

December 12, 2010 by Steve Brandon



Growing Up - Into A Legacy

Revelation 2-3

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Here it is--the first Sunday that we, at Rock Valley Bible Church, are in our new building. What a glorious day it has been. What a happy day for us all. This is a day that many of you will never forget. It will be etched into your mind, as the first day that we enjoyed our new building. We are doing what we can to help you remember this day. In our service, we have had a handful of men share some testimonies about Rock Valley Bible Church. We had planned some special music, but due to the weather, that will be rescheduled. We are going to have some cake downstairs after the service to help you remember this day. We have decorated the downstairs to help you remember this day.

Many of you children will remember this day as well. In speaking with my 7 year old, Stephanie, about this building recently, she was particularly excited that we will finally have "benches" to sit on! I know that some of you adults are enjoying the padded pews as well. But, don't enjoy them too well during my message this morning.

Now, as good as this day is, I don't want us to pay too much attention to this day. This day is a day to celebrate. It's a day to remember. But, it's not a day to fix our attention upon. A year from now, I don't want you looking back on December 12, 2010, thinking what a great day it was. "... Remember how happy everyone was? Sure, there were many things that weren't quite in order yet. But, it really didn't matter, because we finally had a building to call our own. Wasn't the excitement in the air wonderful! Oh, how I wish that we could go back to that day!" Living for the past is not a good way to live. Rather, on this day, I want for you to look forward. I want for you to look forward to the time when all of us are gone from this church. I'm looking forward to the time when I hand over the pastoral role to another man, who will take the baton from me.

And here's the question that I want for us to deal with this morning: What will we leave to the next generation? What sort of church will there be when we are no longer here? What sort of legacy will we leave?

A week and a half ago, I was speaking with a pastor friend of mine, who is pastoring a church in another state. They had recently moved into a new facility. And he told me how he has been reminding the people of his church to think about what they are doing at the church. He said, "Let's be involved in something that outlasts us. Let's build something that will continue long after we are gone." And that's what I want to impress upon you this morning as well. Let's seek something here that is bigger than we are. Let's seek something here that will last long after we are gone. This is my question to you on this morning--the first morning in our own building--"What sort of legacy will Rock Valley Bible Church leave to the next generation?"

In recent weeks, I have been preaching a sermon series entitled, "Growing Up." Because, in many ways, we as a church, are growing up. Obviously, this morning, we are in our new facility. Two weeks ago, I preached a message entitled, "Growing Up -- In a Facility." I urged you to be spiritually minded people. I urged you to ask God to do great things. I urged you to glorify God in this building. Last week, we looked at "Growing Up -- In Leadership." I put before you three men who, by God's grace, will soon serve as official elders and deacons in this church - Darryn, Phil, and Ray.

This morning, we are continuing the series. My message is entitled, "Growing Up -- Into a Legacy." A legacy is what you hand on to the next generation. And today, this first Sunday, as we enjoy this building together, I want for us to think about the future of Rock Valley Bible Church. What will our legacy be? What will we hand off to the next generation at Rock Valley Bible Church? What will outlast us? What does the future hold for Rock Valley Bible Church?

Last Sunday afternoon, our family went to a production by Christian Youth Theatre at Maddox Theatre at Rockford College. They performed Charles Dickens' classic, "A Christmas Carol." The show was excellent. And you know what it's about. It's the story of ole' Ebenezer Scrooge, the grumpy, old man who lived a life of frugality, living only for himself and for his riches. And then, one Christmas Eve, he is visited by three ghosts. The Ghost of Christmas past. The Ghost of Christmas present. The Ghost of Christmas future.

Each of these ghosts show Ebenezer what his life is like. In the past, Ebenezer was a delightful little boy. In the present, all around are joyful, except for Scrooge. In the future, he is shown his own, neglected tomb stone, a symbol of his own, fruitless life. Such a vision of the future frightened Ebenezer Scrooge to the core. He turned to the Ghost and said, "Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of the things that May be only?" [\[1\]](#)

Now, Scrooge never received an answer from the Ghost, but he set apart that very night to change the "shadows of the things that May be." He went from that place a happy, joyful, compassionate and kind man. What changed Ebenezer Scrooge? A vision of the future.

