

THE WEALTHY CHURCH ... that went bankrupt
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(Revelation 3:14, 22)

When a wealthy man becomes insolvent there is something radically wrong either in his soul or in his business. If his material possessions cannot prevent disaster, moral weakness in his life has created problems too great to be solved by money. If his business be based on unsound principles, virtue and sincerity will be unequal to the task of satisfying creditors. The Church of the Laodiceans provides a striking example of a bankrupt assembly. They had a great bank balance, but an empty prayer room. They had many social connections, but no sincere converts. They found it easy to obtain phenomenal collections, but tears were unknown. It was a popular social club with a religious flavour about its proceedings, and never a birthplace for souls. And it was to this Church that the Lord Jesus sent His challenging message: "Behold, I stand at the door. and knock . . ."

It is possible to be very religious and not be a Christian
This simple fact explains why Christ said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." We must never forget this letter was sent to a Church. The Lord declared, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods. and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched. and miserable. and poor, and blind, and naked." This was the Church that possessed everything and enjoyed nothing. Their acts of worship were formalities; their sermons were essays meant to please; their prayers were beautifully phrased utterances that charmed the listeners but never reached the heart of God. They had a form of godliness, but no living Christ who breathed peace into troubled hearts.

It is not possible to be lukewarm and not to be in danger
It is worthy of note that these people were not "cold." Had they been completely cold, the message delivered to them might have been somewhat different. They were neither hot nor cold. They occupied a position about half-way between the two extremes. They were sufficiently warm to go to church; and sufficiently cold to keep Christ outside the door. To these people Jesus said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." The most difficult people to reach with the Gospel are the men and women who respectably occupy the middle position. To the arrogant sinner they say, "You should be a better man"; to the Christian they say, "You are too narrow-minded." They have sufficient vision to recognise their own importance, but are too blind to see their own nakedness. Such people inevitably stand in great danger.

It is not possible for Christ to enter a man's life without the man's permission
'The human heart is a temple, of which man is the custodian. It is a strange thing that the Maker of heaven and earth can be easily frustrated by the closed door of a human sanctuary. This explains why the Lord Jesus found it necessary to ask admittance to the inmost shrine of the Laodicean Church. It explains also why the same state of affairs exists throughout the world. Christ respects the free will of man. He may so easily control the storm on Galilee's lake; He may instantly expel demons from

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their place of abode; He might seem capable of performing
the impossible: yet when He comes to the human thresh-
hold, He can only knock and ask the tenant to draw back
the bolts.

It is not possible to have Christ within and be bankrupt

Language is inadequate to express the wonder of His
promise, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him,
and he with me." The Saviour always left a place richer
than when He entered. His message to this disappointing
church spoke of "gold tried in the fire . . . white raiment
that thou mayest be clothed . . . eyesalve that thou mayest
see." No man can be poor when Christ dwells within his
heart. All the promises of God are "yea and amen" in the
Lord Jesus; and if He be my constant companion, I have
access to the unlimited wealth of eternal banks. It is a
cause for great amazement that such a wealthy Saviour
should seek a home in a sinner's heart. It is even more
surprising that some hearts are locked against Him. The
poor Laodiceans went bankrupt, and they had no excuse.

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