

The Two Roads to Laodicea

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We know, as God's people, we've learned over the years that there is only one way, one path to salvation. Let's go over to Matthew 7 and look at verse 14. Christ, in His very first message that He gave, He was very adamant, very clear that there is one way to salvation. Matthew 7:14, He tells us that... He's drawing analogies. He says:

Matthew 7:14. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, ... (KJV)*

Not "a" way, but "the" way.

Matthew 7:14b. *... which [leads] unto life, and few there be that find it. (KJV)*

Now the Greek word for "way" is the Greek word "hodos." It's Strong's 3598 and it means *a road; or by implication, a route, a way to get somewhere, a path.*

And then remember, Christ said... We won't turn there, but in John 14:6, Christ said to the people; He says:

John 14:6b. *... I am the way, ... (KJV)*

"I am the hodos. I am the route." And He says:

John 14:6b. *... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man [can come] unto the Father, but by me. (KJV)*

In other words, "... the route [is] through Me."

And, yet, we also know; we've had experience in our lives that there is a contrary way to that one way. And that contrary way we find in Proverbs 16 and verse 25. Let's turn over there. There is Christ's way—the only way, the true way. And, yet there is an alternative way. We understand that in Genesis, but in Proverbs 16:25, it says:

Proverbs 16:25. *There is a way that [seems] right unto a man, ... (KJV)*

Or we could say, "Unto a human—all humans."

Proverbs 16:25. *... but the end thereof [is] the [way] of death. (KJV)*

Now that Hebrew word "way" means *a road, as trodden*; but figuratively, symbolically, it also means *a course of life.*

So Proverbs 25:16 says the same thing that Christ said: “There is a course of life that man thinks is good but it leads to death.” And Christ said, “There is a course of life that leads to life.” There is Christ’s way and therefore, by definition, any other way is wrong. There is only one way—Christ’s way.

Now, the book of Revelation is a book of prophecy. We understand that. And in the beginning of the book, Christ wrote letters to seven churches. And those seven churches were connected by a Roman built road along a mail route.

Now, we also know that the letters to the seven churches are warnings. Christ points out what they did well and then He warns them and points out what they did not so well. We know that those messages apply to all Christians at all times. We need to take heed to all of those messages.

But we also understand that those seven messages are to seven consecutive eras of God’s church because when you look at it carefully, the last four eras (according to what’s written in those letters), the last four eras will be in existence when Christ returns. Now, this is not the subject. This is all by way of introduction.

And we should be turning over to Revelation chapter 3 anyway. We’re going to pick up the story. But Thyatira was told, “Hold fast till I come.” That’s in Revelation 2:25. And we understand that there are remnants of the Thyatiran era this day in Southern France and in South America.

Sardis was told by Christ, “I come as a thief in the night. You don’t know what hour I come upon you.” And that strongly indicates that there are going to be members of the Sardis era alive when Christ returns. You find that in Revelation 3:3.

And, then, to Philadelphia, Christ said, “Behold I come quickly.” You find that in Revelation 3:11. And we should also note that just because a group has a corporate name of “Philadelphia” doesn’t mean... it doesn’t have anything to do with whether or not that corporation is the Philadelphia era of God’s church. We understand that.

And, then, to Laodicea, Christ said, “I’m standing at the door. I’m knocking. Are you going to open up to me or not?” That’s in Revelation 3:20.

And so, at the end of the age, understanding that these are consecutive eras, the way to Laodicea, the road to Laodicea will be the dominate characteristic of the end-time church. Now, that’s not to say that we who live in this era are predetermined to be Laodiceans. That’s not the case at all. It is up to us. It is up to us entirely which of those seven minds, spirits, attitudes that we adopt. Hopefully, it’s more along Philadelphia, but we do live in the Laodicean era. And remember four of those eras will be in existence at the time Christ returns.

So, why are we discussing this subject today? What I’d like to do is analyze the way or the road to Laodicea and we will do so by the meanings of the Greek words themselves

used to describe Laodicea. Therefore, it might help us to avoid the pitfalls that are common with this Laodicean era.

So, the title of the sermon is

Two Roads to Laodicea

And we're going to start by examining the meanings of the two words that describe Laodicea. Let's go to Revelation 3. We'll pick up the context in verse 14 and we're told:

Revelation 3:14. *And unto 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; (KJV)*

Now, we want to focus on the beginning of verse 17. It says:

Revelation 3:17. *Because [you say], ... (KJV)*

Meaning: "You Laodiceans say." Not Christ.

Revelation 3:17. *[But you Laodiceans say], I am rich, ... (KJV)*

That's the first word—rich.

17b) ... and increased with goods, ... (KJV)

That's the second word.

And, "Therefore, because I'm rich and increased with goods, I don't need anything."

17 continued) ... [I] have need of nothing;... (KJV)

Now the meaning, the Greek meaning of those two words, "rich" and "increased with goods" are very, very similar. In fact, they're only two digits apart in the Strong's numbering system. Now both of these words have a literal meaning and then they have a figurative or a symbolic meaning.

