

(Timeless Doctrines) What Kind of a Church Do You Go To? - Part 6

by Denny Kenaston

The sermon emphasizes the need for churches to evaluate their faithfulness and resist the creeping influence of worldliness as exemplified by the church at Pergamos.

Duration: 1:21:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Revelation 3:3, Revelation 3:17-19

Topics: "Doctrine"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the messages to the churches of Sardis and Laodicea in the book of Revelation. He emphasizes the relevance of these messages to the churches of America in 1996. The preacher highlights the importance of remembering and repenting for their imperfect works. He also discusses the dangers of being spiritually asleep and lukewarm, urging the listeners to open their eyes and repent of their lukewarmness.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. I want to continue on with a message that we began last Sunday morning.

And the title of the message last Sunday morning was, What Kind of Church Do You Go To? I guess the reason for that message is because we are looking at God's messages to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. And those churches and the condition of those churches is a bit definitive. And I think that we do wisely if we take a look at those churches and then take a look at our lives and take a look at our church.

I believe it's a very healthy thing for us to do, especially when you consider the fact that when the Lord Jesus wrote the message to those seven churches, that was the very motivation of His heart that they would take a look at themselves and evaluate where they are in light of the end of the age. If you remember last week, we noted that the book of Revelation was written to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Now we know that it's also written to us, but just like the book of Ephesus was written to the church at Ephesus and the book of Thessalonians, first and second, was written to the church at Thessalonica, the book of Revelation was written to the seven churches.

Last week, we saw what an awesome thought that is, that the Lord Jesus spoke these words to arrest the attention of those seven churches, to cause them to think, to cause them to ponder where they were at, what their condition was in the sight of God, and the motivation for writing those two chapters, chapter 2 and 3, was because chapter 4 through chapter 22 was to follow. And the words of our Lord Jesus were, I come quickly. These things shall shortly come to pass.

Brothers and sisters, if that was pertinent to the seven churches of Asia Minor, nearly 2,000 years ago, how much more pertinent is it to the churches of America and to our church and the churches around us who live in 1996? It is very important. It's very pertinent. It's time that judgment begin at the house of God.

It's time that we consider our ways. It's time that we evaluate where we are as a congregation. It's time that congregations evaluate themselves, because surely these things are shortly to come to pass.

Well, we looked at the church at Ephesus, and we also looked at the church at Smyrna last week, and now we have five more that we need to look at this morning. And the first one is the church at Pergamos. The church at Pergamos, we're still in Revelation chapter 2. And let us read those words before we look a little bit at the church at Pergamos.

We are reading in chapter 2 and verse 12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges. And remember last week I told you that it's very interesting that each time Christ uses part of the description of His presence in chapter 1 to tell each one of these churches that He is writing to them.

And that which He uses to describe to the church at Pergamos is He which hath the sharp sword with two edges coming out of His mouth. Now, we know from reading a little bit further on in the book of Revelation that that sharp sword coming out of His mouth is an awesome picture. And it's not just the Word of God, which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, but when we see the Lord Jesus later on in the book of Revelation riding on a horse and the sharp two-edged sword coming out of His mouth, we know that it's judgment time.

And that's the words that our Lord Jesus uses to describe Himself as He's riding to the church at Pergamos. Now, I think it's good for us to look at some of the history of Pergamos, and not every one of these cities' history was worthy of note. But the history of the city of Pergamos was worthy of note.

Pergamos was a wealthy city. It was one of the wealthiest cities in the whole area of Asia Minor. Pergamos was a filthy city.

It was a city of promiscuity, sensuality. It was one of the most luxurious places in the whole of the area. In fact, the rich from around the Mediterranean world traveled to the city of Pergamos.

It was like a tourist attraction. That's where they went to spend their money. That's where they went if they wanted to live in the highest of luxury for a vacation.

They went to Pergamos because it was a wealthy place. A little bit like Florida or something like that. Nothing against Florida, if there's anybody from Florida here today.

But that was the history of Pergamos. It was after the death of a very wealthy man who owned most of the city and most of the wealth in the city, it was given over as a state to Rome and the Roman Empire. It is said in history that when the city of Pergamos and the state which surrounded that city was given over to the state of Rome, the spirit of Rome changed from a masculine spirit to an effeminate spirit.

If I may say so boldly, from a masculine spirit to a homosexual, sensual spirit. Pergamos was that kind of a city. And Rome lost its masculinity when it opened its heart to the sensuality of Pergamos.

Now that is the history of the city. But, praise God, just like the Bible says, where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. And God, by His grace, through the saints of those days, planted a church through missionary work in the city of Pergamos.

