

What Does God Really Want? (Part 3)

Acts of Kindness

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Given 06-May-00; Sermon #447

This sermon that I am going to be giving today is a continuation of the "What Does God Really Want?" series that I began just prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread. I got into the theme of this sermon series because of the calendar series, with its concentration on technicalities, because technicalities have a strong tendency to divert anybody involving themselves in them from the main theme of God's work.

As we begin this sermon, I want to remind us of what Laodiceanism clearly is right at its very foundation. I will just say it right out: Laodiceanism is *immorality*. It is *lawlessness*. It is *iniquity*. It has facets to it, but at its foundation, that is what it is. The clues are supplied right in the context of Revelation 3:17, where God says,

Revelation 3:17 Because you say that I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

These people say, in evaluation of themselves, that they are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. But God's evaluation—the reality—is that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Please remember that the Laodicean does not literally say this. He lives it, though, and that is what God is judging.

Just this week both Evelyn and I heard an advertisement for Dr. Laura [Schlessinger's] radio program. I want you to listen to this quote because it fits right into this evaluation of what God said of the Laodicean: "We are known by what we do. We cannot live in our imagination, because we are not what we imagine we are, but what we are is what we do."

God is evaluating, not what they say about themselves, but how they are living—what they *do*. This describes why the Laodicean is shown giving

such a mistaken evaluation of himself. Human nature has deceived him into thinking of himself differently from what he really is.

Another deceptive feature of this is that the Laodicean might be quite religious. But just remember, so were the Pharisees, and they were not doing what God wants either.

I chose to focus only on three things that God states there: 1) Have need of nothing, 2) blind, and 3) naked. This is in my previous sermon, because their application is so apparent. "Have need of nothing" indicates that Laodiceanism contains a swelling of pride—"the father of all sin." The Laodicean is filled with self-righteousness. It is so great that they judge themselves to be already complete. They have need of nothing.

I am going to read something to you from a book titled, *People of the Lie*. It was written by a psychiatrist named M. Scott Peck. Incidentally, it is a very fine book. I am going to read to you just one long paragraph beginning on page 79 and ending on page 80. I want you to think of this in terms of Laodiceanism. He begins this paragraph by stating:

'Pride goes before the fall,' it is said, and of course laymen simply call pride what we have labeled with the fancy psychiatric term of *malignant narcissism* [an intense self-absorption] being at the very root of evil. It is no accident that church authorities have generally considered pride first among the sins. By the sin of pride they do not generally mean the sense of legitimate achievement one might enjoy after a job well done. While such pride, like normal narcissism, may have its pitfalls, it is also part of a healthy self-confidence and a realistic sense of self-worth. What is meant is rather a kind of pride that unrealistically denies our inherent sinfulness and imperfection, a kind of overweening pride or arrogance that prompts people to reject and even attack the judgment implied by the day-to-day evidence of their own inadequacy.

In different words, he is saying what Revelation 3:17 says. He put it into psychiatric terms, that these people have such pride that they judge themselves as already complete. Again, God is judging what they do, and that is what their actions are showing Him.

Blind means that they are not able to recognize God's spiritual truth about themselves. Again, from the book: They do not recognize the inherent sinfulness of the way they live, day by day. "Blind" means they are not able to recognize God's spiritual truth about themselves. Like a physically blind person, they are unaware of the spiritual reality of their condition, and they say, "What sin?"

Naked means that they are not clothed with God's righteousness. By contrast, the bride of Christ in Revelation 19:7-8 is clothed in white, and "she has made herself ready."

All of this taken together—the pride, the blindness, and the nakedness—points to not keeping the commandments, because when one keeps the commandments, Psalm 111:10 says that *understanding* is the fruit, and therefore one should not be blind or unaware of his sinfulness. In addition to that, Psalm 119:172 says that all of God's commandments are righteousness. So if they lack righteousness, immorality is the cause. What is it that God wants from the Laodicean? He wants them to turn from their immorality, and to keep His commandments.

We are going to continue this review at the beginning of this sermon by turning to a scripture that we have not used in this series. It is in John 6. This series of verses is important because it points to the fundamental problem that we are dealing with in this series of sermons.

