

Living as an Overcomer – Tony Evans

Reflecting Authentic Christianity - Chapter 8

1. Read Revelation 3:14-22. Unlike the other six churches that Jesus wrote to, He has more issues with the way the members of the church at Laodicea are living their lives. They are fully immersed in the world. Laodicea was a wealthy area. God doesn't have an issue with wealth, He has problems with self-reliance.
2. Jesus said in Matthew 19:24, "*it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.*" It doesn't mean that if you are rich then you can't get into heaven. People with money tend to be more self-reliant and focused more on their money than on God. Rich people can have a comfort thing and attribute their wealth to themselves and not to God's blessings.
3. Jesus identifies himself as "*the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation*". Google defines Amen as, "The basic meaning of the Semitic root from which it is derived is 'firm', 'fixed', or 'sure', and the related Hebrew verb also means 'to be reliable' and 'to be trusted'. The Greek Old Testament usually translates amen as 'so be it'; in the English Bible it has frequently been rendered as 'verily', or 'truly.'" Somewhere in my life, I was told "amen" means that you are in agreement with what was said.
4. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, "*For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*" Jesus is the "Amen". He fulfilled more than 300 prophecies/promises.
5. Jesus is the "*the faithful and true witness*". When we face God, Jesus will be our faithful and true witness and He will have one of two responses. He will say "*I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!*" (Matthew 7:23) or "*Well done, good and faithful servant!*" Jesus knows us. He doesn't look on the outside, He can see what is in our hearts and minds.
6. Finally regarding Jesus calling Himself "*the ruler of God's creation,*" He was given that power and authority by God. All power and authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. (Matthew 28:18) He was there when God created and He will be there when we are judged.
7. Evans brings up the geographical point that two rivers or aqueducts that flowed into Laodicea. Even though it makes a good analogy, most theologians disagree with hot water and cold water flowing into the city but there were rivers and hot springs in the region, so the Laodiceans would have understood that they were lukewarm.

Guzik says regarding Laodicea, “One of their problems was a poor water supply that made Laodicea vulnerable to attack through siege. If an enemy army surrounded the city, they had insufficient water supplies in the city, and the supplies coming into the city could be easily cut off. Therefore, the leaders of Laodicea were always accommodating to any potential enemy, and always wanted to negotiate and compromise instead of fight.”

8. In the previous chapter we learned that Jesus told the church of Philadelphia, “*I know your deeds. . . I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*” They were not fence-setters. They were committed to Jesus and God’s Word. The members of the church of Laodicea were the exact opposite. When you think of someone willing to compromise on everything, do you think of them being committed? No
9. In verse 15, He says, “*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!*” Have you ever let your hot coffee or Diet Coke sit for a time while you did something else? When you went back to drink it, the drink was lukewarm. It was not what you were hoping for.
10. Jesus found the lukewarm Christianity in Laodicea off-putting, to the point that He said, “*I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*” The NKJV says “vomit” and the KJV says “spue”. It would not be good for the lukewarm Christian.
11. Jesus says that He wishes that they were either hot or cold. Hot would mean that they are on fire for Him. They would be willing to endure whatever the world throws at them for the sake of Jesus. Cold means that they are committed the other way but they would have at least been committed to something. Ephesians 4:14 says “*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.*” If a cold person turns to Christ, he can be used of God but a lukewarm will switch sides at a whim.
12. The old adage sums up the Laodiceans, “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.” This comes from self-reliance. God wants us to rely on Him. Philippians 4:19 says, “*And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*”

“Hot water heals, cold water refreshes, but lukewarm water is useless for either purpose.” (L. Morris) It was as if Jesus said, “If you were hot or cold I could do something with you. But because you are neither, I will do nothing.” The lukewarm Christian has enough of Jesus to satisfy a craving for religion, but not enough for eternal life.” (Guzik)

13. The church of Laodicea says, “I am rich and will follow Jesus as long as it doesn’t cost me anything.” They consider poverty to be only a physical thing but it is a spiritual thing too. Our salvation only costs our faith but this church does not have enough faith to merit salvation.
14. As the old hymn “Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart” says, “And now let the weak say ‘I am strong’, let the poor say ‘I am rich’, because of what the Lord has done for us. Give thanks...” This hymn tells us that spiritual richness and spiritual strength that comes from Jesus. Joel 3:10 says “*Let the weakling say “I am strong!”*” and Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:10, “*sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*”
15. Jesus says that they do not truly grasp the state of their spiritual life. He says, “*you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*” Spiritually speaking their lives are a mess and their future does not have salvation in it. Jesus will say to them on their day of judgment, “*I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!*” (Matthew 7:23)
16. The Laodiceans are living fake lives. Their goals are not Jesus’ goals for them or us. Their measuring stick is not the same as Jesus wants us to use. Jesus says that He will sell them gold but it is not the same gold that they already possess. 1 Peter 1:7 tells us that “*These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*”
17. The reference to wearing white shows purity. We see it all the time in weddings. In Mark 9:3, when Jesus was transfigured, “*His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.*” Jesus told us that the few members of the church of Sardis who have remained faithful will “*They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.*” This applies to all who are overcomers and remain faithful but not those in the Laodicean church.
18. Jesus says that the members of the church of Laodicea “*are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*” Jesus will solve their problems by:
 - a. For the Poor – “*counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire*”
 - b. For their Nakedness – “*white clothes to wear*”
 - c. For their blindness – “*salve to put on your eyes*”

19. The treatment for blindness makes me think of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. He was heading to take Christians to be crucified because of his spiritual blindness but Jesus gave him physical blindness to make him see the light. Then Jesus removed his blindness with the help of a man named Ananias.
20. The members of this church put earning money at the top of their priority list. God was not at the top. He says, "they clock in at church for duty rather than to cultivate a relationship." Indifference and complacency have crept into their worship. When attending worship becomes out of habit and not out of love and desire to do so, there is a problem. In Hosea 6:6, God tells the people of Israel, "*I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.*"

