

Revelation 3:14-22 (NIV)

¹⁴“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. ¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. ¹⁹Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²²He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

66-03-02-Exploring the Depths of Repentance

complacency, self-sufficiency, repentance, communion with Christ
Rev 3:14-22

Each element of repentance is an ongoing part of the Christian life.

INTRODUCTION: Text as the Scripture Reading.

–Humans on earth are the “likeness” of God *in heaven*. [Ancient Chinese viewed *Man* with *his feet* on the earth and *his head* in heaven.] As Christians, we immerse our mind in God’s will above to walk in His ways here below.
–Lent is about *heart preparation*, often begun by smearing ashes on the forehead as a sign of *repenting*. But today that word *repentance* is often ridiculed or despised. [As in cartoons and movies where they have crazy-looking guys wearing sandwich-signs that say, “*Repent! The End is near!*”]
–Yet *to repent* merely means “*to change the mind*.” People do it all the time about all kinds of things. *Education* is a series of *changes of mind*. With Christians, *repentance* is a lifelong attitude, because all spiritual growth involves *changes of mind* leading to *changes in behavior*.
–*Repentance* isn’t just for *entering* salvation but for *enjoying a lifestyle of salvation*. [A Lutheran nun, Mother Basilea Schlink, even wrote a book called *Repentance—the Joy-filled Life*.] How can repenting be a joy? Because it’s a blessing to *change our minds* from *wrong thinking* to *right thinking*. Our true joy isn’t to *stay the same* but to *grow* to be more like Christ, and that requires change. [Einstein: “*I must be willing to give up what I am in order to become what I will be*.”] To let go and let God through repentance is a *process with many elements*, and **HOM.idea**.
– But before exploring the components of repentance, let’s look at a *question* about the passage read this morning in Rev 3:14-22:

I. Why Did Laodicean Christians Need to Repent?

- A. They had uncommitted hearts— v.15-16, “*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*”
1. God illustrated this in a way we could understand [How would we feel, if we ordered *iced tea* or *hot coffee* but got a “lukewarm” drink instead?]
 2. Lukewarmness yields no growth; *change* requires *commitment*.
- B. They were also self-satisfied and “blind” to their spiritual poverty— v.17, “*You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*”

1. God has remedies for all spiritual deficits— v.18, “*I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*” (Back then, blindness and “nakedness” indicated earthly poverty. Here, they stood for spiritual poverty.)
 2. God’s motive isn’t to condemn us but to change us, so someday He can commend us with “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (His love won’t leave us in presumptuous pride, or moral poverty or spiritual blindness— v.19a, “*Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.*”
 3. And since God won’t change His mind about who we are to be in Christ, we must change ours!— v.19b, “*So be earnest, and repent.*”
- C. Finally, they treated Jesus as an outsider, not an internal King, so He said in v.20, “*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*”
1. We use v.20 to illustrate inviting Christ into our hearts, but Jesus says this to believers who are ignoring His indwelling presence.
 2. Repentance means recognizing who’s in charge— v.21, “*To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.*” (How did Jesus overcome? The only way possible: “Not My will but Thine be done.”)

TRANS: The attitude of repentance is a willingness to forsake our own ideas and follow God’s ways. It’s **not** about limiting our freedom! Jesus unites us with Himself to free us from narrow views of reality. God has an extravagant goal: to seat us next to Christ on His throne of rule over “a new heaven and a new earth.” Christ’s call to repent isn’t to ruin our life but to bless us with His life. So, in our heart preparation during Lent, we can surely “*be earnest, and repent*” much better by...

II. Exploring Six Main Components of Repentance (Lenten series)

- A. **Complacency’s Confrontation** (Any unconcern or lukewarmness about God’s Kingdom and Kingdom living must be confronted...
 1. 1st, and generally, by the written Word of God, but
 2. 2nd, and specifically, by the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.)
- B. **The Comforter’s Conviction** (It’s the Holy Spirit’s task to apply the Gospel’s content to the heart, bringing a sense of true guilt for habits of wrong-doing and for negligence in right-doing.)
- C. **The Conscience’s Contrition** (The goal of Holy Spirit conviction

- is an authentic, freely chosen, godly sorrow of heart—it’s the only proper response to having “*missed the mark*” of doing God’s will.)
- D. **A Convinced Confession** (If there’s real certainty about the cause for godly sorrow and the need for godly change, that inward realization must be outwardly confessed by frankly admitting...
 1. personal failure in doing God’s will, and by boldly announcing...
 2. personal faith in Christ and a renewed resolve to follow Him.)
 - E. **A Comprehensive Conversion** (When repentance, or a change of mind, is authentic, it will result in a complete change of direction:
 1. turning from vestiges of the old life that God reveals to us, and
 2. stepping upward on a higher spiritual pathway in the new life.)
 - F. **The Commitment to Communion** (There must be a decisive but ongoing determination to live out each component of repentance through a growing intimacy with the indwelling Christ.)

CONCLUSION:

–The Chinese were right: we stand between earth and heaven. Praying “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*” also includes a request for heavenly changes of mind in our own earthly lives.

–In repeating cycles, these **elements of repentance are ongoing parts of our growth in the Christian life**. [Ancient Chinese viewed life as cyclical, in contrast to the linear view of Western thinking. Rather than moving in a straight line, the Chinese saw life as moving through repetitive cycles, like the natural circle of seasons.] This perspective is helpful for growing spiritually, **only if** we let God lead us again and again through these elements of change.

–God moves us from complacency into conviction, then to contrition, to confession, to conversion, and finally to communion. But it’s not really final! The closer in communion we get to Christ, the more areas we see that need to be changed. Then, hopefully, we’ll start the cycle of repentance over again, to bring the changes God longs to see in us.

–In the coming weeks of Lent, we’ll take a closer look at these elements of repentance. As we do, we must heed Christ’s call to the believers in Laodicea. We must be ready and receptive for change. That’s why I’m concluding with words similar to those Jesus used to finish His exhortation to the Laodiceans— v.22, “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*” I say “*Let’s all have listening minds, so that we can hear what the Holy Spirit will say to Village Community Church.*”