Let me give you an example between literal and symbolic or literal and figurative. Let's use the word "nailed" (n-a-i-l-e-d). Now the literal meaning is, "Yesterday I got two pieces of wood and I nailed them together with nails." That's the literal meaning. Now, if you like basketball, as far as the figurative meaning, a basketball commentator (play-by-play man) could say, "He (this player), he nailed a 3-pointer! He made a three point basket," affirmatively made the basket. And he used the word "nailed." Well, nobody took out hammer and nails with a basketball, but the point I'm making is that is the symbolic meaning or the figurative meaning of the word "nailed."

Now for words “rich” and “increased with goods,” they have symbolic meanings and they have literal meanings. And those are very important for us to understand.

Let’s look at the word “rich.” “I am rich,” the Laodiceans say. That’s Strong’s 4145 and it is the Greek word “plousios” (plo’-see-os). Now Thayer’s says this; he says the literal meaning is (and I’m quoting from Thayer) *wealthy, abounding in material resources*. It could be money. It could be possessions of any kind—*wealthy, abounding in material resources*. The symbolic meaning of plousios is *abounding or rich in Christian virtues*, Christian characteristics, fruits of the holy spirit, we might say. So there is a literal meaning focused on material things and then there is a symbolic meaning focused on spiritual resources, talents, abilities, so on.

Based on the meaning of plousios, Christ is saying, “You Laodiceans say, ‘I am physically wealthy and I have what I need spiritually to be in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, I need nothing. I’m physically wealthy. I’m also spiritually wealthy and I’m just waiting it out until Christ returns because I have what it takes to be in the Kingdom of God.’”

Now let’s look at the word “increased with goods.” Now, that’s three English words, but it’s translated from one Greek word. That is Strong’s 4147, only two digits away from 4145 plousios. And this Greek word is “pluteo” (p-l-o-u-t-e-o), very close, but notice the difference. Now Thayer says again, the literal meaning is *to be rich; to have an abundance of outward possessions*. In other words, it’s not describing what’s inside of us but our outward possessions—homes, cars, property, and so on. But notice the symbolic meaning this word “pluteo” because it is different than the Greek word “plousios” that we just talked about. The symbolic meaning means *affluent in resources so that he can give blessings of salvation to all*. And when I read that I was shocked because here is a human being saying he can give blessings of salvation to all.

So, based on the meaning of pluteo, Christ is telling the Laodiceans, “You say, ‘Look at my possessions, my buildings, my colleges, all of this; and if you listen to me and if you sit in my church, I can grant you salvation. I can guarantee you salvation.’” That’s quite a claim. So, remember Christ said, “You say.” Christ said, “I’m not saying this. You Laodiceans are saying this that ‘I have abundant physical possessions. Therefore, I don’t need to trust in God for those physical possessions. I already have them. I am abounding in Christian virtues. I am both physically and spiritually self-sufficient. Therefore, I don’t need anything. I am ready for the kingdom and if you will follow me, I will give you the kingdom. If you sit in this seat or you follow me, you will be in God’s kingdom.’”

Now, these Greek words, with their literal meaning and their symbolic meaning, tell us that becoming Laodicean can happen in two ways—two different ways. And, as we go through this, I hope you can see that prophecy is being fulfilled right in front of our very eyes this very day. It’s just unbelievable. What God says is true and it’s coming to pass right in front of our eyes.

The first path is becoming materialistic or relying on physical wealth.

Now, let's look at the first at the first path, the first road, the first route to Laodicea. And this is based on the literal meanings of those two words.

Now, let's understand that relative to ages past, all of us are wealthy. And relative to the rest of the world, those of us in the western world are wealthy because 80 percent of the world today lives in poverty. And prior to today that number, that percentage was even higher.

And today, the average western inhabitant lives better than the kings of old. Take the Kings of England for example. They had incredible wealth but they had no running water in their homes. They had no indoor plumbing and toilets. They had no air conditioning. If they wanted to go around and move around, they didn't have automobiles that had heat and air conditioning and comfy seats and all of that. They didn't have a fraction of what we have today. We live like kings. We really do.

And the fact is you don't have to be wealthy to be materialistic. You can be poor and be focused on physical things. One can make one's life focus the accumulation of physical wealth or physical things regardless of your economic status. One can be preoccupied with the physical, with things.

And, as I've said before, the worst thing that could happen to any of us is to win the lottery. I don't know if you saw a couple of weeks ago, this one guy... I can't remember where he lived, but I think he was up in the Midwest somewhere. Minnesota I think. There was this \$450 million power ball thing and he had one ticket. So that means he won a third of it. They said he cleared a \$150 million. And by the time the taxes were paid they were going to write him a check, a one time check of \$50 million. And they showed him on television. He was up there with a big check, holding the cardboard check. And his girlfriend was up there with him. She was grinning like a Cheshire cat because you could see the dollar signs (\$\$\$) going through the eyes.

That would be the worst thing that could happen to any of us because it gets our mind off God and the essentials of Christian life and we get our minds on physical things.

Now, let's take a minute in this first point, let's take a minute and see what God's word has to say about becoming materialistic or relying on physical wealth. I know this is a reminder. We've been through these scriptures before, but let's turn to Proverbs 28 and verse 11 and see a huge pitfall for someone who is wealthy. And, as I said, we are all wealthy in the United States and Canada, and Western Europe, and all, Australia. We're all wealthy. Proverbs 28:11, I'll read it out of the New King James. Notice what it says.

