

Christ's Last Word to His Church SERIES: Challenge # 5: Getting Clothed for Christ's Sake Daily Revelation 3:18

There's only one portion of God's Word, specifically written to the Church, by Jesus Christ: Rev. 2&3. Join me there as we continue systematically examining Christ's challenges to this, the seventh and final of the churches.

If you had traveled to visited friends or family in Laodicea, three things would have stood out to you in the First Century. These three unique features to this city, are the framework of Christ's words we are examining today in Revelation 3:18. These could be called:

Laodicea's Three Key Industries

First, **you would have noticed gold in Laodicea.** As you walked around the city it would have had the feel of a wealthy, financial district type of city like London, New York City, or Shanghai, where wealth was evident, banking was concentrated, and gold was readily seen, worn, used, and available.

Secondly, **you would have noticed Laodicean people were wearing, and shops were selling, exquisite clothing made from a rich black wool** fabric that was darker than any black wool you'd ever seen. This wool looked and felt so silky smooth, you would have asked the person where they got such soft, luxurious wool. Of course they would have said from right here, because that was the world famous wool that was sheared and processed right from Laodicea's own special flocks of sheep.

Finally, **you would have noticed the sprawling Laodicean campus of the famous medical school and hospital, that specialized in eye care.** The locally compounded eye-salve that was so effective that people of means, from across the ancient world, would travel here to get their ophthalmic eye-salve and treatments.

Laodicea: a wealthy, gold-brokering and banking center; and a world-class woolen garment center; and a world-renowned medical center specializing in ophthalmic eye-care. Those would be what you would have noticed if you visited, and what you would have known if you would have been native to the city. Knowing that makes us realize:

Christ's Pointed References to Their City's Claim to Fame

Look down at Christ's words in Rev. 3:18, He notes those exact three key industries.

Jesus Christ told the church at Laodicea that they needed to make three specific purchases from Him. As we read this passage and focus especially on the three items that Jesus specifically pointed out as vital to their spiritual lives.

Please stand with me for prayer then we'll read these words in Revelation 3:14-18

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

As you are seated, this verse should cause each of us to ask ourselves : "Is Jesus asking the same of me today? And if He is still asking this, are we listening to Him with our hearts?

Focus with me upon each of the four phrases of v. 18:

First, "I **counsel** you to **buy from Me**".

The word "counsel" is a very serious word that speaks of quite deliberate, thought-out, pre-meditated action. Almost every other time this word is used its translated "plotted". Jesus is asking this church:

Get Completely Focused On Doing What I Ask

When a person plots about doing something, it begins to dominate their thoughts and actions. That is how serious Christ calls us to get this morning.

This word is used four other times in the New Testament and always describing the deep seated desire at all costs to find a way to do something. Look with me at the other uses to get the feel of how seriously Jesus is speaking to this church.

1. Matthew 26:3-4 (NKJV) Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4 and **plotted** to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him.

2. John 11:49-53 (NKJV) And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. 53 Then, from that day on, they **plotted** to put Him to death.
3. John 18:14 (NKJV) Now it was Caiaphas who **advised** the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.
4. Acts 9:22-23 (NKJV) But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. 23 Now after many days were past, the Jews **plotted** to kill him.

So Jesus gives the level of focus we need to obey Him in this matter. It needs to be what we plot about. This is something that becomes our plan so meditated upon that we are very serious, and take a planned course of action. But what is the action? He wants us to "buy" something from Him. The word is agouradzo and means something purchased from the "marketplace"

Now look closely at the next three phrases in v.18, and let me put them in context for you. Using what we know about the first phrase, Jesus is saying I am constantly asking you to very seriously plan how to get these three items from Me.

Jesus offers us gold, white garments, and eye salve. Remember, those were all items familiar to Laodiceans, they were the key industries of their town.

Decide to Come to Me To Obtain These Items

- "*Gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich*"; we studied this last time as **Habit # 4: Repent of Spiritual Wastefulness**. Remember the points?

