

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

Message 21

Words: 6417

Scripture: Revelation

INTRO: This is our last message in the letters to the seven churches of Asia. We have seen only two Churches with no criticism; Smyrna and Philadelphia. We have seen two with no commendation; Sardis and Laodicea. We are in the Church of Laodicea and there is no commendation, and a lot of criticism.

Now in an earlier message when I was on the subject of the devil I wanted to deal with it a little further but I could not arrange the message in such a way as to make room for it and said I would mention it elsewhere. I will need to do it elsewhere. Let me just say this. In the 1900s there were many that I would say, allowed the devil to lead to them to extremes on this subject. Out of those extremes some, who later discovered they had been misled reacted, and found ways to discredit working with such situations entirely. A recent American poll shows that only about 65% of professing Christians even believe in a devil, never mind demons. And here is the caution: don't get caught in either extreme.

Our subject in the Laodicean church has been lukewarm Christianity. It is my conclusion that lukewarm speaks of unsaved people who say all the right things and go to church. This church is not rebuked for any sins other than that of being lukewarm, and I think being lukewarm could be classed as supreme hypocrisy. It is play-acting something that is not true.

We then began to look at the counsel. They thought they were rich, and the Lord counseled them to buy gold from Him which was tried in the fire. That is what happens to the true believer's faith. And when it comes out genuine, as gold does when it is put into fire that is hot enough, then one has bought the real thing from the Lord.

4. The counsel cont'd (3:18-20)

So, We have looked at the Lord's first counsel to the Laodiceans. The Laodiceans lived in world of their own imagination. They did not live in reality. They lived in full deception. They were

not off in some cult. They were not against Christ, at least in their view. They viewed themselves as spiritually rich. Now I have said that no church in this state will ever say in words that they are spiritually rich. These kinds of things are said in works. Laodicea was a rich city and that is why the Lord chose this church to picture the last of seven church ages. He could have chosen any other city. Colossi was just a few miles away, but it would not have given the right picture of the last church age.

The Lord's second counsel now is, "Buy from Me white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed." Let me remind us once more of Barclay's history of Laodicea. He says Laodicea, and I quote, *...was a great centre for the manufacture of clothing. The sheep which grazed round Laodicea were famous for their soft, violet-black, glossy wool. The city mass-produced cheap outer garments. It was especially connected with a tunic called the trimita - so much so, indeed, that it was sometimes called Trimitaria. Laodicea was so proud of the garments it produced that it never realized it was naked in the sight of God.*

Laodicea was known, according to Barclay, for the wool they produced. It was soft, violet-black and glossy. One article I read said of Laodicea, *It was the center of a huge clothing manufacturing industry. It was the New York garment district of the ancient world. Huge flocks of sheep that grazed outside the city were world renown for their soft, glossy wool. And using that wool, the clothing industry mass produced inexpensive outer garments known all over the empire. They were known as trimita, and the city, so famous for them, was often nicknamed Trimitaria. My guess is that many of the Christians in the Laodicean church were in business of raising those sheep, or shearing the wool, or making those garments, or selling them. And I can picture in my mind's eye the Laodicean Christians parading into their*

worship services, showing off the latest in trimiti, end quote.

So the Lord's counsel is, "Buy from Me white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed." Surely they should have understood this language. But we ask now, how do you buy white clothing from the Lord? Here is what the Lord said to the Church of Sardis:

"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. How do you buy white clothing from the Lord? We have seen that you can buy gold tried in the fire from the Lord. When you get this gold, you have something that is valued by God like gold is valued by man. I view this gold as genuine faith, as described in 1 Peter 1. God will go to any length and pay any price for people whose faith is genuine. And like gold, it is a rare commodity.

I recommended that you buy this gold tried in the fire by learning to fully trust God in life. And in order for that gold to be refined by fire, it must be tested by trials. You see, real gold is not damaged by fire. Fire purifies it. Testing does not damage real faith, it purifies it. I have spoken to two people who have recently faced deep trials, and in the conversation both said something like this, "As difficult as this is, I would not trade back."

Now we ask, how do you buy white clothes from the Lord? There is one way and it is very simple, but costly as well. Here it is: Live right! Those who live right will walk with the Lord in white someday. They will have white garments. They will also have fancy white stoles, Revelation 6. And they will have a beautiful white wedding dress for the wedding, Revelation 19.

