

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



March 11, 2018

I Have Need of Nothing

Churches, like people, can easily deceive themselves into thinking that everything is fine, and completely miss the spiritual disease that is slowly destroying them.

"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—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev. 3:17-18).



The church in Laodicea was in great shape. No heresies were infiltrating their faith, they were at peace internally, and persecution had somehow passed them by. Moreover, they had been blessed materially. This was a church that had found the "sweet spot" of comfort and faithfulness. In their own words, they "had need of nothing." All they had to do was maintain the status quo, and they were home free.

But Jesus saw their condition in much darker tones: "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked"—hardly the image of a successful church. Jesus summed up their spiritual condition in

one word: "lukewarm." The passion they once had for their Lord had turned into a listless apathy.

Here was a church on the verge of being cast out by their Lord, yet heedless of their spiritual bankruptcy. How could a church be so oblivious to the peril they were in?

Prosperity always breeds complacency. When people get comfortable, they usually become self-satisfied and indifferent. This principle is borne out in the history of Israel. The good times never lasted long, because the abundance bred a spirit of complacency, which led to decline and collapse—again and again and again.

Whether we're talking about churches, nations, or individuals, the pattern is always the same: people get comfortable, then turn soft and smug, and get blindsided by "bad luck" of their own making.

Laodicea was given an opportunity to correct the problem before it became fatal. The Lord's advice on how to get their house in order is worth looking at more carefully.

First, they needed to "buy gold refined in fire." This is a common biblical metaphor for a strong character that has been shaped in the furnace of affliction (see Job 23:10; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).

Second, they had to procure "white garments," a metaphor for the good deeds that God's people are known for (see Rev. 19:8,14).

Finally, they were urged to get "eye salve" to cure their spiritual blindness, a reference to a new way of viewing reality (Jn. 9:39; Ac. 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:18).

Note that they had to *buy* all these things. This wealthy church was being told to *spend their wealth on the things that really mattered*. Like the rich young ruler, Jesus was telling these people to sell all, give it away, and come follow Him. Repentance required a wholesale re-orientation of their faith and life.

The church at Laodicea is a model for today's church. We are loyal, well-off, comfortable—and utterly blind to our desperate condition. We must open our eyes, throw ourselves into His work, and take the slings that will come our way, while we have time to do so.

— David King



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