With that in mind, I want to look at a vision of the future. I would like us to look at a vision of the future of Rock Valley Bible Church. I do believe that a look into the future will help us. If we knew that things would end well, wouldn't we be encouraged to labor on until the end, even in times of hardship, knowing of the final result? If things were heading for disaster, wouldn't we seek the Lord to change our paths? Now, I don't know what the future holds for Rock Valley Bible Church. I really don't. I am praying for God's blessing upon the future of our church. I am praying that God would do something here that would last longer than we do. But, I don't know for sure what will take place here at Rock Valley Bible Church.

The good news is this: we have an inspired vision of the future of other churches. So, open your Bibles to the book of Revelation. This morning, we are going to look at two entire chapters in the Bible. We are going to look at Revelation, chapter 2. And we are going to look at Revelation, chapter 3. These chapters contain letters written by Jesus, Himself, to seven churches that existed in the first century. Through the book of Acts, we can discern that some of these churches had been in existence for more than 30 years. And so, Jesus was addressing the fruit of the first generation. Jesus was addressing the legacy that they were leaving.

Some of these churches had turned out well and left a great legacy. And some of these churches had not turned out well. And so, as we ask this question about the legacy that we will leave, it will be good for us to consider these churches. Let us consider the good things about these churches, and press on toward these things. Let us consider the bad things about these churches, and avoid these things in our own day and age.

Now, these seven churches all existed in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. In chapter 2, we see the words of Jesus to the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira. In chapter 3, we see the words of Jesus to the churches in Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Though these words were written to the churches of Asia Minor, they have application for us. In fact, at the end of each of these letters, we read a statement that addresses us, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). This address is given seven times in these letters.

Essentially, Jesus is saying, "I know that many of you who will have an opportunity to read these words aren't going to be the original readers. However, if you have heard these words, please heed their warnings. These words are for you! So, ... take heed!"

This is what we are doing this morning. We are going to listen to the words of Christ and take heed. We are going to learn from the examples of other churches. If the church in Ephesus could have known what Jesus would say to them 30 years later, do you think it would have changed their focus today? If the church in Pergamum had known where its major struggles were going to be, do you think they would have done some things differently? I believe that they would have.

So, this morning, let us look at these churches and learn from their examples. Let's aim toward those things that Jesus finds commendable. Let's steer clear from those things that Jesus finds objectionable. And on this day, our first day in our building, I can think of no better counsel to give you on this day, than what Jesus gave a generation into the life of each of these churches. So, as we go through these churches, I want to pull out one point of application for each of these churches for us.

First off, let's begin with the church in Ephesus. Revelation, chapter 2, ...

Revelation 2:1-7

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

I trust that you can see the good things about this church. They were performing righteous deeds (verse 2). They were laboring for the Lord (verse 2). They had a perseverance in their work (verses 2, 3). They were discerning - they tested those who called themselves apostles (verse 2). They had endurance for the sake of Christ (verse 3). They were tireless in their labor (verse 3). They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans (whatever that was) (verse 6). And to all of these things, I say, "Amen!" Let's be tireless laborers for Christ. Let's persevere and endure for His name's sake. Let's not grow weary.

Let's heed the counsel of Horatius Bonar, who wrote, ...

Go, labor on: spend, and be spent,
Thy joy to do the Father's will:
It is the way the Master went;
Should not the servant tread it still?

Go, labor on! 'tis not for naught
Thine earthly loss is heavenly gain;
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The Master praises: what are men? [\[2\]](#)

But, fundamentally, Jesus isn't looking for laborers. He is looking for lovers. And those in Ephesus had left their first love. Look at verse 4, ...

Revelation 2:4

I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Here's my admonition to all of you, ...

1. Don't Lose Your First Love

Jesus here is telling those in Ephesus that they used to love, but they have lost their first love. They are like a marriage partner, who once loved his wife, but left her for another love. Just as such a man has forsaken his wife, so also does the one who leaves his first love forsaken His God.

Now, one of the things that is difficult at this point is that we don't know exactly what Jesus was referring to here. Was He referring to an upward love for Jesus? Was He referring to an inward love for the church family? Was He referring to an outward love for the lost? People will spend time attempting to argue for each one of these positions. And there are good points to be made on each side. But, in the end, we don't really know what Jesus meant. And in some way, it doesn't really matter. Perhaps Jesus was intentionally vague, so that we might search our own lives and see if we have left any of our first loves.