We must go to Revelation 19, because we have a very important explanation there. We begin in verse 6:

6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Now the Lord Himself tells us what the fine linen, clean and bright is. It is the righteous acts of the saints. The KJV translates this as 'righteousness'. The better translation is 'righteous acts.' It is just simply living right! Live right! How do you buy white garments from the Lord? Live right!

The Laodiceans, being rich, probably paraded their beautiful black clothing. And the Lord said, *—and you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.* You think you have white clothing and it is black. In the sight of God, the shame of their nakedness was so very obvious, but they thought they were well dressed. In the Lord's eyes they were wearing the emperor's new clothes. While these Laodicean Christians paid a swindler a lot of gold for their clothes, they were parading around stark naked! That is a picture of myriads of professing Christians today.

Let me give you a graphic picture of the church of Laodicea from the little story of the Emperor's new clothes. In the 1800's Hans Christian Anderson, a Danish writer wrote a little story called, "The Emperor's New Clothes." It begins like this:

Many years ago there lived an emperor who loved beautiful new clothes so much that he spent all his money on being finely dressed. His only interest was in going to the theater or in riding about in his carriage where he could show off his new clothes. He had a different costume for every hour of the day. Indeed, where it was said of other kings that they were at court, it could only be said of him that he was in his dressing room!

One day two swindlers came to the emperor's city. They said that they were weavers, claiming that they knew how to make the finest cloth imaginable. Not only were the colors and the patterns extraordinarily beautiful, but in addition, this material had the amazing property that it was to be invisible to anyone who was incompetent or stupid.

"It would be wonderful to have clothes made from that cloth," thought the emperor. "Then I would know which of my men are unfit for their positions, and I'd also be able to tell clever people from stupid ones." So he immediately gave the two swindlers a great sum of money to weave their cloth for him.

You will have heard this story, or about it. As the swindlers were making these clothes for him, the Emperor sent his old minister whom he trusted to see how they were making out with his new clothes. Let me quote further:

So the good old minister went into the hall where the two swindlers sat working at their empty looms. "Goodness!" thought the old minister, opening his eyes wide. "I cannot see a thing!" But he did not say so.

The two swindlers invited him to step closer, asking him if it wasn't a beautiful design and if the colors weren't magnificent. They pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old minister opened his eyes wider and wider. He still could see nothing, for nothing was there. "Gracious" he thought. "Is

it possible that I am stupid? I have never thought so. Am I unfit for my position? No one must know this. No, it will never do for me to say that I was unable to see the material."

"You aren't saying anything!" said one of the weavers.

"Oh, it is magnificent! The very best!" said the old minister, peering through his glasses. "This pattern and these colors! Yes, I'll tell the emperor that I am very satisfied with it!"

Well, when the swindlers were done after working day and night, the emperor was finally dressed in his beautiful clothes. So the parade began, and nobody wanted to let others know that they were not fit for the king so nobody said anything, except a child. And the child said, "The emperor has no clothes on!"

Here is how the story ends:

Finally everyone was saying, "He doesn't have anything on!"

The emperor shuddered, for he knew that they were right, but he thought, "The procession must go on!" He carried himself even more proudly, and the chamberlains walked along behind carrying the train that wasn't there.

Now listen to our Lord's words about the church of Laodicea: *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—* You see, here is the church of our age, a church that thinks it is rich and wealthy and dressed in the most wonderful finery, and it is marching around naked in the eyes of the Lord.

And if this church were told what its true state is, pride would dictate that, "The procession must go on." And it would carry itself more

proudly, and others would hold up the wonderful, glorious train that isn't even there! And there we have the picture of the Laodicean church!

The third counsel the Lord gives to Laodicea is, *I counsel you to buy of me eye salve and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see, because you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.*"

Let me remind you once more of Barclay's history. He writes of Laodicea that, and I quote, *It was a very considerable medical centre. Thirteen miles to the west, between Laodicea and the Gate of Phrygia, stood the temple of the Carian god Men. At one time, that temple was the social, administrative and commercial centre of the whole area. Until the end of the nineteenth century, great markets were regularly held on its site. In particular, the temple was the centre of a medical school which was transferred to Laodicea itself.*

Its doctors were so famous that the names of some appear on the coins of Laodicea. Two of them were called Zeuxis and Alexander Philaethes. This medical school was famous throughout the world for two things - ointment for the ear and ointment for the eyes.