Jesus wants each of us to repent of using our short lives to only gain what can be lost, rather than choosing what can never be lost.

Jesus wanted them to have true wealth, and turn away from the intoxicating chase after materialism's stuff.

Jesus wants them to use the account He already set up for each of us His children to make deposits in the Bank of Heaven.

Jesus wanted them to be sure they were investing into their eternal IRA.

The third phrase is what we need to consider today. Here are the details:

- *"And white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed"*; This is **Habit # 5: Repent of Spiritual Neglect**.

We are asked by Christ pointedly to get dressed every day, all day long in a series of outfits He designed for us.

Each day we have a choice to obey or disobey. That spiritual concept is what we will be coming back to in just a bit.

The final phrase is for next time. Jesus says:

- *"And anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see"*. This is **Habit # 6: Repent of any Spiritual Blindness**. Jesus wants us to protect our eyes. Spiritual blindness is preventable and treatable, it does not have to persist.

So living in Laodicea, and being familiar with its gold, its black wool garments, and its eye-salve, this letter would have been so impactful. They understood the message. Jesus was rebuking them for getting distracted from why they had been saved. But the saints in Laodicea needed to:

Learn How to Apply God's Word

They had neglected the eternal for the temporal.

They had swapped the celestial for the mundane.

They were spending their lives on trinkets and trash instead of priceless treasures.

That is why Jesus pleads with them to listen and respond. Just as He is still doing with us.

Now, focus on that second phrase:

v. 18b and white garments, **that you may be clothed**, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed;

Jesus pointed out that they had started neglecting a vital part of their spiritual lives. They were not clothing themselves as they had been taught to do. Spiritual **Neglect** is when we become more concerned with what we look like to men rather than to God. We impress people outwardly rather than pleasing God inwardly.

What clothing does God's Word describes for us, and command us to wear? Turn back to Romans 13 where we see the two main types of clothing believers wear every day.

Paul explains the necessity of daily clothing ourselves with Christ in Romans 13:12-14 (NKJV):

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us **put on the armor of light**. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Note in this verse that getting clothed for Christ has two areas Paul tells us we need: the first is the armor of light, the second is putting on Christ. So with that command before us, we need to ask:

Are We Getting Dressed For Christ Each Day

From American history we read of the guests of newspaper baron, William Randolph Hearst, at his famous castle in on the coast of California. After the overwhelming ride up the switchback road to the summit, and the breath-taking view of the Pacific and the immensity of the castle, guests were taken to their rooms.

After they were fed and entertained they would return to their rooms to find that clothing, exactly their size had been provided; and they were expected to wear those clothes the next day as they met and dined with Hearst.

Few would ever dare to offend their host by not going along with his unusual habit of choosing the outfits his guests would wear while staying at his castle. On a far higher level, the King of the Universe has provided us with some of the most useful articles of clothing we could ever imagine, dare we offend Him?

What are the clothes that our Great God has for us?

The **armor of light** Paul talks about in Romans 13, is fully expanded in Ephesians 6. Turn there with me to see six clear articles we are actually commanded to wear.

Ephesians 6:10-17 (NKJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Paul describes:

THE ARMOR OF LIGHT WE WEAR

1. **THE BELT OF TRUTH (v.14a)** Vital to every soldier was this belt from which all tools of battle hung. This belt also held the soldier's robe together. To the Christian soldier a belt of truth means that we are surrounded by "honesty," "truthfulness," "integrity," and "sincerity" that every part of our life is governed by truth. Dishonesty brings defeat! If we are not belted, if our life is not held in by truth, any type of dishonesty will bring defeat to our lives.
2. **BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (v.14b)** The soldier's breastplate was a heavy piece of armor that completely surrounded the body. To the Christian soldier this means a pursuit of personal, daily righteousness. We learn confession and repentance of sin can only maintain this. Impurity will bring defeat, so say no to sin daily.
3. **THE SHOES OF PEACE (v.15).** The sandal soles of the soldier were impregnated with heavy, spike-like hobnails, which gave him a good footing, and also kept him safe from stepping on sharp objects. If you injure a soldier's feet he's out of commission. To the Christian soldier this piece of armor is a call to both "readiness" and "peace of mind." If our hearts are not kept in peace by Christ, then anxiety will bring us defeat!
4. **The SHIELD OF FAITH (v.16).** To a Roman soldier, his shield was a portable metal-banded wall, which he hid behind in battle. It was 5 feet high, 3 feet wide and served as the deflector from the flaming darts of the enemy. Our Shield of faith extinguishes all the flaming missiles of the evil one. But doubt will bring defeat!
5. **HELMET OF SALVATION (v.17a).** A soldier never was far from his helmet. Nearly any object on the battlefield could immobilize a soldier if his head was unprotected. So to the Christian soldier the meaning of the helmet is assurance of salvation. A Christian who is not assured that he has salvation is just totally immobilized because he's unsure about everything. He's unsure about God's promises, His Word, His protection. He's unsure about his destiny, his purpose in life. Lack of assurance brings defeat!
6. **WORD OF THE SPIRIT (v.17b).** Quick and deadly was the sword of a soldier. Vital to any victory was the hand-to-hand combat, which ended in the defeat of the enemy. To the Christian soldier this victorious sword comes only through a personal command of the Scriptures. This is essential to effectiveness in battle. Neglecting the Word breeds weakness and will bring defeat in our lives

The second half of Romans 13 says to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the clearest ways to do that was described by Paul in Galatians 5. Turn there with me to survey what it means to wear Christ around through life.

Wearing Christ Each Day

Galatians 5:19-25 (NKJV) Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

There are 15 manifestations of the flesh in verses 19-21. Of these 8 are dealing with interpersonal problems. It is not enough to say that we have always struggled in these areas. Christ offers us a new pathway, the way of the Spirit and not of the flesh.

The Personality Changes Christ Can Bring

When we are dominated by the Spirit of God, Christ is reflected in these 9 ways, from our lives.

1. LOVE is the absence of selfishness. It is the product of the Holy Spirit present in our lives. Can others trace my progress in expressing God's love? Am I less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month?
2. JOY is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances. Do those that know me and watch my life see me as a joyful person?
3. PEACE is the internal serenity that only God can give. Troubles are not absent. Rather, God is present! Has peace become more and more a way of life for you this year?
4. LONGSUFFERING is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. It is that bearing long with people that Paul spoke of in I Corinthians 13. Patience is also one of the Supreme attributes of God. Ask yourself, am I more patient than I was three months ago? Or less? If we are not increasing in patience it is only that we are not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit.
5. KINDNESS is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives. It is the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. It is a chosen reflection of Ephesians 2:8 and 4:32 in my life. Christ's kindness in me will soften any word or act that might hurt

another. Is my character showing an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others?

6. GOODNESS is being Godlike! It is the opposite of fallen humanity. Am I a visibly better person than last year? Do people see me doing good to all those around me?
7. FAITHFULNESS is a trustworthy and dependable life. The kind of person that keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. Am I making strides in reliability and dependability?
8. GENTLENESS is the opposite of asserting yourself. Those who are Servants of the Lord must not strive II Timothy 2:24. They resist selfish ambition [James 3:16] because it is a reflection of Satan not God. Remember Jesus described Himself as 'Meek and Lowly' [Mt 11:29]. What shape is my personal agenda in? Is it intact and my rights being defended? Or, is it in hopeless shape, crucified with Christ and fading?
9. SELF-CONTROL is defined by the Greek Dictionary as "a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones." The only force that can control or flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to Him we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him and no longer to self. Do others see me as graciously under the control of God's Spirit?

Back to where we started. In Rev. 3:18 the saints in Laodicea needed to:

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rather than to God.

We impress people outwardly rather than pleasing God inwardly.

Are we wearing our armor by choice each day?

Are we clothing ourselves with Christ by walking in the control of His Spirit.