Proverbs 28:11. The rich man is wise in his own eyes, (NKJV)

And what this tells us is with wealth can come pride.

When Dorothy and I were visiting the Sooke brethren, we were walking past the harbor in Victoria and this mega yacht comes in. This thing was almost as long as a football field. And it was three or four stories and it had to be in the tens of millions of dollars. The guy was there with his little captain hat on the front and he was piloting this thing through the harbor. It was like the arrival of a king. People were kind of watching on the shoreline and looking and this guy's just motoring very slowly down the center of it. He's just looking around like, "Hey! Your king has arrived. Kneel and worship." When we get wealthy, pride can follow.

Now, let's go to Jeremiah 9 and verse 23; see another warning. We, as God's people, need to be very careful about this because this is one of the paths to Laodicea. Jeremiah 9:23.

Jeremiah 9:23. *Thus [says] the LORD, [He says] Let not the wise... (KJV)*

The word "man" is in italics. He says:

23b) ... Let not the wise glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty glory in his might, ... (KJV)

Notice the last phrase.

23 continued) ... let not the rich glory in his riches: (KJV)

As though we deserve it, we're entitled to it, we earned it all. Christ talked about that in Luke 18. And Christ taught many lessons in parables. Luke 18, we're going to begin in verse 18. This man came to Christ and he called Him "Good Ruler" and he asked Him "What do I have to do to obtain eternal life?" Isn't that the crux of the matter? Luke 18:18, "What do I have to do to obtain eternal life?"

Verse 19:

Luke 18:19. *And Jesus said unto him, Why [do you call] me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. (KJV)*

So, He's answering the question. He says:

Luke 18:20. *[You know] the commandments, Don't commit adultery, Don't kill, Don't steal, Don't bear false witness, Honor [your] father and mother. (KJV)*

And this ruler said:

Luke 18:21. *... All these have I kept from my youth up. (KJV)*

"I've done all that."

Verse 22:

Luke 18:22. ... [Christ] heard these things, he said unto him, [You lack] one thing: [He says,] sell all that [you have], and distribute unto the poor, and [you shall] have treasure in heaven: and come, [and] follow me. (KJV)

This was an open invitation to be a disciple. Notice the man's reaction in verse 23.

Luke 18:23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich [plousios, 4145].

24) And when Jesus saw that he was [sad, he was] sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

25) For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for [a plousios man] a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. (KJV)

And the reason that Christ told him to sell all of his goods was the simple fact that he made an idol of his wealth. And before we were baptized whatever idol we have, whatever it might have been... I had two of them prior to baptism. Christ destroyed both of them. He's telling this man, "This is your idol. So, I'm going to ask you to destroy your idol. Who are you going to put first? Your wealth or following Me?" And, of course, the man made a decision.

Now, let's go, with that in mind, let's begin turning over to Ezekiel 7 and we're going to see (those of us who are alive and last until Christ's return), we're going to see the day come when all of that wealth, the mega yachts, the airplanes, the multiple homes, the jewelry, the clothes and the cars are going to mean absolutely nothing. Ezekiel 7:19, I'll read it out of the NIV. He's says, "There's going to come a time:"

Ezekiel 7:19. They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be an unclean thing. Their silver and gold will not be able to save them in the day of the LORD's wrath. They [this gold and silver is not going to] satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs, for it has made them to stumble into sin. (NIV 1984)

There's going to come a time when gold and silver are going to be meaningless. You can't eat gold and you can't eat silver when you're hungry.

There were wealthy people in the New Testament church and Paul had a message for Timothy to tell to the people. Let's go to 1 Timothy 6. And Paul said, "Charge them." That's a strong word. 1 Timothy 6:17, notice what he says here to this young minister. And Paul wanted to make clear that this can be a pitfall. 1 Timothy 6:17. He says:

1 Timothy 6:17. Charge them that are [plousios 4145, that are] rich in this world. ... (KJV)

Meaning: *With the world's goods.* And that's the literal definition of the word.

17b) ... that they be not high-minded, ... (KJV)

Think too highly of themselves as we've been reading.

17 continued) ... nor trust in ... (KJV)

Certain riches? Solid riches? Eternal riches? No.

17 continued) ... [in] uncertain riches, but [rather, he said, they had better trust] in the living God, who [gives] us richly all things to enjoy; (KJV)

You see money doesn't buy us salvation. Money doesn't even buy us happiness. If you do a study of the people who have won the lottery and the vast majority of them wind up in misery—absolute, abject misery. Money does not buy happiness. We all die and then what? What happens after that?

The message is in this first point for people who trust in materialism or wealth, the message is we can't allow our present state of relative wealth and relative ease of life to make us feel like we don't need God.

And we live in this society of wealth and ease. And it is easy, then, for people to focus on the material and "Hey! I don't need anything. I've got it all."

So the first path to becoming a Laodicean is to become materialistic and relying on physical wealth.

The second path is becoming self-righteous, judgmental of others, and exclusivist.

This is more dangerous and more insidious—becoming self-righteous, judgmental of others, and exclusivist. And this is from the symbolic meaning of those two words "rich and increased with goods."

