

# A Searching and Fearless Self Inventory

- Dragons and Revelations
- Recite Revelations 3:14-22
  - **14** "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.
  - **15** "'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!
  - **16** So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.
  - **17** For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.
  - **18** I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.
  - **19** Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.
  - **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 eat with him, and he with me.
  - **21** The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.
  - **22** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"
- Pray
  - Open our ears
  - Eph 1:17-19

- See his faithfulness and love

- **Intro - Location Context**

- Laodicea was one of the **wealthiest commercial centers** in the world at the time. **It is located ten miles west of Colosse (Col. 2:1; 4:15-16) and six miles south of Hierapolis (Col. 4:13). It was well known for its banking, manufacturing of clothing (black wool) and it even boasted a famous medical school**
- In essence, we get the picture of a church that is in the midst of **an affluent society**. The different trade guilds had patron deities and since those trade guilds were responsible for the economic prosperity, and the church is referred to as rich, it stands to reason that the Church there had **compromised severely on it's values**.
  - Essentially, the church in Laodicea is engaging in idolatry, most likely nurturing different idols in their hearts
- The use of Jesus' titles - the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, and the Beginning of God's creation all allude to this
- This church **received the harshest rebuke from Christ** even though on the outside they seemed like the most affluent church
  - If this **letter were written today**, would it be addressed to the Western Churches? Churches in the United States? Churches in Silicon Valley? Perhaps Mercy Hill?
  - We are after all in the most affluent parts of the world
- There are **5 observations** I want to draw out of this text and the let's get started with the first one
- **7 Minute mark**

## 1. Savior and not Lord? (vs. 15) 8 Minutes

- The **first words of Jesus** are **"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot"** and we can see that Christ is making a **judgment based on their works**, which to **some of us can be shocking**
  - **Aren't we saved by grace alone through faith alone? Why the focus on works?**
- There is a widespread heresy that if we are being truthfully we make room for in one-way or another. It is this idea that what **you do, especially what you repeatedly do, doesn't matter, as long as you believe in Christ**
- It is true that **we are saved by grace alone through faith alone**. However, **if we are truly saved, our lives, overtime, should begin to mirror that of Christ**.
- We cannot continue to believe the lie that all that matters is that I said a prayer and I keep living my life just the way I did before.
- Let me be clear, **your works never justifies you!** By themselves your works can only amount to filthy rags of righteousness
- To be in the Kingdom of God means that we, **over time**, grow into his likeness. This was and has always been our original intent, hence why we are made in his image. Therefore if we are truly saved, we **"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."**
- What you see is that there is a dimension to this relationship where God has ordained that we take some level of responsibility, even though He is truly the one that works in us
- He cannot simply be **Savior and not Lord/Master**

- A. W. Tozer expressed his "feeling that a notable heresy has come into being throughout evangelical Christian circles--the widely-accepted concept that we humans can choose to accept Christ only because we need him as Savior and that we have the right to postpone our obedience to him as Lord as long as we want to!"
- This 'heresy' has created the impression that it is quite reasonable to be a "vampire Christian." One in effect says to Jesus: "I'd like a little of your blood, please. But I don't care to be your student or have your character. In fact, won't you just excuse me while I get on with my life, and I'll see you in heaven." - Dallas Willard
- There heresy is the idea that Jesus accepts me as I am and underneath that is this sense of I can continue in my sin because Jesus loves me and accepts me as I am.
  - The sense here is I do not need to change
- In reality it is that **God accepts you despite where and who you are**, and He is always about **conforming you into the image of His Son** (Rom 8:29)
  - Do you see the subtlety of the enemy in perverting grace?
  - Is grace simply a way for me to justify continuing in sin?
    - Romans 6:1-2
      - 1** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?
      - 2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?
    - **Titus 2:11-12**
      - 11** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,
      - 12** training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled,