Alright, let's continue to read. Now, I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is. And I believe that is worthy of note because the city of Pergamos, as God described it, He said to the church at Pergamos, I know where you dwell.

You dwell in the place where Satan's seat is. In other words, there is high powers of wickedness in the city of Pergamos. Just like the Bible says, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

And I believe that Pergamos was one of those places, it was one of those high places, where there was much spiritual wickedness. And by the way, those always go together. Wherever you have a wicked city, you also have high wicked spirits that rule over that city.

And therefore, God could say, I know where you dwell, and you dwell where Satan's seat is. These things are worthy of note as we begin to see what the weaknesses of the church at Pergamos were. These things are very worthy of note.

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is. And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth. Now here we have some good things to say about Pergamos.

They have kept His name. They have continued to lift up the name of the Lord Jesus. The name Christian was there in Pergamos.

There was a testimony in Pergamos that there were Christians there. They used the name of the Lord Jesus. They held fast that name.

They were not ashamed of that name. And that is to their credit. And also that they have kept His faith, the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

So much so that at a time of persecution, one among them was martyred. And the Lord Jesus commends them for these things that are among them that are good and right. And we want to commend them also in the midst of a luxurious, sensual, wealthy place where Satan's seat is, where spiritual wickedness rules

and reigns.

Yes, there they are, standing for the name of the Lord Jesus, standing for the faith, and yea, even have a martyr among them. God bless the church at Pergamos for these things that we find among them. But then He goes on to say, But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication.

So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate. Now here's where we want to just look a little bit. We want to look at these two doctrines.

And I'd like us to notice that with this, the church at Pergamos, which you remember I called it last time, an acceptable worldly church. The problem that Christ has with the church at Pergamos in the state that it is in right now is with doctrine. Doctrine brings forth action.

Right doctrine brings forth right actions. But wrong doctrines bring forth wrong actions. And it appears in this church that the church is indifferent to the subtle influences of wrong doctrines that are among them.

They are indifferent to it. They don't realize the deadliness of those doctrines that are moving among them. What are those doctrines? Well, there are two.

And these are significant. First of all, the doctrine of Balaam. The doctrine of Balaam is simply this.

And we can go back to the Old Testament, but we will not look at all the verses this morning. But we know that after Barak tried to destroy Israel, he wanted to destroy Israel, but Balaam could not give a curse on Israel because God had put a blessing on Israel. Balaam told Barak and his men how he could destroy the children of Israel.

And they went and joined themselves with Israel. Same old proverb, you know. If you can't beat them, join them.

And by joining them, you'll beat them in another way. And that is exactly the counsel that Balaam gave to Barak and his people. Go and join yourself to the children of Israel and lead them in the direction that you are going.

Lead them into joining you and your feasts. And soon you will lead them to commit fornication, and thus they will be destroyed from the inside out, rather than the outside in. That is the doctrine of Balaam.

You say now, how does that apply to the church at Pergamos? Simply this. There was worldliness creeping into the church at Pergamos. And the church at Pergamos was saying that it was okay.

The pastor at Pergamos was saying, it's okay, it's alright. But there was worldliness moving in, little by little, into the church at Pergamos. And that worldliness, God, knowing what worldliness would do, He saw that it would be the destruction of the church at Pergamos.

But the pastor and the people were unaware of the subtle movings of these wrong teachings among them. You see, when worldliness begins to creep in to a church, there should be a herald standing up and crying out against it. But there was no one crying out against the doctrine of Balaam, which simply is, let the world come and join the church, and it will be destroyed from the inside.

Oh, how many illustrations could we give this morning where this very thing has happened, where men, yes, have taken the counsel of Balaam down through the generations since the church was started nearly 2,000 years ago. And worldliness has come into the church. And because no one stood up to herald and cry out against the doctrine of Balaam, it has destroyed its tens of thousands.

The doctrine of Balaam. Just let the world in. How many places today are they saying these very words? Just let them in.

Just take them the way they are. And just love them the way they are. And all of those kind of things.

And worldliness is just moving in, en masse, into the churches. The doctrine of Balaam. Now, the other one is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.

I had to study a bit to find out what that is because, frankly, there's no clear teaching in the Word of God to explain what it is. But I did some studying. And here, as near as I can understand, here's what the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was.

They were followers of a man called Nicholas whose teaching was this. We are free from the law of the apostles. If you remember, the apostles sent some laws to the Gentile churches.

And they sent those laws as a protection. They told them that they were not to eat meat offered unto idols. They were to abstain from eating blood.

They were not to eat those things which are strangled. And they were to abstain from fornication. Now, there's a reason why those four things were mentioned and nothing else.