Now, notice what is being said today by some church leaders. I get stuff... I don't go seeking this, but people send it to me all the time. One leader says, "I am the source of salvation to all." Meaning: If you are with us, you will have salvation. If you are not with us, you will lose your salvation. That's almost a direct quote.

People say today, "We are the only ones who are going to the place of safety." "We are the only ones who are the firstfruits." "We are the only ones God is working through." I know several groups say that. "We alone have all the truth. Everybody else maybe has a little bit, but we are the only ones who have all the truth." And, as an aside, how can that be when Peter says what? "Grow in grace and knowledge." How can we have all the truth and then grow in grace and knowledge? He says that in 2 Peter 3:18. Well, it's hard to reconcile those two.

No one and I mean no one will have the complete truth until Christ returns—none of us. We might think we know something. We might think we understand something, but when Christ returns, we're going to see how woefully little we really knew. Oh, we were certain in certain areas and Christ said, "Unh huh. No. Let Me tell you about this."

So, some say, "We have all the truth." And the fact is that who are we to tell God who He is going to save when somebody says, "If you follow me, I'll lead you to salvation."? Or, who are we to tell God who He is going to take to the place of safety? "If you're with us, we're all going to the place of safety." Who are we to tell God that? Who are we to tell God who the firstfruits are? That's God's decision—not ours! And who are we to tell God who He is working through? Can you imagine? To say, "We're going to dictate to God who He is working through and who He's not working through." I mean, who are we to say that? There's no way we can say that.

Then there's another group that says, "We are so spiritually superior that we will not fellowship with others outside our group because those others are unclean." And one uses a scripture in the New Testament to justify that very statement that "We are clean. All the other Church of God groups are unclean. Therefore, you can't talk to them. You can't fellowship with them even through they might be your own relatives or your own husband or wife."

2 Corinthians 6:17, let's just go there, just to see how things get twisted. Now this principle is true, but if taken out of context it can be woefully misleading. 2 Corinthians 6:17, Paul is saying to the Corinthian church:

2 Corinthians 6:17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be [you] separate, [says] the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and [if you touch not the unclean thing] I will receive you, (KJV)*

And so they are saying that "Everybody else outside of our group is unclean. You can't touch them. You can't talk to them. You can't associate with them."

Now, look at the context of the verse. Look at verse 14. Notice what Paul says.

2 Corinthians 6:14. *Be not unequally yoked together with ... (KJV)*

Other Church of God members? No. With who?

14b) ... unbelievers: (KJV)

People who don't even believe in God or Jesus Christ!

14 continued) ... for what fellowship [has] righteousness with unrighteousness? (KJV)

People who don't believe in God, don't believe in Christ behave in unrighteous ways.

14 continued) ... and what communion [has] light with darkness? (KJV)

And "The world," Christ said, "walks in darkness." Verse 15:

2 Corinthians 6:15. *And what concord [has] Christ with Belial? or what part [has] he that [believes] with an infidel? (KJV)*

And if you look up the Greek word "infidel," it means *somebody who does not believe in God*. And he says, "What part does somebody that believes in Christ and is baptized have to do with somebody who doesn't even believe that God exists?" Verse 16:

2 Corinthians 6:16. *And what agreement [has] the temple of God with idols? (KJV)*

Talking about people who worship false gods.

2 Corinthians 6:16b. *... for [you] are the temple of the living God; as God [has] said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (KJV)*

So, the context here clearly is about unbelievers. Not brethren. So, we need to be very careful about that. And we know; we've talked about it many times before. The reality is those who are led by the holy spirit are the children of God regardless of what corporation they belong to or what seat they sit in.

What does God's word say about self-righteousness, judgment of others, and exclusivism? The Bible is replete with admonitions that we can't go there. We can't do that.

Let's go to Luke 18. We were there earlier. We started in verse 18. This time we'll start in verse 9. Luke 18:9. And Christ is again speaking by way of a parable, very descriptive.

Luke 18:9. *[He spoke] this parable unto certain [people who] trusted in themselves ... (KJV)*

Now, does that sound like Laodicea? "I have need of nothing."

Luke 18:9b. *... that they were righteous, and [the problem is they] despised others: (KJV)*

So, we know the story. Two men went up to pray at the temple. And one was a Pharisee. One was a publican. The Pharisee prayed with himself, in verse 11 we're told. And he says, "I thank You that I'm not like all these other creeps. I'm not like all

these others who are beneath me.” He said, “I thank you that I’m not liars, adulterers or even as this guy standing over here on the corner, this publican.” He says, “I fast. I tithe. I pray. I do all these other things.” Verse 13:

Luke 18:13. *And the publican, [stood] far off, ... (KJV)*

He was over in the corner in the shadows.

Luke 18:13b. *... and would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but [he beat on his chest], saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

14) [And Christ said, I'll] tell you, this [publican] went down to his house justified ... (KJV)

That means *being in a right standing with God.*

Luke 18:14b. *... rather than the other: for every one that [exalts] himself [is going to] be abased; and he that [humbles] himself shall be exalted. (KJV)*

This addresses the issue of one individual looking down on another individual, one individual judging another individual and elevating the self relative to another individual.