upright, and godly lives in the present age

- Some of us can think we are in **“control” of when we receive Christ**. We might sense a drawing to Christ in our hearts but think “I will first live my life to the fullest, and then at some point in the future, when I am done, I will receive Christ towards the end of my life”
  - While we are **not in control of life itself, we are also not in control of the new birth** and when we will again be drawn by God’s Spirit
- Tim Keller gives this insight about a time in his life where he came to see Christ both as Lord and Savior:
  - At a Christian camp in Colorado, a woman Bible teacher gave an illustration that changed my life. She said, “If the distance between the Earth and the Sun, 92 million miles, was reduced to the thickness of a sheet of paper, then the distance between the Earth and the nearest star would be a stack of paper 70 feet high. And the diameter of the galaxy would be a stack of paper 310 miles high. That’s how big the galaxy is. And yet, the galaxy is nothing but a speck of dust, virtually, in the whole universe. And the Bible says Jesus Christ holds this universe together with the word of his power. His pinky, as it were.” And then she asked the question: “Is this the kind of person you ask into your life to be your assistant?”
- There is a great omission how we carry out the great commission – Matt 28:19-20
  - **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
  - **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- We have become comfortable in **making coverts by asking them to recite a prayer** they barely understand and selling them **a lie that might cost them eternity**. Rather we are to make disciples, apprentices that look like their master
- **Question for you** -
  - How are we truly doing per becoming like your master, an apprentice that strives to know him like Paul captured beautifully in Phil 3:1-14
  - **Do we take seriously our apprenticeship to Christ?**
  - Do we have a sense of **healthy responsibility to make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit** to do his redemptive and transformative work in us?
- **15<sup>th</sup> Minute Mark**

## 2. The Wretched Ones (vs. 15-17) **12 Minutes**

- **15** "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!
- **16** So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.
- **17** For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.
- Lukewarm Water -Historical Context Interpretation
  - The **picture of hot, cold, and lukewarm** water is seen as a **unique feature of Laodicea** and the surrounding region in the first century. The hot waters of Hierapolis had a medicinal effect and the cold waters of Colossae were pure, drinkable, and had a life-giving effect.

- **Laodicea had access only to lukewarm water, which was not very palatable and caused nausea.** When the city tried to pipe water in, it could manage only to obtain **tepid, emetic water.**
  - **The effect of their conduct on Christ was like the effect of their own water**
- **What was that conduct - it is spelled out in verse 17**
  - **17** For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked
- The wealth likely corresponded to the economic prosperity of Laodicea. It is recorded that in AD 60 when the city was destroyed by an earthquake, the city rejected help from the government to show it's self reliance by rebuilding using it's own resources
- We, **like them, are infected with the religion of self-sustenance, self-importance, and a very unhealthy sense of self-esteem.** There is within the human heart, there is this fibrous root that seeks to be self sustaining, where we snicker at any idea of not being able to do that which we want to do
- We **balk at this idea that we are not enough in ourselves** and we dislike any message that **reminds us of our need for help, for a savior.**
- I was reading an article that captures this religion of self-sustenance. As I repeat the story, take note of your heart and how you react internally to this
- A young man asked the question:
  - **"Isn't Christianity a crutch for people who can't make it on their own?" If Christianity is a crutch, then it's only good for cripples.**
- And the answer is Yes, Christianity is a crutch for a people who could never save themselves

- But we don't like to see **ourselves as cripples**. And so it is **offensive to our self-sufficiency** to label Christianity as a crutch. But Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" ([Mark 2:17](#)).
- In other words, **the only people who will ever come to get what Jesus has to give are sick** people, people who know that they are spiritually and morally and very often physically crippled.
- **Truthfully we are all on crutches**. There are no sick and well people. **We are all sick and ever in need of the One who will justify us before a Just God**. Yet God in his infinite mercies decided to offer his Son on that Old Rugged Cross so that he is not only our Judge but also our Justifier – See Romans 3:26
- The **Wretched One Par Excellence** – Why? **Because we think we are not wretched**. It is precisely because we think we are too pitiable, blind and naked that we are the most wretched ones
- Can we like the Apostle Paul begin to see how much we need God
  - [For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.](#) - 1 Cor 15:9 (AD 53-54)
  - [To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ](#) - Eph 3:8 (around AD 62)
  - [The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.](#) - 1 Tim 1:15 (AD 58 - 65)
- How are we wretched ones par excellence?
  - **Ungratefulness**
  - Ignoring the Holy Spirit