"The more self-reliant a person feels they are, the less they realize how reliant on God they are. We are all reliant on God for every moment in time. We are reliant on Him for every heartbeat and every breath. Yet it's easier to forget this when good things come easy to us." (Evans)

21. As a parent of two boys, numerous times I would hear from one of my sons, "He's in MY room." I would reply, "This is MY house, not yours. You only get to sleep here because I say you get to." It is a good thing that God doesn't treat us that way because this is HIS earth not ours. We get to live here as long as He says so. He blesses us every day and we should thank Him for it constantly.
22. Because we live in the United States of America, we should thank God constantly for putting us here and allowing us to live in one of the greatest countries in the world. Our borders are overflowing because they want what we have. We did not ask for it so we should thank Him often.
23. If you are like me, you do a lot of complaining. We take the blessings from God and then expect them to continue without praising Him or thanking Him for all He has done for us.
24. In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus tells us to store up treasures in heaven. Our time on this earth is short but our time on heaven will be eternity. Part of the issue is contentment. Treasures on earth are short lived and leave you wanting more. Eternal treasures will be with you for eternity.
25. In verse 19, Jesus says, "*Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.*" As parents we should understand this verse. Our children spend their early lives learning and testing. Their testing is to see what you will allow and see how far they can push you. I always battled being consisted in where I drew the line. God is unchangeable. He draws the line in the same place.

26. If we love our children then we will want them to know that there are limits and that we will always love them. There are lots of people today that aren't willing to correct their children and their children will not grow up knowing right from wrong. Here Jesus says, "I love you and I am willing to lead you in the path of righteousness, even if I have to correct you."

"You may be facing something you cannot overcome on your own and so God is seeking to draw you back to Him. He allows this challenge so you can discover your need for His hand in your life. Rather than forsake you altogether, God patiently disciplines you to draw you near Him. To teach you. To guide you. To remind you of what matters most." (Evans)

27. Verse 20 fits into the category of highly quoted verses in the Bible. People may ask when something happens, "Where was God?" Jesus says point blank, "*Here I am!*" He says, "*I will never leave you or forsake you.*"
28. Jesus is standing at the door to your heart when you need Him or want Him. He cannot enter unless you ask. He is willing to come in and dine with us or have a personal relationship with us but we have to want it. This offer is for the lost and believer. For the lost, it is for Him to give us salvation. For the believer, it is for a personal relationship with Him.
29. God puts no limits to the depth of our relationship with Him. We have control. We can be as deep as we want. Look at the state of the seven churches. We can be as close as the church of Philadelphia or as distant as the church of Laodicea. He is always with us on Sunday but He can be present the rest of the week if we are open to it.
30. As a true believer, you heard the knock and you responded. If you remember, you may not have answered His first knock. He says that He stands at the door and knocks. Some of us need to hear Him pounding on the door but He doesn't. It is similar to the "still small voice". (1 Kings 19:12) You can only hear it if you are tuned to it and ready for Him to come in.

Evans says it this way, "People must first welcome Him, because He will not go where He's not wanted—whether in corporate church or an individual's life. If they don't want Him, by basis of free will, He will let them have their life without Him."

31. Jesus says that if we let Him in then He will dine with us. He wants to fellowship with us. I have said numerous times, it is all about a personal relationship with Jesus. It isn't about religion. Remember Hosea 6:6? "*I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you*

to know me more than I want burnt offerings.” Offerings and sacrifices are religion, He wants your love, a relationship.

32. In the final two verses, He says “The overcomer will get to ‘*sit with me on my throne,*’ because they overcame like I did.” They were victorious, just as Jesus was victorious. There can be no greater reward than to share the throne of Jesus. Sitting with Jesus on His throne tells us that we will rule and reign with Him but it also tells that we will have a deep personal relationship with Him.
33. To be an overcomer, we must overcome Satan and the world. Those who chose Jesus are constantly under attack. If you aren’t under attack by Satan then you may already belong to Satan.
34. Fortunately we don’t have to be perfect. 1 John 1:9 says “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*” To be an overcomer doesn’t mean that you overcome Satan and the World by yourself. It takes the power of Jesus.

Evans says, “Tapping into God’s provision through the power and person of His Son, Jesus Christ, is the key to being an overcomer—to being a victor, not a victim.”

Putting the Seven Churches of Revelation into Historical Perspective (Guzik) - Taken from the Blue Letter Bible website.

Many have attempted to make sense of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 (the letters to the seven churches of Asia) by taking them as a unified whole. It is significant that Jesus chose these particular seven congregations to address, though there were other churches in the region that were not written to (such as the church at Colosse). Additionally, some have pointed to the *order* of the letters as evidence of their significance as a broad explanation of church history in the period between the Ascension and Jesus to His return.

Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (written in 1983)

“Although it is by no means the dominant theme, there is a sense also in which the seven churches seem to depict the respective stages of development and change of Christ’s churches during the ensuing centuries. History has, indeed, shown such a general development through the years... He is not capricious in His selection. There is bound to be some significance in the *sequence* of the seven, as well as the total.”

Following is a chart from page 66 of “The Revelation Record”:

Church	Period in Church History	Dates
Ephesus	Apostolic Age	Before a.d. 100
Smyrna	Age of Persecution	a.d. 100 to 313
Pergamos	Imperial Church Age	313 to 590
Thyatira	Age of Papacy	590 to 1517
Sardis	Reformation Age	1517 to 1730
Philadelphia	Missionary Age	1730 to 1900
Laodicea	Age of Apostasy	1900 to ?