Now, let’s look at the group, one group looking at itself and then comparing itself to another group. Let’s go to Galatians chapter 5. We’re going to begin in verse 19, the works of the flesh, but there is a very, very interesting translation on this. Galatians 5 verse 19, it says:

Galatians 5:19. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, ... (KJV)*

That means *made apparent.*

Galatians 5:29b. *... which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (KJV)*

We would say lack of moral ethics, loose conduct. Verse 20:

Galatians 5:20. *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (KJV)*

Now I’m going to read verse 20 out of the New Living Translation. It was a shock when I read it the first time.

Galatians 5:20. *idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, ... (NLT)*

And notice this last, the NLT says:

Galatians 5:20b. ... the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group. (NLT)

That's a work of the flesh. And that means one group is looking down on another group. One group is judging another group. And we're told not to judge others or compare ourselves with others.

Back to Matthew 7. We were there earlier. Christ made it very clear right in the very beginning because the Pharisees had a problem with that, the Jews had a problem with that. If they rubbed elbows with a Roman or a pagan, they would go home and wash. Matthew 7 verse 1 out of the New King James. It says:

Matthew 7:1. "Judge not, that you be not judged. (NKJV)

Now, that is the Greek word "krino." It's Strong's 2919. And it can mean *to condemn or to damn—condemn or damn.*

Christ says, "Don't condemn." He says, "That you be not condemned."

Verse 2:

Matthew 7:2. *For with what [condemnation you condemn somebody with, you're going to be condemned the same way]; and with [what] measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*

3) *And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, [and don't] consider the plank in your own ...?*

4) *Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck [in] your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?*

5) *You hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (NKJV)*

It can't be anymore clear than that. We cannot judge other human beings. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 12. Paul in this little section of scripture is being very sarcastic. And I'm going to read it out of the NLT because it puts it in modern English and picks up the sarcasm very well. 2 Corinthians 10, we're just going to read verse 12. Paul in his sarcasm says:

2 Corinthians 10:12. *Oh, [he says] don't worry; I wouldn't dare say that I am as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are. But they are only comparing themselves with each other and measuring themselves by themselves. What foolishness! (NLT)*

He says. So, we cannot be deceived into thinking that we already have the kingdom made; we've already changed to the point we look just like Jesus Christ; and all we have to do is tread water until the kingdom is here.

You see both of these paths, becoming materialistic or relying on material goods or becoming self-righteous and judgmental and exclusivist, they result in the same attitude—"I have need of nothing. I am okay on the physical side and on the spiritual side. I'm okay." You see people who have that attitude can come to the conclusion that "I don't need God involved anymore than He already is in my life. I don't want Him encroaching in my life anymore than He already is. I'm fine. He's involved up to a certain point, but that's it. I don't want Him involved anymore."

Another attitude is "You cannot teach me anything. I'm ready. I'm already there. I don't need to change because I am already ready to enter into the Kingdom of God. I like who I am. I'm just right there waiting for Christ to return. I do not need a thing." And the reality is that this is a defining characteristic of this end-time era and there are many people who have symptoms of both of these categories—materialism and have the spiritual gifts necessary already to be in the Kingdom of God. And I'm speaking to the greater Church of God here.

And notice what God says about. We were in Revelation 3:17. Let's go back there because I left off the last part of the verse on purpose. Revelation 3:17, remember we started off, it says "Because you say." Christ says, "Because you Laodiceans say:"

Revelation 3:17b. ... *I am rich and increased with goods; and have need of nothing; ... (KJV)*

But notice the last part of the verse. He's saying, "You don't know:"

Revelation 3:17b. ... *[you] know not that [you are] wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (KJV)*

"You don't see it. You're blind. You don't know."

So, up to this point now it leads us to the big question. What should we as individuals, as Christians, be doing about this problem, this two-faceted problem that is endemic in the era, the time in which we live? What should we be doing about that? We're going to talk about three areas.

The first one is minor compared to the other two.

1. What others do in different groups is between them and God and it is none of our business.

What others do in other groups. And sometimes it's good to see. We talk and buzz and speculate and gossip and all of that about what's going on in other groups. But it is between them and God and it's not our business. In other words, we shouldn't focus on what's going on in other groups. We don't have any control over that. That's between them and God.

Now, let me give a caveat to that because occasionally a shepherd or a minister needs to warn the flock of something that's going on in the greater Church of God so that the flock doesn't fall prey to that pitfall. We're doing so right now. But generally that is not the norm. What people do in other groups is between them and God.

Let's go to Philippians 1 and see that this happened to Paul. And he's writing to educate the church in Philippi about this very thing. Philippians 1, we're going to read verses 15 through 18 because they were getting focused on what some of the group was doing. Philippians 1 verse 15, Paul says to the church there and by extension to us today:

Philippians 1:15. *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; (KJV)*

In other words, they're up there preaching to glorify themselves. And they're arguing among themselves and trying to see who's in the spotlight the most. And he says, "But others preach Christ out of good will." That's verse 15. Verse 16:

Philippians 1:16. *The one preach Christ of contention, ... (KJV)*

That in the Greek means *selfish ambition*. They're preaching Christ for their own ends.