- Identity as status, significance, accomplishments
  - How I want him to be **Savior but not Lord**
  - Deflecting my flaws
  - How do I make use of my resources? **Am I simply oblivious to the plight of those around me?**
  - Do **I consistently turn a blind eye to the suffering of people** (across nations, race, gender, etc.), coming up **with theological and social explanation to avoid the thought?**
  - Rarely ever turning to him for help until I am in trouble
  - **Do I truly carve out time to be with Him and to pursue him?**
  - Our **prayerlessness is often a result of not sensing we truly need him.**
- It seems harsh but it is truly loving
  - Christ is about to turn **their self-reliance on its head** - and this is the **inversion of the Kingdom that is so repulsive to our sense of self-sufficiency.**
  - Externally, **they were truly in great shape and needed nothing.** However, truthfully they are far from being in any good shape or condition.
  - **Is this is not true of us, here and now, in Silicon Valley?**
    - Do **we not tend to rely on our intellect and logic more than God?** When we are faced with issues, do we not run to books to give us the right tip to manage our colleagues and bosses or communicate aright?
    - When we are in some form of financial need, do we first take it to God or simply start calculating how we can mask our greed as ambition?
    - Do we ever think of first inviting the Holy Spirit into our issues rather than first go find the 7

laws of conflict resolution?

- **Jesus' challenge to the Laodicean Christians' self-sufficiency (3:17-18) reminds us how readily we Christians absorb the attitudes of our culture without pausing for critical reflection on this behavior, and this is how we nurture idols**
- **30<sup>th</sup> Minute Mark**

### **3. In Christ Alone (vs. 18) 6 Minutes**

- **18** I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.
- John Piper says
  - "The creed behind this criticism of Christianity [as a crutch for people who can't make it on their own] is the confidence that we are not cripples, and that **real joy and fulfillment in life are to be found in the pursuit of self-reliance, self-confidence, self-determination, and self-esteem.**
  - **Any Messiah who comes along and proposes to replace**
    - **self-reliance with childlike God-reliance**
    - **self-confidence with submissive God-confidence**
    - **self-determination with sovereign grace,**
    - **and self-esteem with magnificent mercy for the unworthy—**

- **Such a Messiah is going to be a threat to the religion of self-admiration**
- And yet this is exactly what Jesus prescribes in the 3-fold solution he gave.
  - So we access **true wealth** by **relying on God's provisions** rather than relying on their commercial wealth
  - **"White garments"** is in stark contrast to the **local black wool** that Laodicea was famous for.
    - The phrase to cover the shame of your nakedness has strong allusions to turning away from the idolatry for "Uncovering the shame of nakedness" is language usually employed in accusing Israel of idolatry.
  - The **eye salve** stands against their medical pedigree
    - Ancient sources report a first-century medical school located in Laodicea, ear ointment made there, **a famous eye doctor practicing there, and eye salve made of Phrygian powder (probably abundantly available there)**
- Jesus is essentially calling us to make **an exchange** - to **transfer our self-reliance (or other-reliance) to humble God-reliance**. And such an **Exchange can only happen because of the Cross of Christ**
- How do you **purchase** this gold, white garments and eye salve?
  - **With nothing and with everything**
  - It cost you nothing technically for all it took was the blood our Savior
    - [Isa 55:1 alludes to this "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price](#)
  - It will **cost you everything** because there is only one to do this exchange, **to accept Christ**

**as Savior & Lord.** This is the path of discipleship

- There is no salvation without transformation into Christlikeness
- Luke 14: 26-27, 33
  - **26** "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.
  - **27** Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.
  - **33** So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
- Mark 8:34-35
  - **34** And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
  - **35** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

- **36<sup>th</sup> Minute Mark**

#### **4. An Invitation to Intimacy (vs. 19-21) 6 minutes**

- 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.
- 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 eat with him, and he with me.
- 21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and

sat down with my Father on his throne.

- What is the point though
  - Jesus shows **his motivation** by saying **Those who I love, I reprove and discipline**
  - I know **God's reprove and discipline can often be a hard thing to process.**
  - You might have heard of a quotation that goes like this
    - **If there is a way for God, who is love, to make you become who he intends you to be, without trials and affliction, he would. Why? Because Love demands it.**
  - Here's the part we usually do not think of
    - **If there is no way for God, who is love, to make you become who he intends you to be unless you go through the trials and affliction, then he will take you through the trials and affliction. Why? Because Love demands it.**
  - Our **perspective is very limited to this world** and what we see in front of our eyes.  
However, we will do well to recall that His perspective spans eternity
  - **The principle is that God loves you. It isn't hard for God to love you. Rather it is impossible for God to NOT love you.**
  - The paradigm is seen in the live of Christ. Whatever we say about God, we have to admit that he takes his own medicine. Why do I say so?
    - **For God to make Christ be the sacrifice that would ensure our eternity, he made him go through a most horrifying death. Why? Because His Love for us, demands it**
  - God loves you. **He absolutely adores you with depth, persistence and intensity beyond your wildest dreams** and this is exactly why he who rebukes you is the same one who comes

pursuing you

- **Standing at the Door and Knocking**

- The King of Kings comes after a wretched unworthy soul. He presents himself seeking your audience, a continuous knocking on the door of your heart, hoping for your positive response
- And this invitation is open to all – if anyone hears my voice and opens the door – no one is exempt. **Everyone is invited to this picture of intimacy with Christ.**
- We know from our studies of **Luke that dining was usually a leisurely affair that carries a sense of active relationship and deeper communion.** And this is what God wants from you