No church should have more readily understood the Lord's counsel in this matter than Laodicea. And once more we ask: How do you buy eye-salve from the Lord? Well, why the need for eye-salve? Well, it is a problem of sight, and without doubt it is because of spiritual blindness. They could not see. When you are blind you need somebody else to help you. You are helpless because you cannot see. If this church had bought eye-salve from the Lord they would have known that they were naked. But now they walked in pride.

Now there is a double problem here. First of all, they could not see that they could not see. They

thought they saw. I see a progressive
deceptiveness in the work of the devil in these
churches. And the deceptiveness of the devil in
this last church is extremely cruel. In Ephesus
they were led into leaving their first love. Here
they are led to think they have the first love.
In Smyrna, the Christians did not allow the devil
to get a hold of them in any way. In Pergamos he
used Balak to lead them into eating things
offered to idols and to commit fornication. But
here, there is no such open blatant sin. In
Thyatira Satan used that woman Jezebel to mislead
them. But here there is no such blatant sin. In
Sardis he had led them to defile their garments,
until there were only a few left. But here there
is no record of anything like that. In
Philadelphia, with all the devil did, he could
not induce them to sin. He was powerless because
of their righteousness.

But here in Laodicea, he just leaves them to
themselves. It is people rule. They do what seems
right to them. They do what comes easy. Satan
sees to it that they have riches. He sees to it
that they are impressed with their clothes of
religion. Though it is black, they don't see it.
He lets them think they see, when in fact they
are blind and walking around spiritually naked.
The deception is so complete as to render them
hopelessly lost. Unless they are brought to see
they are spiritually bankrupt, spiritually naked,
and spiritually blind; they are hopelessly lost.
Such is the case of Laodicea, the democratic
church; the people rule church.

And now we ask, how do you buy eye-salve from the
Lord? What is this spiritual eye-salve. This is
how you buy it: Repent! Nothing will open a
person's spiritual sight like repentance! Look
now at the very next verse, verse 19: "As many as
I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be
zealous and repent!"

Now there is a great marvel here. The Lord says
that He loves them. This is agapee love. He loves

this church that makes Him want to vomit! Turn to Mark 10 to a passage that is also amazing. There have always been some lukewarm people. We begin in verse 17:

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

19 "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" "

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"

Jesus looked at this man and loved him! And this agapee love called on Jesus to do the right thing, and He did it. He said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." How do you like it when you have to tell someone the very last thing they want to hear. One old preacher, Vance Havner, said, "I could have led many people to the Lord if they had not already been church members." How do you tell a

church member, "You are lost and need to be saved"? Well, you love them by doing the right thing.

And what indication is there that the Lord loves these Laodiceans? He rebuked them! He chastised them! You see, because they have entered this special class we referred to in an earlier message, they come under the sound of the Word of God and there the Lord rebukes and chastens them.

So let me now read verse 19 again:

19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

So the Lord now counsels them to be zealous and repent. So let me ask, what does zeal have to do with repentance? The word here means to burn with zeal, according to the Online Bible. And this is what it has to do with repentance, as I see it. Repentance is the hardest thing for a sinner to face, whether that sinner is a Christian or not. To truly repent and confess sin, acknowledge it to the one we have wronged is extremely difficult for us. We must burn with zeal to be right with God before we will even consider doing it.

Now you see, because these Laodiceans had entered this special class we talked about earlier, the Lord has access to them to rebuke and chasten them. This is done to bring about a burning with zeal to be right with God and fully repent and truly become right with Him.

Now look at verse 20:

20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me...

Notice that the Lord is speaking to a professing Christian. Not somebody who acknowledges they don't know the Lord. But notice second that He is

standing outside the door. He is not in and the person is not saved. I heard someone say once that this door has no latch on the outside. You have to open it from the inside. Notice also, that the Lord wants in. He loves them. Notice also that the person is keeping Him out. They could let Him in but leave Him standing outside.