Philippians 1:16b. *... not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: (KJV)*

Because he was in prison. Verse 17:

Philippians 1:17. *But the other [this other group preaches Christ out] of love, knowing that I am set for the [defense] of the gospel.*

18) [And he says,] What then? [What do we do about this?] notwithstanding [he says, here's the solution.], every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and therein do [I] rejoice, [He says, yes, I] will rejoice [the fact that Christ is being preached]. (KJV)

And that should be our attitude. Now notice Romans 14:10 Paul is charging the Romans and educating the Romans on this very fact something that we need to always keep in mind—what others do is between them and God. Romans 14 and verse 10:

Romans 14:10. *But why [do you] judge [your] brother? or why [do you] set at [nothing your] brother? ... (KJV)*

Meaning: Through your gossip or criticism, or being judgmental.

Romans 14:10b. *... for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (KJV)*

And I might add the words “as individuals.” We don’t stand there as a group. We stand there as individuals.

So, in general, rather than focusing on what other groups are doing, we need to spend the time preparing ourselves to be the Bride of Christ. As, I said, occasionally a warning has to go out about what’s happening so it doesn’t adversely affect the brethren or the flock, but in general, we should focus on what we need to be doing.

That leads directly to the second point which is just that.

2. We need to focus on what we are called to do.

That should be our focus. Now remember in 1 Peter 4:17, Peter said, “The time has come that judgment is on the house of God.” Boy, it is on the house of God big time right now as we approach the end of the age. And Christ said in Matthew 12; He says, “You’re going to be held accountable for every idle word that you say and must give account of in the day of Judgment.” So, those are the things that we should be cognizant of and be concerned about.

Let’s go back to Matthew 7. It’s amazing what Christ said in that very short space. This time we’ll begin in verse 21. Notice what He says, and something that we all need to take to heart, all of us—especially me!

Matthew 7:21. *Not every one that [says] unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that [does] the will of my Father which is in heaven. (KJV)*

It’s not what we say. It’s what we do, what our heart is, what our attitude is. He says, Verse 22:

Matthew 7:22. *Many will say to me in that day [judgment day], Lord, have we ... (KJV)*

Now it’s interesting He doesn’t say, “Have I.” It says, “Have we.” Is that a group? It sure sounds like it to me.

Matthew 7:22b. *... have we not prophesied in [your] name? and in [your] name have [we not] cast out [demons]? and in [your] name [have we] done many wonderful works? [Haven’t we done all that?]
23) And then will I profess unto them, ... (KJV)*

Not “you” but “them.”

Matthew 7:23b. *... I never knew you: depart from me, [you, all of you who] work iniquity [who don’t do what I tell you to do].*

24) Therefore [whoever hears] these sayings of mine, and [does] them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it [didn't fall because] it was founded [or had a foundation] upon a rock. (KJV)

And that Greek word for “rock” is the Greek word “petra,” the same word that Christ used in Matthew 16:18 when He said, “Upon this rock will I build my church.” So, those, who build their foundation on Christ and what Christ said and what Christ did in His example, are not going to fall.

But in verse 26, He says:

Matthew 7:26. *And every one that [hears] these sayings of mine, and [doesn't do] them, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

27) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (KJV)

And if you remember the news here when the hurricane came through on the Jersey shore and those homes were just built on pilings in sand. It looked like pickup sticks. It was just a jumble of wood and stuff. That hurricane just went right through, undermined, underneath all of those and they fell in. Boy, what a graphic example of building your house on sand.

You know the point that we stand before God individually. Not as part of a corporation.

Now think with me on this. What if God said this: “I know this group over here. They’re a corporation, have a certain name. I know this group. And they’re doing a really good job. They’re doing this and doing that for me and generally they’re doing a good job. And I’m going to take that whole group into my kingdom even though there are a few stinkers in there.”

Now does that make sense? Does that make any sense at all? Or what if God said: “Hey, this group over here, they’re lethargic. They’re not doing what they should be doing. They’re a social club and all of that, but on the other hand, there are a few righteous people there. So, I’m going to take the whole ... I’m going to throw the whole lot into the lake of fire, even though there are a few righteous over here.”

Now does that make sense? Of course not!

The key is in Matthew 22 where the lawyer came to Christ and said, “What do I have to do to obtain eternal life?” It is so simple. Love God with all your might, with all your mind, with all your heart, with all your being and love your neighbor the same as you love yourself. It is very simple and it is made possible by one thing. Let’s go to

Ephesians chapter 4 and see what makes it possible under this second point of we need to focus on what we've been called to do.

Now Ephesians 4, we're going to start in verse 11. It has been a proof text for years to show that there is rank in the church. And I think it's obvious that these verses in the very beginning here talk about jobs that ministers do. Verse 11:

Ephesians 4:11. *And he gave some, [the job of apostle]; and some [the job of a prophet]; and some, [an evangelist]; and some [are pastors, shepherds] and [others are] teachers; (KJV)*

But notice!

Ephesians 4:12. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (KJV)*

Notice that's to be done:

Ephesians 4:13. *[Until] we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God [to know about Christ], unto a perfect man, ... (KJV)*

That means *complete or mature*. But notice this last phrase, what we want to focus on.

