



Daily Verse and Comment

Revelation 3:17

(17) You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

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How close this is in principle to what the Pharisee says in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican ([Luke 18:9-14](#))! Oblivious to his spiritual poverty, the Pharisee chooses to compare himself to humans he can see rather than the holy [God](#) to whom he supposedly prays in [faith](#). Notice also his conceit in listing his wonderful works of tithing and fasting!

Though the [Laodicean](#) is indifferent, lackadaisical, and inconsistent in his devotion to God, his ignorance of his spiritual condition reveals a fundamental flaw that undergirds his lukewarm condition and paralyzes his spiritual life. The Laodicean says he is rich, but Christ's revelation shatters that delusion. He completely misreads his spiritual condition! He thinks he is already complete, thus he is indifferent to growing and changing. So great is his conceit that it blinds him into saying he needs nothing!

This self-deception results in inconsistency in prayer and Bible Study and nonchalance in overcoming. Why do those exercises when he has no need? His relationship to [Jesus Christ](#) is distant and insipid. Would we want to be married to a person who could take us or leave us depending upon his momentary mood? No wonder Christ reacts so severely! The Laodicean's self-perceived "wealth" is a barrier to any meaningful relationship with Him ([Proverbs 18:11](#)).

A Laodicean is poor—really and truly poor—yet all the while thinking himself to be rich. He is unwilling to jettison anything, let alone everything in a whole-hearted search for God. Undoubtedly, he has knowledge about

God and thinks this is the true religion, but it is plain that he does not know God. If he did, he would not be so blind to his poverty because he could compare himself to God's [holiness](#), and his shortcomings would be exposed. He is intelligent, but he mistakes his intelligence for true [wisdom](#). Christ may even have given him gifts for ministering to the church in some way, but he mistakenly judges them as grace toward salvation. He is blind yet has the light of God's truth in him—remember, this is written to converted people—but the light is turning to darkness. How great that darkness must be!

To be wretched describes life when everything one owns has been destroyed or plundered by war. Here it describes the Laodicean's spiritual destitution and pitiableness before God. He is being devastated in the spiritual war against [Satan](#), even though to all outward appearances he may look well-clothed, well-fed, and vigorous in carrying out his daily, secular responsibilities.

How careful Christians must be in this time when [the world](#) and Satan are pressing their distractions upon us as never before! We cannot allow ourselves to be deluded into negligently or carelessly cheating ourselves out of so great salvation ([Hebrews 2:1-3](#)).

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Beatitudes, Part Two: Poor in Spirit](#)

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[Laodiceanism](#)

[Lukewarm](#)

[Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican](#)

[Self Deception](#)

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