



Daily Verse and Comment

[Revelation 3:15-19](#)

(15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. (17) Because 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: (18) I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. (19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

King James Version

[Revelation 1:10](#) states that the Day of the Lord is the setting for all of Christ's [letters to the churches](#). For Laodicea, [Revelation 3:17](#) identifies the central issue: “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.” It would be a rare and foolish individual who would sincerely speak these words, so we should not understand the word “say” to mean they literally utter these words. The saying, “actions speak louder than words,” comes into play here. Thus, the conduct of the members' lives proclaims that they feel no great need for anything else in their lives.

This portion of the church has one assessment about itself, while Christ's evaluation could hardly be more different. The church holds up evidence of divine favor—riches of some sort—and concludes that it has “need of nothing.” Yet Christ's verdict is that their condition is not only wretched but even more pitiable because they are not even aware of it.

Like the Israelites, the church members fundamentally and unknowingly disagree with [God](#) as to their spiritual condition, so His judgment comes as a

shock. Their lives are pleasant, stimulating, and distracting enough that the Creator God does not meaningfully intrude into their thoughts all that often. So, they carry on, as though arm-in-arm with Him, even as they wander off the path. Like with the Israelites, God's silence encourages them to believe that He approves.

This letter to the [Laodiceans](#) powerfully testifies that we can officially reject the Doctrine of [Eternal Security](#) but still live as though our salvation is a foregone conclusion. The simple fact is, we *can* fall away—and, materially speaking, we can feel as if we are living the “good life” all the while. The Laodiceans point to their abundance as evidence of how well they are doing, yet we should remember that even idol-worshippers and other pagans will come up with proof of their gods' favor. Some practiced rituals like rain dances and fertility rites because they connected—incorrectly—those activities and a later good harvest and became confident of their gods' blessing. God's Word, however, urges us to consider our ways and not become settled because human nature tends to deceive itself.

The word “need” in verse 17 is pivotal. We know that there are physical needs and spiritual ones. There are legitimate needs, and then there are wants, things we desire but can do without. But when there is a need—real or perceived—we take steps to fill it. If we need food or water, we will search it out. If we need money to put food on the table, we go to work, and so on. God created these needs in us, and we legitimately attend to them. If we look at what we spend our time, energy, or money on, we can discern what we believe our needs are. The greater we feel the need, the more we are willing to expend to meet that need.

Further, if we recognize that we have spiritual weakness, inconsistent [faith](#), or besetting [sin](#), we who are spiritual will drive ourselves to attend to the lack through what God provides, according to how significant we consider the need to be. But if we conclude we have God's favor regardless of what we do, then we will not feel our spiritual needs as keenly, and we will focus on other things.

This letter, then, serves as another “woe” that the Day of the Lord “will be darkness, and not light” ([Amos 5:18](#)) for those who pay lip-service to God, who assume they have God's favor because they cannot see any real need.

Regarding abundance, [Matthew 5:45](#) says that God makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and He sends rain on the just and the unjust. In other words, God provides the conditions that allow anyone to prosper. Prosperity, therefore, can simply be evidence of God's generosity and faithfulness to His promises. Prosperity *can* indicate His favor, but it is dangerous to take it as an absolute sign of God's approval because too many examples speak to the contrary. Israel was quite wealthy before she fell, but her affluence resulted from God's good and righteous nature, not from His rewarding her.

— David C. Grabbe

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