John 6:26-29 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him has God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said

unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent.

This series of verses begins to get at the fundamental problem because Jesus is directly asked, "What must we do to do the works of God?" Brethren, is that not what we all want to do, to do the works of God? Well, we are given the answer right out of Jesus' mouth.

This episode took place the day following the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus begins His answer by informing them that they misunderstood the signs. It says in the *King James Version* "miracles." "Miracles" is a misleading translation. Yes, the feeding of the five thousand indeed was a miracle, but the real *intent* of the miracles was to produce a *sign*, and that is what the Greek word says there.

Jesus answered as He did, because their motive in asking the question was wrong. What Jesus did in feeding the five thousand (and all of His other miracles besides), were indeed miracles, but they should have been taken as a sign that He was their spiritual Messiah. Instead, all they could see was that He could do wonders, and that He could take care of their immediate physical needs. That is, He could fill their stomachs, or He could heal their bodies—and they liked it.

But Jesus said, "You're missing the point." So He told them to stop working for that food. Incidentally, what He said there is in the imperative sense. It is a strongly worded command. He said, "Stop laboring for that stuff. Instead, work for that food which will fill the void in your heart so that you can be eternally in the Kingdom of God." And then He says, "I will give you this food." In other words, "I will provide it for you because of who I am."

I am going to change His words a little bit. He said, "I am the One on whom God has set His seal." Do you know how seals are used? It is a sign of authenticity. From the miracles, they should have concluded that God had stamped His seal on Him, that He was the Messiah. But they did not, and so He was saying, "I am the Messiah as testified by John the Baptist and the many signs that I have done." He hardly could have made it any plainer. But do you know what, brethren? They still did not get it.

What is important to us in terms of this sermon is that Jesus, in this four-verse section there, called faith a work. Very unusual, but not in the least wrong. Right here is the breakdown point—the point at which the producing of a Laodicean begins. Loss of faith is the flashpoint. We tend to separate the two into separate categories, as though somehow or another they (faith and works) are not all that related. This is one of the "gifts" of Protestantism, and it is a bad gift.

What Jesus is telling us here is that it takes work to produce faith, and it is faith that enables one to do the work of God. It is a mental work that involves study, meditation, analysis of God's Word; study, meditation, analysis of God's creation, including people and their cultures, and so forth. I could go on and on, but the point is to reach conclusions that one can put into practical application in life.

Faith is not a constant. It must be maintained. The things of God cannot be taken for granted, and if faith is challenged by a false doctrine and the challenge is not met and overcome, then faith in God diminishes, and the drift into pride, spiritual blindness, and nakedness has begun.

In verse 31 the people replied:

John 6:31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written,
He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

We are not going to go any further here, but all through this chapter from this point on there is a play on this word "manna"—its spiritual imagery. Manna sustained the Israelites' physical lives in the wilderness. Jesus used it here to symbolize that which gives strength and energy to spiritual life.

Just suppose that the Israelites stopped eating manna when they were in the wilderness. What would have happened to their physical strength? When Israel was in the wilderness, God freely gave the manna, but the Israelites still had to labor by going out to gather it, and then they had to labor to prepare it into something suitable for a meal that would nourish them and give them strength.

Are you getting the drift? It takes work to produce faith. In this sense that Jesus was using it, He was saying faith had to go out and be gathered. It just does not come to you by magic.

So in like manner, we have to go out and go to the true Bread of life in study, meditation, prayer, and analysis in order to find nourishment for our spiritual lives. But even when we gather it, there is still labor to make it applicable and practical to daily life. In other words, it is a labor of receiving what He wants to freely give that He is focusing on at this point in this long discourse in this chapter, and it takes work in order to receive so as to produce living faith. And that faith, combined with grace, becomes the foundation of all that follows, because everything else is built upon them.

God too is working to produce faith in us in order that we might be motivated to yield to His workmanship. God is reproducing Himself in us, and in order to do that He has willed that we *must* live by faith, choosing that we might be in His image fully and completely spiritually, as well as physically. And this faith that one has to work for is not a mere lazy agreement or acceptance of certain knowledge. This is faith that works. It not only must be worked for, but it works as well, and faith which is working through love, faith which by love is mighty in operation.

