

CHRIST AT THE DOOR

Revelation 3:20

Intro: Our Golden Text for tonight contains words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. They were given to the Apostle John many years after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. They were to be given to a church in the Roman Province of Asia. The church was in the city of Laodicea. But, as we can see, they were also to be included in the New Testament. This would mean that they were intended for churches in every generation because, knowing what we know about the church in Laodicea, there have been many, many churches throughout church history which spiritually are Laodicean. Cf. v. 22. So it is a letter of continuing importance. I hope that it is not descriptive of Trinity Bible Church, but, if it is, we have help here for a very serious condition.

Let us look at the Laodicean church for a moment, just taking what is given to us in this letter (Rev. 3:14-22).

It was a busy church because the Lord spoke of her "works" (v. 15). However, the people of the church were lukewarm in the service they were rendering to the Lord. There was not a lot of zeal, not a lot of love for the Lord, but neither had the place become so "cold" that it was about to close her doors. In fact, it was a rather prosperous church from a material standpoint. They were "rich." Their bills were all paid. Wherever they were meeting, it was very satisfactory. They really did not need anything, and they apparently were quick to say so. It seems that they may have been quite proud of themselves.

But what they did not know was that while things seemed to be great on the outside, they were really ignorant of the deplorable condition of their hearts. Spiritually they were in great need. The Lord called them "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They must have known that things were not right, but, according to the Lord's words to them, they did not know how very bad things were from a spiritual standpoint. The Lord's words describe what today we would call a street person, a homeless person, who had no place to go for shelter, who was hungry, and who did not have sufficient clothing to keep himself warm. Verse 17 takes us from material riches to spiritual rags. It tells us that things can look outwardly like they are as they should be, but when the Lord looks at our hearts, He sees a picture that is completely different.

All of this made the Lord sick at His stomach, so sick, in fact, that He felt like vomiting them out of His mouth. It

is an expression of the Lord's disgust that His people would get themselves into such a condition, and yet try to give the impression that things were going great! It is a picture of hypocrisy. And it seems that the more we deteriorate spiritually, the more we try to make things appear to be better than ever.

Verse 18 indicates that one thing they lacked was tribulation. "Gold tried in the fire" is a term which the Apostle Peter used to speak of the believer's trial of faith. It was a severe testing of faith, and the Lord speaking to the church at Laodicea said that one thing that they did need to buy, although they couldn't do it with money, was "gold tried in the fire." They were evidently a people who did not like to wait on the Lord. They preferred, in words which we here today even among the Lord's people, to make something happen if it were not happening. This is the way we conduct evangelistic campaigns. This is the way we build great church, and attract hundreds of people. If it doesn't happen through prayer and preaching, then we resort to all kinds of methods to "make it happen." (I am always reluctant to use the world's expressions because I don't ever know what it means to people in the world. But I think you know what I am talking about.) We are to be a people who live by trusting God. The Lord puts us in situations where that is really all that we can do, and it grieves Him when we try to work ourselves out of situations which He means to be a testing of our faith. Only those whose faith is tested can really experience the faithfulness of God.

The Laodicean church's motto was "Do it now," instead of, "Let us trust God."

But even with the situation the way it was in Laodicea, the Lord was sending this letter to them because He loved them, and because He wanted them to repent of their sin because "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23b). We learn from this letter that one of the greatest sins of the Church is an unwillingness to trust God. Trusting God usually seems to be foolish, a waste of time, an excuse for not doing something. But there are times when the Lord makes it clear that is all that we can do because it is all that He wants us to do. So we go to our knees to seek the blessing of the Lord.

This brings us down to our text.

Before we look into verse 20, you probably know that this is a verse which is usually used as a Gospel verse. If we were to lift it out of its context, it sounds like a Gospel verse, that is, a verse which we would use in seeking to win others

to Christ. But when you leave the verse in the letter where it belongs you can see that it is not a Gospel verse at all; it is a verse containing a message for believers. It was written to a church. To be sure, there may have been people in the Laodicean church who were not true believers, but the Lord does not seem to be dealing with that possibility. He wouldn't counsel unbelievers to "buy...gold tried in the fire."

So we are dealing with a verse which some of us may need tonight.

Let me make another point. The fact that the Lord is standing at the door knocking, does not mean that we are dealing with a weak, helpless, frustrated Christ. Look at verse 14 where He pictures Himself as the Creator, and then look at verse 21 where you have a sovereign, overcoming Son of God. So we must not mistake the thought of this verse in any way. When the Lord starts to knock, we can all be sure that He is going to get in.

Now let us consider together:

- 1) The call for attention.
- 2) The One at the door.
- 3) The door.
- 4) The knocking.
- 5) The one inside.
- 6) The opening of the door.
- 7) The supper.

I. THE CALL FOR ATTENTION: "Behold."

This is the word of a prophet. The OT prophets used it again and again. It was a word which John the Baptist, the last of the OT prophets, used. It was a word calling attention to something very important that the prophet was about to say. And so this is an expression which ought to require that this whole verse should be printed in caps. Always pay special attention to a verse which contains this word. It means, "Look," or, "See." And remember that the Lord before this had called them blind. He wanted them to see something which they may have known before, but which they needed to see again--and to see at that very moment!