At any rate, the call here is a call to love! Let us not lose our love for Jesus. Let us not lose our love for His church. Let us not lose our love for His message to go out. Have you lost your love for Jesus? Have you lost your love for your fellow believers? Have you lost your love for those who are lost in their sins and in need of a Savior?

If we want to leave a legacy to the next generation at Rock Valley Bible Church, we need to cultivate our love. Are you cultivating a love for Jesus? Are you in His word? Are you praying? Are you depending upon Him day by day? Are you cultivating a love for those in the church? Are you spending any time with those in the church? Are you serving those in the church? Are you cultivating your love for the lost? Do you think of the reality of hell and the dangers of those who don't believe? Are you praying for God to save your friends without Christ? Do you have a relationship with those without Christ?

The scary thing here about the church in Ephesus is that they were doing so well. They were working and laboring for Christ! They were orthodox in their doctrine. But, they didn't have love.

If we want to leave a legacy at Rock Valley Bible Church for the next generation, let's be a church that loves. After all, this is the first and foremost commandment, "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and, to love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). Paul wrote that "the goal of our teaching is love from a pure heart" (1 Tim. 1:5). Indeed, without love, we are nothing as a church.

So, if your love is lacking, seek the Lord and ask Him to give you a love. Let's leave a legacy of love.

Let's move on to look at the church in Smyrna. Verse 8, ...

Revelation 2:8-11

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'

I read these words, and I'm thankful that they aren't written to us. We are fortunate to live here in America, where the church has complete freedom. We don't face the pressure of physical persecution, like those in other countries around the world feel. The threat here was martyrdom. Look again at verse 10, ...

Revelation 2:10

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Some here in Smyrna are going to be imprisoned for their faith in Jesus. Jesus says here that they will be "tested." You might easily read here, "tortured." "You will be tortured." "You will have this tribulation for ten days." "After the ten days, you will succumb to death."

Now, technically speaking, this church left no legacy, because the church was killed and snuffed out. But, as is always the case, you show me a martyr, and I'll show you ten more who are coming behind. Because, a cause worth dying for is a cause worth living for. And anytime the government launches a wave of persecution upon the church, the church will always grow stronger! And so, I'm sure that the church of Smyrna left a legacy, we just don't know where it was.

But, if Rock Valley Bible Church wants to leave a strong legacy, let's, ...

2. Be Faithful (2:8-11)

... like the church in Smyrna was.

In fact, this was the core admonition to this church. Jesus acknowledges their poverty (verse 9). Jesus acknowledges their struggles (verse 9). And then, he calls them to be faithful.

That's really where we can find the point of application for us. Wherever we are, whatever we do, let's be faithful. Let's believe in Christ. Let's trust in Christ. Let's walk in light of that reality, even when things are difficult. Life was difficult for those in Smyrna. They were poor (verse 9). People were blaspheming God in their presence. They were experiencing persecution. And Jesus says, "Be faithful."

The truth of the matter is this: faith is tested when the pressure grows hot. It's easy to profess Christ when things are fine and dandy. But, put a little heat on the kettle and let's see what comes out. May God help us to be a faithful people. Let's leave a legacy of faithfulness.

Let's continue on by looking at the church in Pergamum. Jesus says, ...

Revelation 2:12-17

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

If anything puts some healthy fear in you, it may well be the church in Pergamum. Jesus commends them for being faithful people! According to verse 13, they were surrounded by demonic pressures on all sides, and they remained faithful, even when some of their brethren were being killed. Verse 13 says, "you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."

But though they were faithful in some things, they were unfaithful in others. They had need of repentance (verse 16), and Jesus was not pleased with them. They tolerated false teaching to come into their midst. They didn't test the teaching that came in among their church like those in Ephesus did (2:3). Instead, they tolerated false teaching.

Here's my admonition for us this morning: Let's, ...

3. Forsake False Teaching (2:12-17)

I say this, because this is the main admonition of Christ's word to them. Verses 14 and 15, ...

Revelation 2:14-15

But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Those in Pergamum tolerated the false teaching. If we had time, we could go back into the Old Testament and read the account of Balaam and get a hint of what was being taught here. If we had time, we could attempt to discover what the error of the Nicolaitans was. But, we have enough in the text right here to tell us what we need to know. With the false teaching that came into the church, there was sinful living as well. At the end of verse 14 we see that this teaching was leading others into idolatry and immorality. And, according to Revelation 2:6, Christ hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Somehow, they were engaged in sin.