This is not a faith that merely works to rigidly observe a set of rules, but rather it is rule-keeping combined with kindness, with mercy, with concern for others' needs, with forbearance of others' weaknesses, one that is not easily irritated nor arrogantly puffed up. It is one that is kind and patient, without envy, sacrificing itself for the well-being of others.

Where does one get the nature with the spiritual power to do this? This is a matter of grave concern for us because I believe that most of us feel, for the most part, inadequate and ill-equipped to do this. On the one hand, our mind is mentally able to outrun our ability to actually do something. We are able to perceive a need to do or be something other than what we are, but we find ourselves unable to perform.

The overall answer to that question was the reason why the "All In All" sermon was given. That sermon shows us that we are being *drawn* into a

unity—a oneness—which will culminate when the Father is "all, and in all." This is Jesus Christ's work as He administers to the church. It is Jesus Christ's responsibility as High Priest to get us to that point.

By analogy, we are seen in the Bible as His body. He is our Head, and we are His fullness. That is, we complete His body, and thus we are being led by, we receive our direction and carry out functions as He, the Head, sees fit. It is from Him that we receive whatever gifts we need to fulfill those responsibilities. He is able, as Paul said, to do exceedingly more than we could ever even ask.

He has already loaded us with things, as Paul so clearly shows in Ephesians 1-3. In Philippians 4:19, He tells us that He will supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ. We can see that there is a chain of command here. All these things originate with the Father. They are part of the Father's will, but they are given through our personal individual relationship with Jesus Christ. With no faith, there is no relationship. With weak faith, there is a weak relationship.

If we are truly *laboring* as He said, and really want to do the works of God, and we are *laboring* to increase our faith, then the relationship is going to be good, and the gifts from Christ that will enable us to keep His commandments will flow to us. That is His job: To do what He can to get us to that place where we are making every effort, bending our will, setting aside the time, sacrificing, and doing whatever it takes to make that relationship right and good, the way it should be, with that One who is going to be our Husband.

These gifts include all the gifts that enable us to fulfill our responsibility, and brethren, it even includes things like a calendar. He has already taken care of that so that we do not have to be distracted, because our present responsibility is already hard enough. I want you to think about this, brethren: It is not in the Father's nature not to supply us with everything needful for the completion of His purpose. Those of you who are parents answer this. Would you ever withhold anything from any of your children that was absolutely necessary for their life? I do not mean luxuries. I mean necessities. I can see heads shaking out here. "No! We would never do anything like that!" Well, neither will God! If human beings will not do it,

neither will God. He took care of the calendar long ago and gave it to His church.

Remember that we are at the end of a long 6,000-year process by this time, and God did not wait until the very end to reveal a calendar that He is pleased to be worshipped through. That would be totally unfair to all of those who came before us in this process. The calendar has been in existence at least ever since Exodus 12.

Our responsibility is to yield, to work out our own salvation. God has opened the way, but we must labor, we must walk to carry it to its conclusion. Even there in that verse in Philippians 2:12-13, we are assured that it is God who works in us, both to will and to do. He supplies the desire as well as the power, and this is why Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing." Do we believe Him when He says that those who keep His Word, that both He and the Father will take up their abode in us? That is pretty close in terms of relationship.

We cannot evaluate ourselves against others, because everybody's walk is a bit different. Some people are old. Others are young. Some are healthy. Others are sickly. Some come from religious backgrounds, others from non-religious ones. Some are highly educated. Others have the bare basics. The differences are perhaps almost endless, but regardless of our circumstances, the analogy of Israel coming out of Egypt into the wilderness and on to the Promised Land teaches us that He can—and He will—supply what we need for our walk.

We are going to learn something now from the Pharisees that touches on this subject of what God really wants. I touch on this because the Pharisees were the ultra-orthodox of that time. No doubt they seemed, on the surface anyway, to be striving to do what is right.

Matthew 23:1-4 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not you after their works: for they say and do not. For they

bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation.

I take it from what Jesus said in the first couple of verses here of Matthew 23 that the scribes and the Pharisees' basic teaching was in harmony with the will of God. That is why Jesus said, "Whatever they bid you observe, that do," but they themselves did not follow what they told others to do. How could God bless such hypocrisy? That is why I read verse 14. He certainly did not bless that hypocrisy. But there is another characteristic that they had that I feel is more important for this sermon.