Today we have all kinds of people who call themselves Christians, but Christ is standing outside. And the reason many of them won't let Christ in is because an older generation of so called Christians, fed on doctrines like unconditional love are helping them keep Christ out. But let me put a bit of caution to us. Let me quote from John McArthur to give this caution. He says:

I've been mentioning to you that I was at Southeastern Seminary in Raleigh, North Carolina, the most liberal of all Southern Baptist Seminaries up until about four years ago. They would have denied, of course, the inerrancy of Scripture. They're still a number of faculty there that do. They would have rejected and been considered as apostates.

On the faculty was a woman by the name of Lindeman(?). She had written a number of books. These books were critical books that denied the authorship of Scripture. They attacked the Scripture. She was a formidable writer of liberal persuasion and her books led many people astray. They were books that denied the Scriptures, all in the name of academic Christianity.

Then something amazing happened. Just a few years ago she got saved. She was delivered from scholastic night into biblical day. And a reporter came to her and said, "We understand you've become an evangelical Christian and been born again."

She said, "That is right."

The reporter said, "Well what would you suggest we do with all your books?"

To which she replied, "The same thing I've done with them. Throw them away, they're worthless."

Transformation. The Lord was knocking at an apostate church and one who espoused that apostasy prolifically who taught in a seminary and wrote books was saved and the door was open and the Lord came in.

We can become so hostile toward liberalism and neoorthodoxy and apostasy and false teachers whatever they're in, wherever churches are that are filled with error and illusion and deception. We can become so hostile that we lose our perspective. And so the Lord says, "I know the condition of the church is wretched. It makes me sick, so sick I want to vomit but still My heart cries out for their salvation, even as it did over the city of Jerusalem and the apostasy of Israel." Even as Paul who had his heart's desire for the salvation of an apostate Israel.

We take a strong stand on the truth but we don't ever want to be lacking in compassion, do we? End quote.

Let me give you a prime picture of our age. I saw an article on Fox News the other day that summarizes the attitude among professing Christians that has been common since I became a Christian. The picture is that of a rather clean cut man about 50 years old, and he has his arms around a young man with long hair like a woman. The young man has a beard, a white shirt and a necktie. They are both all smiles. The article title is, "Can Someone Be Long Haired And A Christian?" The article says:

Meet 15-year-old Ben. Ben has long hair. Ben listens to wildly inappropriate music. Ben is rebellious, bitter and has no respect for

authority. Ben smokes behind the barn and slings a vocabulary saltier than beef jerky.

Maybe that's all true. Perhaps this great church friend of mine is all those things. Or maybe he just has long hair.

Let's confess - most of us have made quick judgements about people who don't fit our mental image of a modern-day disciple of Christ. Too often we want white teeth, short hair on males, a light amount of makeup on females, neat clothes and maroon minivans.

Years ago I overheard someone ask a first-time visitor at church why she'd worn sweatpants to Sunday services. (I happen to know that at the time, sweats were the best option she owned.)

Another member complained that someone came to church with tattoos exposed. Oh, the horror!

Yet another worried aloud about a young man with an earring.

Back to Ben. My shaggy young friend knows that opinions can hit and hurt like quick punches. He's heard the whispers, seen the stares and felt the judgement.

Ironic, isn't it? Christians judging Christians for not being Christian enough?

*Maybe Ben and every other long-haired, tattooed and sweats-wearing Christian needs a T-shirt that says: "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."
(Samuel 16:7)*

What would we see if we looked on Ben's heart? What would we find if we didn't let our eyes get tangled in his hair?

Ben is more Christ-like than most people I know. He's thoughtful, soft-spoken, respectful and kind-hearted. He's talented, self-aware and forgiving. He has a long list of leadership qualities and owns that kind of warm personality that makes you want to be around him.

Ben's not perfect, of course, and he has teenage moments like every other kid, but he starts each day desiring to be a little bit better than the day before.

He wants to be even kinder, more patient and more willing to serve. He's working to become a better son, brother and friend.

Um, isn't that the definition of a disciple of Christ?

My dear friend knows that the day will come for shaves and haircuts. In fact, he's planning to donate his long hair to Locks of Love, a well-known nonprofit that provides hairpieces to patients battling cancer and other illnesses. Sounds like something Christ would do, doesn't it?

In the meantime, he and everyone else who doesn't fit perfectly into our trending definition of Christianity knows that long hair and a beard don't disqualify him from discipleship any more than sweatpants or ink on the arms.