Such is always the case - false teaching is always followed by sinful living. Oh, such words of false teachers might sound sweet and convincing. There certainly is a measure of God's word mixed in with their teaching. But, look at their lives. It's there that you see what they really believe. Look at your life. How you live demonstrates what you really believe.

There were many in Pergamum who were following the false teaching, and the poor example of the teachers. Thus, the call for repentance in verse 16. Such is the sorry state of affairs in this church, lots of religion going on, but a need for repentance. Oh, church family. Let's Forsake False Teaching (2:12-17).

And much the same thing was taking place in Thyatira as well. Look at verse 18, ...

Revelation 2:18-29

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will

give to each one of you according to your deeds. But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them--I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to Him will I give authority over the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

In this case, the false teaching comes disguised in a different garment. There are different players involved. And yet, the outcome is the same. The false teaching in Thyatira came from a woman called Jezebel. Like the Jezebel of old, she was leading many astray. Again, we see some of the same deeds coming out - immorality and idolatry (in verse 20).

And the call here is the same. Let us forsake false teaching. Let us forsake the false living that comes with it. For the sake of an outline, my fourth point is this. Let us, ...

4. Forsake False Living (2:18-29)

If we want to leave a legacy at Rock Valley Bible Church, we must be those who practice what we preach. Our preaching needs to be Biblical. Our living must follow.

The hope here in Thyatira comes in verse 24, there were some in Thyatira, who didn't hold this teaching. Like all of these churches, there is a remnant. I suspect that verse 19 is addressing many in the remnant, "I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first."

They had a love. They had a faith. They were serving and persevering in it. Furthermore, they were improving. They were getting better. And yet, many were following the false example of their spiritual leaders. The whole church was suffering as a result.

By God's grace, may the legacy of Rock Valley Bible Church be filled with sound teaching and healthy living.

OK, let's turn to my fifth point. It comes from the church in Sardis, ...

Revelation 3:1-6

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. "Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

My point of application here with Sardis is this. Let's ...

5. Be Alive (3:1-6)

The problem with the church in Sardis was that they were a dead church. You can see it there in verse 1, "You are dead." Now, the alarming thing about these people here in Sardis is this: they didn't have a reputation to be dead. No, when people talked about the church in Sardis, the reputation of the church was that it was very much alive! Verse 1 says, "You have a name that you are alive."

When people in the community spoke about the church, they were delighted. The church in Sardis had their approval. I suspect that there was a lot of activity at the church. I suspect that there was much enthusiasm and excitement at the church. I suspect that many would have claimed that it was a Spirit-filled church. And yet, the reality of the matter was that they were dead. People said that they were alive. But, Jesus said that they were dead.

And when it comes to the legacy that Rock Valley Bible Church will leave, what do you want? Whose reputation is most important to you? The reputation of the community? The reputation of other churches? Or, the reputation of Jesus, Himself? How easy it is to rest on the reputation of people.

So, with such a reputation, how could it be that they were dead? The clue comes in verse 4: "But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments." In other words, most of the people had soiled their garments. The church in Sardis was dead because they weren't alive to God!

Oh, Rock Valley Bible Church, Let's Be Alive (3:1-6) - not merely in the eyes of men, but, in the eyes of God. May God look down upon us and say, "There are many at Rock Valley Bible Church who have not soiled their garments" (verse 4). The promise for those who live this way is glorious, "and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."

This calls us a few chapters later, when great multitudes are worshiping the Lamb in glory. They are described as being "clothed in white robes" (Rev. 7:9). One of the elders described these people, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). Jesus said, "Those who have not soiled their garments will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev. 2:4). We will wash our clothes with His blood, and they will be white and pure before the Lord. And this will be the case if we are genuinely alive.

May the reputation of Rock Valley Bible Church among the people of this city not be enough for us. May we seek God's verdict. So, as we think about the legacy that Rock Valley Bible Church will leave, may our legacy be that we were alive and not dead!

All-right. Let's continue with our next church, the church in Philadelphia. Chapter 3, verse 7, ...

