

Chapter 3

“What is Now”

A. Church at Sardis (3:1-6) “the dying church”

a. Facts

- i. Capital of Lydia
 1. 30 miles south of Thyatira
- ii. 600 years prior – greatest city in the world
 1. Lots of gold
- iii. Years of wealth had made it soft and flabby (gold had dried up)
 1. They gloried in its past (**Ex.** – Egypt today)
- iv. Coins first minted here
- v. Chief industry – carpet
- vi. Impregnable – or so they felt
 1. False security
- vii. Small remnant remains today, but mostly in ruins

b. Christ

- i. Him who holds the seven spirits of God
- ii. Him who holds the seven stars
 1. He holds pastors responsible and protects them

c. Commendation

- i. None
- ii. They needed the quickening power of the Holy Spirit
 1. Hence the seven spirits
 2. A church going through the motions

d. Complaint

- i. It was dying; lifeless
- ii. No zeal
 1. Having a form of godliness (**II Timothy 3:5**)
 2. Outwardly they may have been working
- iii. Formalism; ritualism; traditionalism
- iv. Deeds were not complete in His sight
 1. Outwardly impressive but with wrong motives

e. Counsel

- i. Wake up (keep awake)
 1. **II Timothy 1:6,7** – stir up the gift
 2. Discouraged and about to give up

- ii. Strengthen what was already in place
 - 1. Put new life into it
 - 2. Pray, pray, pray
- iii. Remember
 - 1. **II Peter 1:12-14**
 - 2. *Why?* Because we are forgetful; distractions
- iv. Obey
 - 1. **James 1:22** – “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”
- v. Repent
 - 1. A changing of heart/direction

f. Warning

- i. He will come like a thief
- ii. What little they had will be taken away
- iii. Will be left bare; worthless/useless for the Kingdom

g. Promise – overcomers were those not afraid to confess Christ

- i. Clothed in white
 - 1. Righteousness; put on the Lord Jesus Christ
 - 2. Garments given to believers in Heaven
- ii. Name not blotted out the book of life
 - 1. Name there at birth???
- iii. Will be acknowledged by Christy before God
 - 1. **Matthew 10:32,33**

Challenge
 “*Wake Up!!*”

B. Church at Philadelphia (3:7-13) “the faithful church”

a. Facts

- i. Philadelphia – “one who loves his brother”
- ii. Center of Greek culture
- iii. 28 miles southeast of Sardis
 - 1. Very small town/village
- iv. Gateway to the East
- v. Heavy Jewish population
- vi. Destroyed by earthquake in AD17 then rebuilt by Tiberius Caesar
 - 1. Youngest of the seven churches
- vii. Lived in fear from constant tremors
- viii. Known for its excellent wine

b. Christ

- i. Him who is holy and true

1. Holy – **Isaiah 6:3** – “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.”
 - a. Calling to one another by seraphs (six wings – two covering faces; two covering their feet; two flying)
 - b. “*At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook...*”
 - c. Title originally (OT) given to God. Now to Jesus
2. True – two words
 - a. “**alethes**” – a true statement as opposed to a false one
 - b. “**alethinos**” – that which is real as opposed to unreal
 - i. In Jesus, there is reality
 - ii. Not a shadowy outline, but truth itself
 - ii. Him who holds the key of David
 1. Key – symbol of authority
 2. Jesus is the final authority

Picture – Hezekiah (**Isaiah 22:22**)

* King had a faithful steward named Eliakim who was...

Over all his house

Only he could admit people into the house

* Jesus is the final authority to admit people into His kingdom (new kingdom of Jerusalem)

c. Commendation

- i. This church was holding to the truth of Christ in its witness
- ii. Open door of evangelism (placed before them by Christ)
 1. **John 20:21** – “*...as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*”
 2. Christ had opened the door
 - a. Strategically located – main road from Rome to Asia
 - b. On border of 3 major cities and to the regions beyond
 3. They were reaching out
- iii. Little strength
 1. Small; lower class people; not many resources

Point – God can use us all

* The weak

* **I Corinthians 1:26-31** (READ)

* **II Corinthians 12:7-10**

* God uses us in our uniqueness

* You have purpose/worth (**Psalm 139**)

iv. Faithful to God’s Word

1. “*...you have kept my Word and have not denied my name.*”
2. **John 15:10,14** – “*If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in His love. You are my friends if you do what I command.*”
3. They lived and studied it

