

## **I Don't Need a Thing!**

### **The Laodicean Problem**

#### **Traditional Idea**

In this thinking the thermometer shows cold – lukewarm – hot. Usually the “cold” are considered to be non-Christians or Christians within the church that have very little interest in spiritual things but still might go to church. They don't really participate in any activities. Everybody can tell that they are cold. “Hot” are the good and active Christians, working very hard for the Lord, attending all meetings, etc. When something needs to be done, the leadership in the church can truly rely on these “hot” individuals.

The “lukewarm” are in-between, sort of active, but they often have a bad conscience because they think they don't do enough. They want to be active, but don't have the power, the time or the abilities, they believe. Therefore they consider themselves not as good or active as the “hot” church members.

A traditional sermon on this subject would be: Be more active, work harder, attend more meetings, etc. – otherwise God will spit you out. Naturally, this is very depressing for the lukewarm. They don't easily find a way out of their lukewarmness. They don't like sermons on this issue. The majority of the SDA church members believe they belong to this group. This traditional interpretation focuses on sanctification.

#### **Hot and Cold**

Let's see what the Bible says. “Hot” is not defined in this passage so we assume it stands for something good. “Cold” is not defined either and most of us would agree that it represents something bad. But here is the dilemma that many seem to ignore! God actually wishes the lukewarm to be either hot *or* cold, Revelation 3:15:

*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!*  
(NIV)

This does certainly not fit the traditional view! If someone is “half-good,” of course God would want him or her to improve. Isn't that what you would tell your children as a parent or your students as a teacher, if you knew they could do better? But God says: “*I wish you were either one or the other.*”

That means, God thinks it is better that we are cold rather than lukewarm. How strange! There doesn't seem to be any advantage to be lukewarm at all. God seems to have more hope in a cold person than in a lukewarm one. Why would God say something like that? Maybe this passage isn't about sanctification after all...

#### **The Lukewarm's Own Definition**

But when we come to the “lukewarm” we actually have two definitions in the Bible. According to Revelation 3:17 the lukewarm claim three things for themselves. First, they are “*rich*,” which probably refers to all kinds of riches. Secondly, they “*have acquired wealth*.” Thirdly, they have an arrogant attitude saying they “*do not need a thing*.” If you think of hot as 100% and cold as 0% this is certainly not something in-between. It is not a description of something lukewarm or half good either. Revelation 3:17a:

*You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'* (NIV)

On the contrary, the lukewarm's statement is very strong, persuasive and boastful, especially if you contemplate the last expression; “*do not need a thing*.” Not one thing? This must be something extraordinary good, perfect

or 100%. But remember – this is the lukewarm's definition of himself. God uses this to come to *His* point. Unfortunately, God's definition is *very* different.

### **God's Definition of the Lukewarm**

The next sentence starts, “*But you do not realize,*” which shows that God has another view of the lukewarm. God continues to say in Revelation 3:17b; “*that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*” This is absolutely contrary to the lukewarm's definition of himself! If we use the previously mentioned thermometer, where 100% is hot and 0% is cold, this seems very close to 0%. This is certainly nothing half-good around 50%! Revelation 3:17b:

*But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. (NIV)*

Obviously the lukewarm's definition of himself is not true and, of course, God's definition is the one we should trust. But what is the point here? Why are the definitions so different? It is clear that the lukewarm don't understand the issue. He is blind and totally unaware of his true condition.

### **God's Counsel**

In the next verse we can read God's advice, “*I counsel you...*” If God counsels the Laodiceans to acquire these attributes, it is obvious that the lukewarm do NOT have these. God also tells the Laodiceans where they should go to get the lacking features. He says, “*Buy from me.*” Thus, the lukewarm do not have the remedy in themselves. Only God has the solution!

When God wishes to give them *His white clothes* it is obvious that the lukewarm do not have them. If they don't have God's white clothes, what are they wearing?

Do you know that the Laodiceans in the ancient world were famous for a fabric of very high quality? It was glossy and *black*! If it was black and God offers them to buy his *white* clothes, the black clothes can't be God's. The black clothes don't represent anything good either, because God counsels them to buy His “*white clothes,*” which must refer to His righteousness. If God's white clothes is His righteousness, then the Laodiceans black clothes must refer to their own righteousness! Revelation 3:18:

*I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (NIV)*

Thus, the problem is that the lukewarm are self-righteous! That is why it is so hard for God to reach them. That is also the reason why the definitions are so different. A self-righteous person considers himself good. He is important, he has everything, he has understood everything, and believes he lacks nothing. But he doesn't realize that something incredibly important is missing!

Thus, the Laodicean Church represents salvation by works. Now we understand why God wishes the so-called “lukewarm” to be either hot or cold. It is easier for God to reach a cold person than a person who believes he is good enough in himself. Only a self-righteous man will be boastful. A person who knows he needs Christ's salvation – is humble. Thus, the issue in the message to Laodicea concerns JUSTIFICATION – not sanctification.

### **Other Implementations**

In our denomination we have often heard that WE represent the Laodicean church. Strangely, it sometimes appears that we are even proud of being Laodiceans. If that is true, in what area do we know best and need nothing? In what areas do we consider ourselves rich and wealthy? How about the Sabbath, the correct

understanding of prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, end-time events, the Sanctuary message, the health message, etc.?

This is not the place to discuss these individual issues – however these riches do not suffice. We need a living relationship with God! We need His righteousness! Without *His white clothes* we are not even saved! I will say it again, NOT EVEN SAVED!! The correct doctrines cannot save us!

### **Eye-Salve**

But there are more attributes the Laodiceans lack. They don't have the eye-salve that many believe refers to the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit no one can see how wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked he is. Without that insight no change will take place and the Laodiceans continue their own walk as if nothing is wrong. How sad!

### **Refined Gold**

The third thing lacking in the Laodiceans' lives is "*gold refined in the fire.*" The Bible does not clearly tell us what that means. In 1 Peter 1:7 we read that faith is "*of greater worth*" than gold refined in the fire, which implies that faith is far more important than gold. Therefore, the "*gold*" cannot equal faith.

Personally I believe that gold refers to the "truth." Truth can be refined in the fire, Psalm 18:30. The truth can be tested over and over again and every time it will shine brighter and brighter. In summary: It is extremely sad and very serious that the Laodiceans don't have Christ's righteousness, don't let His Holy Spirit guide them and are not willing to let the truth be tested!

### **The Remedy**

Jesus is the answer in Revelation 3:20, "*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.*" He wants to come into our hearts. He wants to eat with us, which in those days meant to make a covenant. If this happens, He promises; "*To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne,*" Revelation 3:21.

Of course, Jesus' remedy will save us! "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" God wants us to listen to Him and realize what His Holy Spirit is trying to tell us. The message to the Lukewarm in Laodicea is very sincere and I pray that many will seek His remedy before it is too late.

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