Revelation 3:7-13

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 'I know your deeds Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie--I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

The church in Philadelphia was a small church. Verse 8 tells us so, "You have a little power." They didn't have a big church. They didn't have a bunch of people. They weren't particularly influential in the city. The leaders in the church weren't very well known in the city. The people in the church weren't the prominent, powerful movers and shakers of the community. No, they had "a little power."

And yet, they were faithful. Look at how verse 8 continues, ... "You have kept My word, and have not denied my name." The church in Philadelphia was a small, faithful little church. What a great legacy to leave the next generation. "Oh, we didn't have all of the power and influence in the world, but we did keep God's word, and we didn't deny His name." And yet, the blessing of God was upon this church. In the first half of verse 8, we see that an open door is placed before them which no one can shut. This is probably representative of ministry that would go forth from them (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3). They would be a fruitful church. God would accomplish His purposes among them.

Now, with the church in Philadelphia, there is trouble brewing. Not from within the church, but from the outside. There would be a time of testing upon world that would com. But, because of their trust in Lord, God would protect them. Verse 10 says, ...

Revelation 3:10

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Here's my point of application from the church in Philadelphia, ...

6. Trust God's Ways (3:7-13)

Many, many churches in America have turned from the path of faithfulness to God and His word in an effort to gain more power. Churches across our land want to get bigger. They want to have more power. They want to have a bunch of people. They want to have influence. And they have sacrificed God's word in the process. What is important to them isn't keeping the word of God. Rather, what's important to them is power and influence.

But, here in Philadelphia, we see the opposite. We see a faithful church, who, in the sovereign plan of God, continued to remain small and with relatively little power. But, like the church in Smyrna, God says nothing bad to this church. Let's leave such a legacy to the next generation: "We were a people who trusted God's ways. And this is what God did."

Finally, we turn to the church in Laodicea, in Verses 14-22, ...

Revelation 3:14-22

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

The amazing thing about this church is that Jesus has absolutely nothing good to say about this church. Even the dead church in Sardis had some commendable things about it. But not the church in Laodicea. In many ways, they were completely useless. They were taking up space. Jesus said, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."

Obviously, the admonition for us is this:

7. Don't Be Lukewarm (3:14-22)

For those in Laodicea, the imagery would have been clear to them. Up the road (about 7 miles away) was the city of Hierapolis, where there were some naturally formed hot springs. People would go to Hierapolis and sit in these pools of water to help them physically with their ailments. It was a place of benefit.

Also nearby was the city of Colossae (less than 10 miles away). In Colossae, there were springs of fresh water that flowed. This water was pure and drinkable and gave much refreshment.

But, in contrast, the water in Laodicea lacked both of these qualities. It wasn't pure enough to be drinkable. It wasn't warm enough to provide for good medicine. Rather, it tasted putrid. And so was the church of Laodicea. Jesus says to these people, "Don't be useless! Don't be lukewarm."

Notice their pride and arrogance. It shows up in verse 17, "Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.' And you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." If anything describes the typical American, it is the church in Laodicea. We are rich and arrogant, thinking that we need nothing. But, the typical American doesn't realize that we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

As we think this morning about the legacy that we will leave to the next generation here at Rock Valley Bible Church, may it be this: We knew that we were wretched. We knew that we were miserable. We knew that we were poor. We knew that we were blind. We knew that we were naked. And this is why we place all of our trust in Jesus. Jesus has made us magnificent. Jesus has made us joyful Jesus has made us rich. Jesus has given us sight. Jesus has clothed us.

This is the glories of the gospel upon which we must stand as a church. Our hope isn't built upon us. Rather, our hope is built on Jesus Christ. As we close this service, we will end with a song that speaks of our Legacy.

Let it be said of us that the Lord was our passion,
That with gladness we bore every cross we were given;
That we fought the good fight, that we finished the course,
Knowing within us the power of the risen Lord

REFRAIN:

Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song.
By mercy made holy, by the Spirit made strong.
Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song
'Til the likeness of Jesus be through us made known.
Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song.

Let it be said of us: we were marked by forgiveness,
We were known by our love and delighted in meekness.
We were ruled by His peace, heeding unity's call,
Joined as one body that Christ would be seen by all. [3]

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 12, 2010 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, p. 133

[2] Horatius Bonar, "Go, Labor On!", 1843

[3] "Let It Be Said Of Us", words and music by Steve Fry, 1994