Meet Ben. He's a teen who knows that he's not defined by his hair, but by his heart.

And odds are you know a Ben, too. End of article.

Now that article is to me a perfect picture of lukewarm Christianity. I have heard this kind of thing all my Christian years. The article is written in such a way that if you don't agree, you are made to look like a judgmental, unloving Christian who disagrees with the Bible, because God does not judge by what you look like on the outside. In my early Christian years I heard the

verse that God doesn't look on the outside quoted over and over again.

Here is the interpretation of that article. I'll give you the important part and then the interpretation. Here is the important part: *Meet 15-year-old Ben. Ben has long hair. Ben listens to wildly inappropriate music. Ben is rebellious, bitter and has no respect for authority. Ben smokes behind the barn and slings a vocabulary saltier than beef jerky.*

Here is the interpretation: Fifteen year old Ben is a Christian, and you have absolutely no right to say he is not a Christian. Who are you to judge? Even 15 year old Ben knows it is not what you act like or talk like, or what you look like on the outside. That is not what makes you a Christian. Fifteen year old Ben knows that. He knows the time is coming when he'll come around. He's working on becoming better. He wants to be kinder. He'll donate his hair to some worthwhile cause like cancer patients who need hair. And soon Ben's second part of his Christian life will show up. You can't argue that that makes him a disciple of Christ, right? His Christianity just hasn't showed up yet. It will show up and he'll cut his hair and actually be more kind. So, all you judgmental Christians, you all know a Ben. Quit judging and start accepting this Christianity that you are not used to. Don't you know that God knows better than looking on the outside. Get off your high horse, and get used to this, Ben's Christianity is real Christianity. You judgmental people just make life hard for a Christian who is does not quite act like you think he should."

The subtleties of that article, the sickness of the writer's ideas of what makes one a disciple is what makes Jesus nauseous in our passage. No, Ben is not a Christian. If he was he would want to be a new man in Christ; he would repent of his sins and become a new man. And he would talk different, dress different, live different. And

what is worse is Ben's professing Christian friend, is not likely a Christian either. But Ben will look at him as if he is, and if Ben makes a change, he'll just get his hair cut and change a few other things and except everyone else who names the name of Christ as a Christian too, just like his friend did. How they live does not matter. God said so. He said He didn't look on the outside. Ben won't repent. He won't need to. He was told he was OK. So his spiritual eyes won't be opened.

So I ask you, has Ben met the triune, thrice holy God, and it will just take time for all those changes to come? Or do you think meeting the holy God of the Bible would have an immediate influence on his salty talk, or his rebellion? That description of Ben, if I understand Scripture right, is not even the picture of a carnal Christian, it is the picture of a lost man.

Now let me add, any truly born again believer should not expect perfection the moment somebody claims to be born again. Any truly born again Christian should know you have to give time for growth. But any born again Christian should know that some new Christian who has language saltier than beef jerky would immediately make some changes to his speech. We have a Christianity that all you have to do is profess to have a new heart, and no matter how you live, now all is well. This is what our Lord finds nauseous.

If nobody is able to get through to that kind of thinking, the majority of so called Evangelicalism is going to go to hell and it is high time we wake up. And, you see, when such professing believers close their eyes in death, unless real repentance and real faith take place, they will wake up in hell. And in our weak Christianity, what I am saying will be viewed as so judgmental and un-Christlike, as to make my Christianity questionable to them. Why? Because we are in a lukewarm age.

Lukewarm is not the same as the carnal Christian. Lukewarm is lost. I believe John McArthur is right when he says lukewarm people are unsaved. God will never vomit out any true Christian. Unless somebody can expose their error to them, the majority of professing Christians with the mindset of the man who wrote that article, will be spewed out of the Lord's mouth.

Notice further in our verse that the Lord wants to dine with this person. And if this person will open up, he may dine with the Lord. From that we conclude further that this person is not now dining with the Lord. He says he is, but that is not true. And then notice that if the person does open up, he will yet be able to truly dine with the Lord!

And what are the most appropriate words to follow all this? Verse 22:

22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

5. The comfort (3:21)

We come now to the comfort part of our Lord's letter to this church. Verse 21 says:

21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

Once more, without taking more time, I think the promise here is related to the millennium, when Christians will reign with Christ. And once more we note it is the "overcomer" to whom this applies.