- a. It had become their lifestyle

Thot

* Christ kept the door open because He knew they would be faithful

- v. Confessed Christ openly
 - 1. Boldness comes from prayer (**Acts 2** – a shaken place)
 - 2. Confidence comes from knowing the Word
 - 3. In the face of much opposition
- vi. Fall at your feet
 - 1. The synagogue of Satan (unbelieving Jews)
 - 2. All will eventually bow (**Philippians 2:10,11**)
 - 3. **Zechariah 8:22,23** – *“This is what the Lord Almighty says: In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.”*
- vii. Kept from the hour of trial
 - 1. God would keep the door open

d. Complaint

- i. None

e. Counsel

- i. Hold on to what you have
 - 1. There is always danger of backsliding
 - 2. **Hebrews 2:1** – *“We must pay careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.”*
 - a. Why? We’re all sinners
 - 3. He is coming quickly!!!

f. Promise

- i. Pillar in the temple of God
 - 1. **I Corinthians 3:16** – *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you.”*
 - 2. Permanent part of God’s house
- ii. Security
 - 1. **I John 2:25** – *“And this is what He promised us – even eternal life.”*
 - a. Free from the sinful world
- iii. Will receive God’s name
 - 1. **Isaiah 56:5** – *“...to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off.”*
 - a. Symbol of possession and belonging
 - b. *Ex.* – Like changing your name at marriage
- iv. Will receive name of city of God – Jerusalem
 - 1. **Philippians 3:20** – *“But our citizenship is in Heaven.”*

2. The new Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven
- v. Will receive the Lord's new name
 1. Don't know what that will be!!

Challenge

“Remain faithful and true”

C. Church at Laodicea (3:14-22) “*the lukewarm church*”

a. Facts

- i. 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia
- ii. Extremely wealthy and prosperous (wealthiest in the world)
 1. A financial and banking center
 2. People very self-centered
 3. Place for wealthy people to retire
- iii. Famous for its hot springs
- iv. Clothing manufacturing center (black, glossy wool – mass produced)
 1. Garments famous all over the known world
 2. Wool of Laodicea was a luxury item
- v. Temples, theatres
- vi. Medical school
 1. Eye salve – cellyrium produced here

b. Christ

i. The Amen

1. **Isaiah 65:16** – God of Truth (Amen)
2. God is the God of Amen
3. Put at the end of a statement to guarantee its truth
4. Jesus Christ is the one whose promises can be relied upon

ii. Faithful and True Witness

1. Faithful witness must meet 3 criteria
 - a. He must have seen with his own eyes
 - b. He must be absolutely honest so that he repeats with accuracy
 - c. He must have the ability to tell what He has to say

iii. Ruler of God's creation

1. Creation takes its origin from Him
2. All things find their beginning in Him (**John 1:1-3,14**)

c. Commendation

- i. None! Laodicea has the grim distinction of being the only church in which Christ had nothing good to say about.

d. Complaint

- i. Cold “*psuchros*” – cold to freezing point
- ii. Hot “*zestos*” – hot to boiling point

iii. Lukewarm “chliars”– tepid

Question: *What does he mean here?*

- * This church had become indifferent
- * Complacency – satisfied with the norm
- * Neutral – don’t wish to offend anyone
- * Half-committed – no time; too busy
- * Somewhat alive
- * Wretched – spiritually inferior

iv. Riches had taken prominence

1. Acquired wealth and didn’t need a thing
2. Ex. – curse of things

v. Poor spiritually

1. What they needed took a back seat to what they wanted

vi. Blind, naked, unclothed

1. Blinded by their wealth
2. **II Corinthians 4:4** – *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”*
3. Naked – they were not clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ

vii. Pitiful – doing it all on their own strength

1. Ex. – Impressive buildings & budgets

e. **Counsel** - their strong points had become their weakness

i. **Buy gold refined in the fire**

1. Their wealth was not the true wealth
2. They needed spiritual gold – from Christ
3. **I Peter 1:7** – *“These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*

Point

- * They were physically wealthy, but spiritually poor
- * Wealth cannot buy happiness, satisfy, give health of body/mind, give comfort in sorrow

ii. **Buy white clothing**

1. They lacked the real clothes
2. To be naked in the ancient world meant the ultimate humiliation
 - a. **II Samuel 10:4; Isaiah 20:4; Nahum 3:5**
3. To be clothed in the finest of clothing was the greatest honor
 - a. Prodigal son returns; Daniel clothed purple by Belshazzar

Point

- * They prided themselves in their magnificent garments but were spiritually naked

Colossians 3:10 – “...and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

iii. Salve to put on your eyes

1. A healing of the eyes

Point

* They were famous for the healing of eyes, but were blind spiritually

f. Warning

- i. Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline
 1. **Hebrews 12:10** – “...but God disciplines us for our good, so that we may share in His holiness.”
 2. Be earnest and repent
 - a. Repent of complacency – open your heart

Question: *What is the picture here of Christ knocking?*

* Christ knocking; us responding; fellowship restored

* Hark, my beloved is knocking

g. Promise

- i. Sit on God’s throne
 1. Rule and reign with Him as kings
 2. **Revelation 21:24-27**

Challenge

“Get rid of your lukewarm-ness and lack of commitment”