The Pharisees were also casuists. That is a word that we do not use very often. This is very interesting. That term, incidentally, does not appear in the Bible. You have to get this from analyzing their characteristics. A casuist is a person, often a theologian, who resolves matters of conscience and duty using clever, but false, reasoning. They are quibblers—people who make petty, trivial, insubstantial arguments that rely on a great deal of ambiguity in order to evade an issue that is hitting pretty close to home.

They are people who search for technicalities which renders them unable to see the forest for the trees. They are people who make trivial criticisms. They strain at gnats and swallow camels. They are people who see only rigid laws, and cannot or will not see the spirit or intention of a law or a principle.

Let us read the Parable of the Two Sons. We used this in that second sermon.

Matthew 21:28-32 But what think you? [Jesus said] A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Which of those two did the will of his father? They said unto him, the first. Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the

publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and you, when you had seen it, repented not afterward, that you might believe him [John the Baptist].

There are two types of people in this parable. The publicans and harlots represent a class of people that make no profession of obedience. They lived in open sin and were not surprised when people denounced them as hopeless sinners. These are people whose sins go before them, and anybody with two eyes can see the sin. But what Jesus is saying is, the message of sin goes right into their hearts, and they do not make trivial arguments to evade their guilt. They repent. They are not casuists.

The second type represents those who wear the robes of respectability, not necessarily clerical robes. They are just people who are normally respected within the community, but in reality, in their hearts, they are just as far from God as the publicans and harlots, despite the outward show. These are people whose sins follow behind. They are frequently white-collar criminal types who sin with a deceptive finesse and with convoluted justifications. They always come up with reasons why it is justified that they do this. Jesus is showing that there is more hope for those in society who are consciously wicked than for the self-satisfied.

Now, why am I going into this? Because the Laodicean is self-satisfied, and he wears the robes of respectability. Is one more or less a sinner than the other? The answer is "no," but the consciously wicked have a stronger tendency to do the right thing when confronted by the message of God. They receive it, and they repent.

Those who feel that they are rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing can more easily fail to recognize how spiritually bankrupt they are, and then they equivocate. Like the harlot, they do something, but they do not do the right thing. They justify themselves through some argument clever to themselves, and they do not repent.

They are in reality deluded by Satan and self-deception into believing that their own righteousness will prevail in regard to getting them into the

Kingdom of God. They are deceived into thinking that because of their better status in society, their finer clothing, their greater influence and more money, that somehow or another they equate into God's righteousness.

These people are victims of Laodiceanism. But there is hope, because Jesus did not say that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom *instead* of you. He said *before* you—preceding them. This agrees with what we understand of Revelation 3:18-20. We will go through that.

Revelation 3:18-20 I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich: and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear: and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

This is the purpose of the "trial by fire" that the Laodiceans are going to go through. It is to bring them off the high opinion that they have of themselves, to bring them out of their self-deception and their self-justifications, and to bring them into the Kingdom of God. So there is hope there.

We are going to look at yet another parable. This one is in Luke 10, and just about everybody has some familiarity with this parable.

Luke 10:25-28 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, what is written in the law? How read you? And he answering said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. And he said unto him, You have answered right: this do, and you shall live.

I think that it is interesting that Jesus spoke this in response to a lawyer's question. I think that we all understand how many lawyers like to equivocate and make ambiguous arguments, sort of like our notorious self-justifying president [Clinton] who is recorded as having responded to a question during

a trial. He said, "Define *is*." He is a casuist. I mean, he might be *the* primary example in the whole world—making trivial arguments, equivocating in order to avoid the reality and to have to admit it before the whole world—a man with overweening pride, who I am sure is afraid to repent.

I want you to notice Jesus' first response, because it is important to what I am driving at in this series of sermons. "This do, and you shall live." Is not living (and the implication is *eternally*, because the man was already alive) what we want to do? What was Jesus' response to this man's question? "This do." "Keep the commandments, and you shall live—eternally." That is the answer to our question here. "Keep the commandments."