Ephesians 4:13b. *... unto the measure of the stature of the [fullness] of Christ:*

In other words, all this goes on for the purpose of us approaching the character, the mind of Jesus Christ. That's why we're here. We are here to become like Him in character, thought, deed, attitude, approach. And all of this training goes on, studying, reading the Bible, iron sharpening iron, talking, fellowshiping with the purpose of us approaching the image, the character of Jesus Christ.

And you see Satan wants us to be focused on what other people are doing, what's going on in other places rather than focused on what we need to be doing to become the bride, to prepare ourselves to become the bride. We need to focus on what we are called to do.

The third and the last point and this is probably the most important.

3. We need to realize that instead of saying, "I have need of nothing," rather what we need to do, what we need to realize, what we just need to know to the depth of our being is that "I have need of everything!"

Notice James 1:17. The Bible talks about this and the Laodiceans are just opposite of what we're going to read right now in the next couple of scriptures. Notice James 1:17. James says:

James 1:17. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above [from God], and [comes] down from the Father of lights [not darkness, but lights], [in] whom [there] is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (KJV)*

What this says is that every good thing we have, we don't earn. We didn't earn it. We didn't earn it because of our ability. We didn't earn our height or our weight. We didn't earn the way we look. We didn't earn the fact we have a brain or lungs or arms or legs. We didn't earn the fact that we live in this beautiful world. We didn't earn the fact that we were called and picked up out of the muck. We didn't earn any of that. It's all a gift.

We most certainly did not earn God's holy spirit. That came through the sacrifice of our brother, our older brother Jesus Christ, our Savior. We did not earn that. Rather, we caused that.

We are nothing apart from God. We have no talent, no ability that God needs. We can't educate God. We can't teach God a thing. Everything we have that's good comes from Him. And we are nothing without Him.

Let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and we're going to begin in verse 7. I'll read it out of the New King James. Paul is addressing this very thing to a church that some said, "Well, I'm of Apollos." And "I'm of Paul." "And I'm of this" and "I'm of that." And they had divisions, all kinds of divisions. They were getting drunk on the Passover. They were allowing fornication to go on in the church. They were just messed up top to bottom. 1 Corinthians 4:7, he asks the question:

1 Corinthians 4:7. *For who makes you [different] from another [person]? (NKJV)*

Who causes that? And he says:

7b) And what do you have that you did not receive? (NKJV)

Did you earn your intelligence? Did you earn your eyesight? Did you earn your hearing ability? Did you earn what coordination you might have? He says:

7 continued) Now if you did indeed receive it [meaning as a gift], why do you boast as if you [didn't receive it]? (NKJV)

In other words, as if you earned it because of your superior ability. Now in verse 8, Paul gets sarcastic again. He says:

1 Corinthians 4:8. *You are already full! [He says,] You are already rich! (NKJV)*

Now, isn't this interesting that this is a Laodicean attitude in a first generation church, the Ephesian era? "You're already full. You're already rich. You don't need a thing," Paul is saying. He says:

1 Corinthians 4:8b. *You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you! (NKJV)*

“That we could follow your coattails up to be kings and priests,” he’s saying. Verse 9:

1 Corinthians 4:9. *For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.*

10) We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ [he says]! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! (NKJV)

When Solomon said in the first part of Ecclesiastes “There is nothing new under the sun,” this happened back then before 100 A.D. It is happening today right before our eyes. “I don’t need anything. We’ve got it all. We’re the only true church of God. We have all the truth. We’re going to the place of safety. We have it made, folks. All you have to do is tithe to us and come sit in our chairs.”

Notice, when somebody says, “I have need of nothing,” that means “I don’t want anybody to tell me what to do. I don’t need any correction. I don’t want God to correct me. I don’t want the Bible to correct me. I don’t want anybody to because I don’t need to change. I’m already there.”

But you see what this third point is, when we say, “We need to realize I have need of everything, we need to realize that we need correction.”

We need to be corrected so we can become in the image of Jesus Christ. We’re not there yet. We’re not even close! And we have to be corrected of who we are—the old person, into the new person, which is the image of Jesus Christ.

And correction comes in many forms. Correction comes through our reading the Bible. We read those words and we compare what the words say to ourselves and we can be corrected. We can be corrected by preaching God’s word. We can hear the words and think about them and ponder and compare the words that are said versus what we actually think or do and be corrected. One of the big ways to be corrected is through trials. Pain is a wonderful corrector. And God is the chief rug puller. God can pull rugs out from under us so fast and get our attention so fast to correct us. And, then, of course, true friends can correct one another. When you see somebody hitting their head with a hammer and they’re saying, “Oh, this hurts! Oh, this hurts! Man, why am I hurting all the time?” And the pound, pound, pound reminds me of Galatians 6 and verse 1, it says:

Galatians 6:1. If you see your brother overtaken in a fault, go to them in a spirit of meekness.

So, correction can come from brothers and sisters in the church, true friends in the church. We all need to change. We all need to be corrected from what we are today so

that we can become more like Jesus Christ. So, instead of saying, “I have need of nothing,” today, we need to say, “I have need of everything. I have need of God’s love, God’s spirit, God’s word. I have need of Christ molding and shaping me and correcting me. I need to have more love. I need to have more faith. I need to be more longsuffering. I need to be more patient. I need to be kinder and gentler. I need it all. I need everything.”

