – May 2009*

The pipes in our home sprung a series of leaks. Since most of my neighbours had replaced their plumbing, I knew it was time for me to do the same. However, hiring a plumber to do this would cost thousands of dollars. My friend, Monte, had just repiped his house himself and offered to help me with mine. I am not a handyman, but I am a tightwad. So, I figured, he could be the plumber and I could be the plumber’s helper. Within a week, I had a new plumbing system.

A few days later, when my wife and I returned home one evening, we opened the door and water came rushing out. Apparently, I had failed to connect one of the pipes properly. Water was an inch deep throughout the house.

Embarrassed by the problem, I didn’t want to ask for help in fixing it. So, I drove off to Wal-Mart to buy a mop and a squeegee. I soon discovered that my mop and squeegee were no match for the small lake in my home. Like it or not, I needed help. My delusion of self-sufficiency was only making the problem worse.

In His letter to the church of Laodicea, Jesus warns us about the danger of self-sufficiency. Laodicea was a wealthy banking centre and proud of her rich resources. In AD 60, the city was destroyed by an earthquake. Rather than accepting aid from the Roman Empire, the people of Laodicea refused any help and rebuilt the city themselves with their own resources. They did not need anyone’s charity.

Yet, while Laodicea appeared to have everything, it actually lacked the most basic of resources — water. Unlike the mountain towns that had cold water streams or nearby Hierapolis that had access to hot springs, Laodicea had no water supply of its own. Water had to be piped in through aqueducts. By the time it arrived, the water was lukewarm and full of sediment. Cold water is good for drinking, hot springs were reputed to have healing qualities, but lukewarm, sediment-filled water neither refreshes nor heals. It is disgusting.

Jesus tells the Laodicean church that they are just like their water. “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” (Rev. 3:15–16).

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Jesus is not saying that He wishes they were either spiritually hot or spiritually cold rather than being spiritually lukewarm. Nowhere does God desire for His people to have cold hearts. Rather, Jesus explains what He means by being lukewarm in the next verse. "For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (v. 17). The lukewarm person is not one who is mildly passionate about God. Rather, the lukewarm person is one who has lost his dependence on God. In his arrogance, he believes he has no need of Christ's righteousness because he has enough of his own.

Whenever we take pride in our own moral goodness, we have fallen into the perilous sin of the Laodiceans. We are like lukewarm water. We are forgetting that all of our righteous deeds are nothing more than filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). Jesus finds this sort of spiritual pride so offensive that it makes Him sick. He will spit out of His mouth all those who think that they are rich in their own righteous works.

Walter Marshall said, "Your heart is addicted to salvation by works." As a result, we often wear our good deeds like spiritual merit badges on preening chests, thinking we can impress God with our righteous acts. Like the Pharisee in Luke 18, we pride ourselves that we are not like other men. After all, we are not engaging in the perversity of our culture. Instead, we fast, tithe, read our Bibles, and serve in the church. Yet, we must realize that arrogant self-sufficiency results in disgusting works, no matter what these works may be.

Unless we see that we are poor and needy, Jesus will have no part of us. We do not begin the Christian life poor and then grow into the riches of our own righteousness. Rather, we begin the Christian life spiritually bankrupt. As we grow, we come to understand even more the depth of our sin and our great need for a saviour. It is only when we see our poverty and neediness that we can truly become rich. That is why Jesus says, "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" (Rev. 3:18). Christ is not calling us to wallow in our spiritual poverty but to delight in the riches of His grace.

The Christian, a Stranger Here and a Citizen of Heaven

*By Ian Hamilton (Cambridge Presbyterian Church)
Adapted from Banner of Truth – 22 September 2009*

A Tale of Two Cities

The Christian believer is always living in an inescapable tension! Much as we would love to be free of this tension, until we leave this earthly scene and enter the nearer presence of our great and gracious God, we will be engaged every moment of every day in this tension. I surely hardly need to spell out just what this tension is - but I will do so nonetheless! Here and now we live as 'strangers' in a foreign land; we are the children of the living God: we are even now 'seated with Christ in the heavenly realms'; every breath we breathe takes us nearer 'home' - and yet we are not 'home'. We live out the life of faith in a world shrouded in unbelief. The truth is that every Christian lives simultaneously in two worlds - our life is a tale of two cities.

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There have been periods in the Church's life when Christians have sought to escape the reality of this tension. The Monastic movement (which was not irredeemably bad) was, at least in part, an attempt to avoid the strain and pain of this tension. But far from retreating from the world, God has commanded his people to be salt and light in the world. The gospel does not allow us the luxury of avoiding this tension. We are summoned to live in the world, while affirming in all that we are that we are not of the world. This is no easy thing. It would be so much easier to retreat into a 'spiritual closet', to ignore this world, to pop out now and again to 'evangelise' and then quickly retreat into the safety and security of our spiritual pain-free zone. At the other extreme, Christians have sought to avoid the tension by blending seamlessly into the world, adopting its fashions, trends and ethos. In effect saying, 'Look, I'm just like you; the only difference is that I have Jesus as well.' This attempt to avoid the cost and pain of living in two worlds is equally (even more fatally) flawed. The Lord Jesus Christ is not the icing on the cake of life, he is the cake: 'Christ is our life!' The stark biblical truth is that 'If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' The child of God has experienced a double crucifixion: 'the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.' The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has made it impossible for a Christian to blend seamlessly into this world. To do so would be to trample on the cross of our Saviour.