II. THE ONE AT THE DOOR; "I stand at the door."

As we have already seen, the Lord is the One Who was speaking. The Lord was standing at the door. He was not seated on a stool. Nor was He just walking by, and decided to knock. He was standing there. The implication is that He had something very important on His mind. If someone were to

call out, as we sometimes do, and say, "Who is there?", He would have responded, "Behold, I stand at the door." The Lord could have sent John, but this verse tells us that He personally had come to Laodicea, so great was His concern for the church.

III. "THE DOOR."

What is "the door"? Well, we could say that it was the door of the church--and that certainly is one answer to our question. Amazing isn't it, that with all that seems to have been going on in the church at Laodicea, they had excluded the Lord from their fellowship. The door is the place where you come in, and it apparently had not been opened to the Lord.

But let me point out something else.

The Lord probably knew that not everyone would be interested in letting Him in, and so He addressed Himself to anyone (the Greek says) who would open the door to him. And the last part of the verse is also in the singular: "I will come in to **him**, and will sup with **him**, and **he** with me."

The Lord could have been indicating two things here:

- 1) It often just takes one person to turn things around in a church.
- 2) If the church is not receptive to the Lord, then He will come in to even one who is receptive.

The door is not just the door to the church, a wooden door or whatever it may be; it was the door of the heart. That is where the Lord deals with us, and the first step to restoration of fellowship is to open the doors of our hearts to Him.

IV. THE KNOCKING.

The Lord was not just standing outside, but while He was standing He was knocking. How does He knock?

He knocks by the His providential dealings in our lives. He knock when He speaks to our consciences. He is knocking when suddenly we find ourselves in a trial of some kind. Perhaps it is an illness, or the loss of someone very dear to us. He is knocking when we labor much with little or no fruit. He is knocking when prayer is not answered.

The Lord has many ways of knocking. But, as I indicated before, don't think of a pitiful Savior Who is dependent upon us. It is true that we have to open the door, but He will

keep knocking in one way or another until we know that we have to open the door.

V. THE ONE INSIDE.

In this particular case, it was the Laodicean church and everyone who was a part of that church. It could be any work that is a true church, and it could be any child of God where fellowship with the Lord has actually become a thing of the past.

How encouraging it ought to be to all of us to know that the Lord doesn't wait for us to go to Him; He comes to us, and then He starts knocking. He knows our address, and He knows that we are inside, and He is going to keep knocking until the door is opened to Him. He does not even want a door to be between Him and us. When we are inside, He wants to be inside, too.

VI. THE OPENING OF THE DOOR.

This is always the hard thing to do. Opening the door means to get back to your Bible reading. It means setting aside time for prayer. It may mean in some cases even getting back to church and to fellowship with the Lord's people. Opening the door means cutting out things that have hindered our fellowship with the Lord. It may have to do with the way we spend our leisure. Each one of us has to determine what opening the door means in our case. But the important thing is that we get the door open.

This evidently was where the Laodicean church had lost out. It probably means that their fellowship was not centered in the Lord. They may have even been misusing their time at the Lord's Table. Maybe that had just become something that they did regularly, but they did not do it to remember the Lord and what He had done for them at the Cross.

However, you and I may have closed the door on the Lord, get it open again.

What happens when the door is opened, the door to our church fellowship, and the door to our hearts?

VII. THE SUPPER.

You open the door, and you find the Lord standing there. But He does not stand long. When we open the door, this is what He said He would do: "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

You see, this was the remedy for the problems of the Laodicean church. They needed to sit down and "sup" with the Lord. The Lord used the word here which had to do with the evening meal which was the principal meal of the day! He meant to indicate that the most important meal any of us has on any day is the meal that we have with Him, feeding upon His Word, seeing our Lord in the Word, meditating on the Scriptures, and then communing with Him in prayer. You see, when we were saved, we were, as the Apostle Paul said in writing to the Corinthian church, "called unto the fellowship of his [God's] Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9b). The Corinthian church had forgotten that. The Laodicean church had forgotten that. And it may be that we have forgotten that, too.

The Lord loves us, and He wants to be with us. And there is nothing that delights Him more than for us to love Him, and want to be with Him.

Concl: As I close, let me call your attention to the last two verses in this letter, which are also the last two verses in the chapter.

Notice what is going to happen to those who overcome. (Read verses 21, and 22.)

What are we going to be doing when we get to heaven? I am sure that we are going to be doing many wonderful things which we cannot fully appreciate, or maybe even understand, now. But there is one thing that I know that the Lord is looking forward to, and that is having us seated with Him on His throne. As He said in John 14:3 He has gone to prepare a place for us so that we can be where He is. He doesn't even want a door to be between us.

Illus: Dr. Tidwell of Baylor University preparing on Saturday for a sermon he was to preach on Sunday when a knock came at the door of his study.

Make sure that your door is open, and that it is kept open. This is what our churches need today, and this is what each one of us needs. If our fellowship with the Lord is missing, or not what it should be, this only breeds other problems. May the Lord find us ready to "sup" with Him every day and throughout our days.