And so this third point, as we close this and lead to a conclusion, is we need to realize that apart from God we’re nothing and we need everything.

We tend to attract to certain people—those who want to meet in peace; hence, our name. People just want to meet in peace. And I think people generally want to know the truth and be fed the truth.

And I think people are coming increasingly to understand. And I feel a sense of urgency that we have to have the mind of Christ. We can’t wait. We have to be more like Him every day so that we can be the bride of Christ. That is our mission. Not to build buildings, colleges, print books, be on television and all of that. We must be ready, willing, able, working hard to have the mind of Christ.

But you see, many today, I think all too many—and we’ve all been guilty of it! I’ve been guilty of it—sometimes you just don’t focus on what you need to change. Your mind’s somewhere else. Sometimes it’s on things. It’s on material things. It’s on the world. It’s on this or that. And we don’t get down to the nitty-gritty of focusing on what we need to do to be in the image of Jesus Christ.

And Christ addressed that. He addressed a marriage. And He said, “Some of you aren’t ready.” Let’s go to Matthew chapter 22. We’ll begin in verse 1. Now put this in the context today. As we get close to the end, the marriage supper is getting close. Matthew 22:1.

Matthew 22:1. *And Jesus answered and [spoke] unto them again by parables, and [He] said,
2) The kingdom of heaven is like... (KJV)*

And anytime you hear those words, our antennas should go up, our ears should prick up. We need to pay attention.

Matthew 22:2. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king [referring to the Father], which made a marriage for his son [referring to Christ],
3) And sent forth his servants to call [those] that were [invited] to the wedding: [but] they [wouldn’t] come.
4) Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are [invited], Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and [everything] is ready: come unto the marriage.*

5) *But they made light of it, and [they] went their [way], one to his farm, another to his merchandise: (KJV)*

Focusing on physical things. Verse 6:

Matthew 22:6. *And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and [killed] them.*

7) *[And] when the king heard thereof, he was [angry]: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. (KJV)*

Now obviously, He's talking about the Jews and Christ's first coming, but the message for us today is preparing for the second coming.

Matthew 22:8. *Then [He said] to his servants, The wedding is ready, [and those which] were [invited weren't] worthy.*

9) *Go therefore into the highways, and as many as [you] shall find, [invite] to the marriage.*

10) *So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. (KJV)*

And we know in 1 Corinthians, there are not many high and mighty that are called. And we know that all of us have done bad things before we were called and even after we were called. Verse 11:

Matthew 22:11. *And when the king came in to see the guests, ... (KJV)*

Most of them were dressed appropriately for the occasion, but:

Matthew 22:11b. *... he saw there a man which [hadn't] on a wedding garment: (KJV)*

Everybody else was in their tuxes or in their dark suits and this guy walks in [wearing] sweats and flip-flops. And he stood out.

Matthew 22:12. *And he [said] unto him, Friend, [I invited you] how [can you come here] not having a wedding garment? [How can you come here and not be dressed appropriately?] And he was speechless. (KJV)*

I mean, what's the guy going to say? Verse 13:

Matthew 22:13. *Then the king said to [his] servants, [You] Bind him hand and foot, [you] take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth [as this man goes into the lake of fire]. (KJV)*

This guest hadn't prepared for the wedding. He was invited at the last minute. And, all of us, relatively speaking, are invited at the last minute at the end of six thousand years. And this man was not prepared for the wedding.

And Laodicea in general is not prepared for the wedding. And this is something we have to take to heart because we live in this generation. We live in this area. So, let's make sure. We have to make sure we're not walking down either of those two paths to Laodicea, focusing on wealth and material goods or into being exclusivists and judgmental and self-righteous.

Let's close with one final scripture, a scripture we look to so much as we approach the fall holy days. Revelation 19, we'll begin in verse 7. Revelation 19:7 talks about the marriage that should be our focus, getting ready for it. Revelation 19, beginning in verse 7:

Revelation 19:7. *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, ... (KJV)*

But notice this! These are our walking orders, marching orders.

Revelation 19:7b. *... his wife [has] made herself ready. (KJV)*

Nobody is going to make us ready other than us.

Now, the power of the holy spirit is available to help us. God's word is available to help us, but we have to put forth the effort. We have to make ourselves ready by study and prayer and fasting and fellowship and doing good works and drawing closer to God every day to become more like the man, the being that we're going to marry, and that is Jesus Christ.

Verse 8:

Revelation 19:8. *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, (KJV)*

Not like the guy in flip-flops.

Revelation 19:8b. *... clean and white: [because] the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. (KJV)*

We have to be clothed in righteousness or we're not going to be there.

Revelation 19:9. *And he [said] unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. (KJV)*

Each one of us has been called to that marriage. The question is: In this era that says, "I don't need anything," are we preparing ourselves to change to be in the image of Jesus Christ, the being we are going to marry?

Revelation 19:9b. ...And he [said] unto me, *These are the true sayings of God.*
(KJV)

So let's use the time that we have left to prepare ourselves to meet Christ on that day, and to be His bride.