The fact is, that the Christian life is a life of irresolvable tension. We are, by God's grace, aliens and strangers. We march to the beat of a heavenly drum in a world shaped by an earth-bounded horizon. We live to the glory of God in a world which lives for itself. More acutely, we live to be holy as God is holy in bodies of death, yet marked by indwelling sin. The tension is within as well as without. We cannot, this side of glory, escape the tension - without becoming a disloyal traitor to our God and Saviour.

Perhaps this all sounds just darkly depressing, a counsel of despair: grit your teeth and get on with it! Never. This is the way the Master walked (though he did not have the tension of indwelling sin). It is our great privilege to follow in his steps. No servant is greater than his Master! But we must not and cannot stop there. The tension is real, at times overwhelmingly real, but we share this tension with all the saints. The fellowship of the church is a great comfort and support. Even more wonderfully, the Lord has promised never to leave you nor forsake you. There is always grace to help in time of need, promised grace, oath-bound, blood-sealed grace. And so, 'we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.'

God does not hide from us the reality of kingdom life in a fallen world. But nor does he hide from us the privilege of following in the Master's steps and the grace he promises to support and strengthen us in the tension - thanks be to God. The reality for the Christian is that even as we are always being led in Christ's triumphal procession (2 Cor. 2:14), we are at the same time always carrying around in our bodies the death of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:10). This is as good as it gets this side of heaven's glory. It is the 'normal Christian life', the life pattern that indelibly marked THE man of faith, our Lord Jesus Christ. So, go on. Prove day by day that there is always 'grace to help in time of need.'

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	Today: 04/10/2009	Next Week: 11/10/2009	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We like to welcome Justin Ong, Cheng Jia Yun and Margaret's grand-children (Marcus & Martine) to our worship services last Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	Joey Seow	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld George Chew	
<i>Message:</i>	Travelogue to Laodicea	The First Church	
<i>Text:</i>	Revelations 3:14-22	Acts 2:36-47	
<i>Organist:</i>	Anthony	Joy	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	Joey Seow	NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld George Chew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling of Resident Minister: Thank God for His provision of Pastor Ki as our resident minister. Pray for Pastor and Mrs Ki as they prepare to return to London in December. • DHW Bible Study: Today, we will cover Lesson 20 (Gen 27). Please spend the upcoming week preparing for Lesson 21 (Gen 28). • Pray for those who are sick: - Yetta's mum (recovery from cancer/stroke), Constance (ankle), Douglas (knee pain), Barbara (Alzheimer's), Prema (thyroid and skin condition), Eld Jack Ford (old age and knees), Margaret (Asthma, Hay fever), Brian (wisdom tooth extraction in Oct), Mrs Ki's father (lung cancer), John (ankle, wisdom tooth extraction - appointment) • Pray for those who are on travel: Sophia (Norway), Lee-Wei (S'pore), Nicolas (Belgium), Hubert (Europe), Rev & Mrs Ki (Australia), Daniel & Maureen (M'asia), Sharon (Peterborough) • Pray for the new and returning students as they begin their studies. • Pray for the Church repair works needed: Roof, electrics, taps and notice boards.
<i>Message:</i>	Review of the Letters	God's Plan	
<i>Text:</i>	Revelations 4:1-2	Jeremiah 29	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Grace	Sophia	
Other Duties			
	Today: 04/10/2009	Next Week: 11/10/2009	
<i>Ushers:</i>	John / Yetta	Jonathan / Constance	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Grace	Sharon	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>PA Crew:</i>	Joshua	John	
<i>DHW Class:</i>	Lesson 20 (Gen 27)	Lesson 21 (Gen 28)	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 09 Oct	7:30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: No YAF	
Sat 10 Oct	4:00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by John	
Worship Service Collections			
Offering:	£402.55	Lunch: £39.50	
<h2 style="margin: 0;"><u>Appreciation Too Late</u></h2> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Adapted from "In Green Pastures" by J.R. Miller, D.D.</i></p> <p style="margin: 0;">We ought not to need night to teach us the glories of the day. We ought not to have to wait for sorrow before we can appreciate the sweetness of joy. Yet is it not often true that we learn the value of our blessings but by their loss? Many a time an empty chair is the first full revealer of the worth and faithfulness of a precious human friendship. Would it not be well if we were to seek to appreciate our good things while we have them? We would then have the joy itself, and not merely the dull pain of regret as we look back at blessings vanished. Besides, we would do more for our friends while they are with us if we appreciated their worth. Too many of us never understand what we owe to our dear ones until there remains no further opportunity of paying love's debt.</p>			