Therefore, God insists on our keeping the commandments because it is good for us, because it will ensure that, combined with His nature, keeping the commandments will make us in His image. And then He can give us eternal life, because He knows that we will live the same way that He lives.

Now virtually all the doing involves the Ten Commandments, as Jesus' response clearly implies. I want you to watch how the rest of the Parable of the Good Samaritan drives this point home as to what *kind* of doing is necessary. What did Jesus have His mind on?

Luke 10:29-37 But he [the lawyer], willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering said, a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. Which now of these three, think you, was neighbor unto him that fell among the

thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do you likewise.

This parable is without a doubt one of the most profound that Jesus ever gave. Even though it is very short, it nonetheless becomes a very easily understood treatise on practical ethics. It clearly instructs us as to what the *intent* of the Ten Commandments is, and that intent extends far beyond rigid law keeping.

Notice first that He said, "Behold." That is usually a signal by the Bible's writers indicating that the instruction following was not something that was apparent on the surface, but might require more careful investigation and meditation. It is like a signal for one to look for hidden treasure.

Verse 29 tells us that the lawyer wanted to justify himself. We usually do this as a defense whose intent is to make ourselves appear blameless. That is, to vindicate ourselves as though we are really keeping the law. Sometimes our justification is true, and sometimes it is not.

The three personalities that are given in this parable again represent classes of people from whom one would normally expect either neighborly behavior or non-neighborly behavior. It is the expectation factor that provides the cutting edge of Jesus' instruction.

The priest, of course, represents the ministry. They are ones that everybody would expect to be helpful in this kind of situation, those who are very knowledgeable of the requirements of God's law—people directly in the frontline of doing God's work.

Similarly, the Levite represents those who are fairly knowledgeable of God's Word and involved in God's work, but at a different, less direct, non-frontline level than the ministry. Now perhaps we might consider them to be administrative personnel or lay members supporting and assisting the frontline work of the ministry. Everybody gets included here.

The Samaritan represents those from whom one would not normally have any expectation of being knowledgeable of God's way, and thus a person from whom no one would ever expect to receive any kind of helpful assistance.

Jesus could have hardly picked a better example of this, because in John 4:9 it says, "Then said the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

The Jews and the Samaritans viewed each other as enemies. Let me slide something in here. How about doctrinal enemies in the church of God? Now Jesus is not telling us that all of the ministry and the lay members are unkind, uncaring, and insensitive dolts. Nor was He telling us that all of the unconverted are helpful in serving. He is describing who **we**, His disciples, can be neighbor to. The answer: ANYBODY! That is the answer—anybody God brings across our path that is in need of some help. That is the way the Samaritan treated that man. He did not ask him, "Are you a Samaritan?" "Are you a Jew?" "Are you an Ishmaelite?" "A Midianite?" or whatever. He just took care of him.

The lesson is, we can be neighbor to anybody who is in need of help, and Jesus told the man (the lawyer who asked the original question), "Go and do likewise." That is, "Show the same kindness and mercy to all, whether friend or foe, and *then* you will have evidence that you are keeping the law."

This entire parable is ultimately describing what God means by "keeping the commandments," what it means is to love the Lord thy God with all of your heart and all of your soul and all of your mind and all of your being, and love your neighbor as yourself. Remember love is, by definition, *the keeping of the commandments*.

There is a strong tendency in us to subconsciously think of keeping the commandments as negative, that keeping them involves striving *not* to do: *not* to kill, *not* to commit adultery, *not* to bear false witness. But this parable is clearly teaching us the positive side of keeping the commandments. It involves doing acts of kind consideration.

Both sides of the commandments—negative and positive—are love. But I believe that over the course of any given day we have far more opportunity to practice the positive side—doing acts of kind consideration and service—and end up breaking the commandments by failing to take advantage because we are so wrapped up in what we are doing.

This "doing," that Jesus said—"Go and do likewise"—could include anything from common courtesy, to a warm smile, a cheerful greeting, or a thoughtful complimentary comment, to the far more serious time-consuming and sacrificial services rendered by the Samaritan in this parable. In any case, whether the common courtesy or the serious-service one, loving is going to take a measure of sacrifice, and that sacrifice is going to involve getting our mind off ourselves and our consuming interest, and on the other and their need, to lay our need aside like the Samaritan did, and render help to the other.