I also take it from this that there are some truly born again believers even in this church. And these saved people need to overcome. I listened to a speaker the other day who had been deep into Satanism. He said how Satan is trying to destroy the Church today, and that he does so by going

after pastors. He said that when he got saved he thought people who went to church were saved. What a shocking surprise awaited him to find that Satanists were also attending church. And then there were many false brethren in the church. They had all the appearance of Christians, but they were not really Christians. They were false brethren.

So the Lord has counseled the Laodiceans to three things: Buy real gold from Me. Buy white clothes from Me, and buy spiritual eyesalve from me.

B. Typically

So having looked at the historical meaning of our passage, we ask, what kind of church does Laodicea portray? What kind of church does it typify? This church typifies a church in which most and sometimes all its members are not born again. I would see this church as one that takes in members that are not born again. They may well have all the right words. They may do many of the right things. They profess Christianity. They are not openly against Christ. But they are unsaved.

But, even for a church like this, it is not yet too late. Though these people are harder to get saved than wild, wicked sinners, the Lord loves them and calls to them. But by professing to be believers, they have placed themselves in a special class for the day of judgment. Such, it seems to me, are those who are called lukewarm. And if they do not repent, their judgment will be much harsher than that of the total unbeliever.

C. Prophetically

Now we ask, what church age does the church of Laodicea picture prophetically? Tim LaHaye gives the Laodicean church as picturing as beginning around 1900 and says it is increasing in intensity at a breathtaking pace. Laodicea could well be called the apostate ecumenical church that is gathering momentum at this very our" (85).

Again, church history is not a strong point with me, but I see 1948 as a very crucial year in numerous different ways. For example, Israel became a nation, medicine reached a point where they said the end of deadly maladies in sight. Education promised a new world order. But at the same time we had a sharp rise in divorce and remarriage, and decline in spirituality in the Church. The World Council of Churches was formulated in 1948. To me, that year was a great turning point for the world and for the Church.

Willmington believes this age started around 1900 as well and writes, "Little comment is needed to describe the sad state of Christendom as it exists today. Many groups which brazenly carry the name of Christian seem to prefer Communism to democracy, encourage immorality, support anarchy, downplay every important biblical doctrine, ridicule Bible believers and in general, literally fulfill Paul's prediction when he wrote: 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof' (II Tim. 3:5)."

Willmington then says, "However it must quickly be added that a small (but powerful) and growing minority of Bible schools and local churches are demonstrating a love for the Scriptures, the Saviour, and souls of men rarely seen in church history" (422). Willmington wrote that in the late 1970's. What he wrote might have been true some years ago. But nobody saw what was coming, and by today, by far the majority of those schools have left the true path of Christianity. In the last 60-75 years, I think nothing has speeded up the downward spiral in professing Christianity like Bible schools have. I love Bible school. It is a wonderful way to learn. But it is almost impossible to keep a Bible school on track for any amount of years. Liberalism sets in almost right away.

I am convinced that the teaching of unconditional love, unconditional grace, unconditional forgiveness, unconditional eternal security have had a major impact on creating a professing church.

Divorce has sky rocketed. The divorced and remarried, do they leave the church? Many, many seek to be

accepted in the church. The unconditional love teaching, does it cause people to leave church? No, that is what is practiced in the church. The unconditional grace teaching, does it cause people to leave the church? No, it makes it easier to take in new members. The unconditional forgiveness view, is that an outside the church view, or inside? It is inside, of course. And what did it do? It negated the need for church discipline. Why would you discipline somebody when you can just unconditionally forgive them?

D. Personally

How do we apply this passage personally? I would give one very strong point: Make sure you are truly saved. Buy gold from the Lord. Buy white clothes. Buy eye salve. And then, seek to get those saved who think they are, but they are not. If their salvation is in doubt by life or by lip, do not be afraid to check it out. If they don't like it, you're probably onto something.

CONCL: And on a series of this length, my conclusion should be long, but once more I am short of time. How can we conclude on a positive note by ending with such a negative church as that of Laodicea? Like this. There is one huge consolation; the rapture must be very close! Maranatha! Even so, come Lord Jesus!