- **Sitting on His Throne**

- It doesn't mean you are Christ or you are going to be equal to Christ.
- A throne **does signify royal honor** and a place **with Christ is the highest honors**
- It is a **deeper form of Intimacy** denoting **full participation with Christ** in what He is doing for his **sake and his glory**

- **42<sup>nd</sup> Minute Mark**

## **5. All of Life is Repentance (vs. 19-22)**

- **Don't Read the Scripture**

- 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.
- 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 eat with him, and he with me.

- 21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.
- 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
  - The question then is how do we as sinners continue in **this intimacy that Christ has purchased by his blood?**
  - Jesus says **Be Zealous and Repent**. He also expects us to **open the door and dine with Him**. How do we **continuously do this** given our **sin tendencies**?
    - Oct 31<sup>st</sup> of 2017 marked the **500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of reformation**, which is a massive re-discovery of **golden truths** and it is largely marked on the day Martin Luther supposedly nailed his 95 thesis to the door of Wittenberg's Castle Church
    - Martin Luther's first thesis reads:
      - **When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent," he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.**
    - **All of the Christian life is repentance.** Turning from sin and trusting in the good news that Jesus saves sinners aren't merely a **one-time inaugural experience** but **the daily substance of Christianity**. The gospel is for every day and every moment. **Repentance is to be the Christian's continual posture.**
    - Almost 30 years later, his last words are this
      - **We are beggars! This is true.**
  - How can we continue **to make a fearless self inventory of ourselves**, where we **consistently see ourselves as beggars and the wretched ones, and not be crushed by this?**

- How can we continuously make **this exchange where we transfer our self-reliance unto God-dependence?**
- **Two truths to hold** - from Tim Keller
  - a. We are **more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe**
  - b. **Yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.**
- My question to you today is **"How are you hearing all of this?"**
  - Right from the beginning of this passage, and through out the letters to the church, which covers Revelations 2-3, the phrase "let him who has an ear, hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches" is repeated.
  - **The Amen, The Faithful and True Witness speak to the veracity of God - the God of Truth. It speaks to the depth of the truthfulness of God as a dependable Everlasting Rock.** In colloquial language, it speaks to God being a sure thing
    - The word **"Beginning" there is more of a divine title that speaks to Christ as the "First" amongst the new creation, which he purchased with his blood.** The Beginning of God's Creation likely parallels Jesus being the "first born from the dead" - cf Rev 1:5 and Col 1:18
  - **The point of all the titles is to give weight to the words that were spoken.** It is to remind us of who it is that is speaking and point to both the veracity and the weight of His words
  - So... take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away
  - So how are you doing with



- Taking him as **Savior and not Lord**
  - Seeing ourselves as **the Wretched Ones**
  - Knowing that we can only perform this **transference of self-reliance to God dependence in Christ Alone**
  - Accepting the **invitation to intimacy**
  - Keeping that **intimacy through repentance - All of Life is Repentance**
- Let's make this love practical by looking at Romans 8:31-38 and imagining Christ
    - **31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
    - **32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
    - **33** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.
    - **34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.
    - **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?
    - **36** As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."
    - **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
    - **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,
    - **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## 6. Pray and close sermon

- a. Accepting him as Lord and Savior
- b. Transference of self-reliance into God-dependence

## 7. Homework

- Carry out a consistent self-reflective exercise. This could be done at the end of the day, where you review your day with God and notice where you might have missed him or responded to him. You could also review your strong emotions whether positive and/or negative and review that with God
  - Write your thoughts in a journal.
  - What are you noticing overtime in your review? More of the fruit of the Spirit or the works of the flesh?
  - You could do this practice over a period of time (a day, week, month, year, decades, etc.) or seasons of your life
  - Talk about it with your spouse or trusted friends
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- References

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