Look at what the Samaritan sacrificed in order to do what he did. He interrupted his travel. He was probably a businessman and maybe had an appointment to keep, a meeting that he had to be to, but he stopped and he took care of the man. He poured in his own wine and his own oil to dress the man's wound. He set the man on his beast, and undoubtedly supported him along the way as he walked alongside, going the rest of the way to Jericho. He put the man into an inn, paid for his stay, and then promised to return and pay for any shortfall that there might have been in taking care of him.

You see, that is an aspect of godly love just as surely as not stealing, not lying, not breaking the Sabbath, or setting up an idol in your home. Keeping the commandments in this manner of the Good Samaritan is going to require a cost. It is going to require a change in our thinking about serving even those who do not love us, but it has to be done, and you can begin right in your family. So often we will do things for others and pass by those in our family. Familiarity breeds contempt, and we will just pass them by. It is no wonder we have marital problems and childrearing problems.

Let us turn to one more piece of instruction that is right along this same line.

Matthew 19:16-22 And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why call you me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the commandments. He said unto him, Which? Jesus said, You shall do no murder, you shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother: and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If you will be perfect [complete] go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Here is another episode from Christ's life that shows the same principles. The young man asked the same question that the lawyer did, but this time Jesus answered directly: "Keep the commandments." And again, He is giving us the same answer that we would receive if we were wondering, "What must I do to enter into life?" "What is it that God really wants?"

Brethren, it is so simple. Is He all that concerned about the technicalities of a calendar? Do not bet your life on it—and some are. He wants us to keep the commandments—both sides, positive and negative—because that, combined with His Spirit, with His nature, will create us into what He is.

The young man thought he was doing this, even as sometimes we think we are doing it. But the reality is, brethren, he was not keeping the commandments. Now he was not going around, blatantly like the harlots and the Publicans, sinning, and brethren, neither are we. Neither are the Laodiceans. But like the rich young man, we too are rich and increased with goods, only ours is in spiritual knowledge.

Jesus bluntly told him that he was not even coming close to making any sacrifice toward fulfilling the positive aspects of keeping the commandments. That is why He told him, "Go sell everything you have and

give it to the poor." I am pretty sure that he was keeping the negative aspects of the commandments just like the Pharisees were, but they were not keeping the positive aspects. In order to keep from doing the positive aspects, they became casuists so they could argue their way out of doing it.

I want you to think of this young man in terms of Laodiceanism, because they too have the perception that they are rich and increased with goods, and they too, like the rich young man, show a very self-satisfied deportment, because they say, like the young man did, "All these things have I done from my youth." That is, he did it for a long time. It is the same thing that is implied by, "I have need of nothing."

Material wealth is indeed a reality. It comes into the picture in Laodiceanism as well, just like it did with the rich young man, but we have to come to understand that it is a non-permanent reality. At best, it will last only until the grave. The rich young man and the Laodicean are both blind to what is of greatest value in life, and therefore their real spiritual condition despite the fact that they were not keeping the commandments, and Jesus exposed that reality in both Matthew 19 and Revelation 3. The result is the young man and the Laodicean are both blind to their nakedness that symbolizes a lack of godly righteousness. And the Laodicean, like the rich young man, is unwilling to sacrifice themselves to serve.

We will summarize this sermon in this way. The Laodicean is religious. He has the truth, and he believes generally the truth. But in many of them there are questions, privately held opinions different from what they have been given, that cause their faith to degenerate and puffs them up. They know better, and therefore their faith is severely compromised.

As a result, the Laodicean is misusing the truth in that his using of the truth is only being done in a half-hearted, half-way attempt. His mindset and his half-hearted yielding are producing their fruit of blindness and nakedness. He is in reality in a very pitiful spiritual condition and seems totally unaware of where he is headed.

I hope that none of us is in this condition, and I hope that we will be moved to ask God for help in seeing where we are falling short, in seeing where we can really begin to lay ourselves out for each other in service, not only for

each other, but even for those who are out in the world that we might consider to be our spiritual enemies. That was the advice in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and that is the advice to us.