And here is the reason. Because in the cities where the Gentile churches were started, it was a common practice there to have big feast times where the sacrifices were made unto idols and the meat was eaten and the blood was eaten and the animals were strangled. And after a big feast was made, fornication took place and they all called it religion.

They called it good and right and they called it God. And they had all those names on it. And therefore, the wise apostles sent a decree to the churches, the Gentile churches, and told them, we will not set upon you all the laws of the Old Testament, but there are four that we will set upon you.

And they were set upon them for their protection to keep them from going out into the world. So, the doctrine of Balaam is that the world comes into the church. But the doctrine of the Laodiceans was that the church was going out into the world.

And notice that both of those were there at Pergamos. And notice how concerned God was about it. So, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was simply this.

You don't have to follow those laws that the apostles made. It's okay to go to the feasts that everybody else goes to. And this was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.

In other words, freedom. We're free. We're free in Christ.

You ever hear that one before? I tell you, the devil doesn't have any new devices, does he? We're free. Another one of the teachings of the Nicolaitans was a super, extra-special spiritual experience and knowledge about God that nobody else has. That sound familiar to you? And when you put the two of

those together, there were those at the church at Pergamos who were believing and even teaching that it's okay to go out into the world and join the world with their feasts.

Who knows how they justified it? Maybe they said, we can win the world while we're out there. It's okay to go to the beach? Witness while you're on the beach. It's alright to go to the place, to the sports arenas.

Just witness while you're there. Who knows how they justified it? The Bible doesn't say. But it's clear that the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was that it's okay to go out into that world and that we have a special spiritual knowledge that the others don't have.

And you can tell our spiritual knowledge by the freedom that we have. We're free. You're not free.

You're in bondage. But we are free. We have a special spiritual knowledge and we're free.

And we can go out into the world and we don't have to keep the laws of the apostles. And this was the basic teaching of the followers of Nicholas. God said, which doctrine I hate.

That's what He said. Why do you suppose God hated such a doctrine as that? Because God knew that that would destroy that church faster than anything else could ever do. I wonder if we today realize how quickly and subtly worldliness can destroy the church.

It can do it. And we can see from God's perspective looking at the message to the church at Pergamos, that it was a very urgent message that God gave. In fact, He said, thus saith He that has a sharp two-edged sword coming out of His mouth.

This is an urgent thing, says the Lord. Remember, we call the church at Pergamos the acceptable worldly church. No, they're not apostate yet, but it seems that they're apostatizing, if we can say it that way.

They haven't given up. They haven't thrown it all out. But they're moving in that direction.

They have the seeds of disintegration planted among them by the teachings that are being allowed to be given in their congregations. And those teachings are teachings about worldliness. That worldliness is okay.

Brothers and sisters, worldliness is not okay. God is a holy God. He's still a holy God.

He hasn't changed one bit. He said, Be ye holy, for I am holy. And God hasn't changed in 2,000 years.

He's still a holy God. And He dwells in the midst of holy people. And I don't mean perfect people.

I mean people who have set their hearts to live pure lives. That's all I mean. And listen, let us remember that this message was written to the church at Pergamos in light of the book of Revelation and the things that are to come.

And it was an urgent message and an urgent burden on the Lord Jesus Christ that the church at Pergamos would purge out from among them all worldliness and all those who teach worldliness to be okay. And I tell you, brothers and sisters, many of you that are sitting here this morning and many that hear this on a tape, you know that it's so. These teachings are allowed in the churches.

They've been theologized. They've been burst out of seminaries. And people have done their theological gymnastics and now it's okay to teach these things.

And I mean the church is worldly. The world is coming into the church and the church is going out into the world. And the next step is the next church that we'll look at shortly.

Now let me just make one application and then we'll go on here. Brothers and sisters, we live in a Pergamos-type society. How many of you would agree with that? Let me see your hands.

We live in a Pergamos-type society. Now I know, bless God, we're a bit out in the country, so we're a bit shaded from it and thank God for that. But if you go to New York City, I tell you, you go to Pergamos.

Or you go to Miami or all the other resort cities around this land, and I tell you, you go to Pergamos. Should we not also have an alertness about us in this Pergamos-type society that we live in? Should we have an alertness? Should there not be a watchfulness, a carefulness about us as we move in this world? Yea, may God make us in the world, but not of the world. Amen? Kept by the power of God from the evil that is in the world and here only to be a testimony of what a holy God can do in an unholy life.

But I tell you, I believe that in these last days, as the society of Pergamos begins to reach out its ugly tentacles into every kind of country that this world has, you can see that the very poisoning that is going on here, going on in other places, it's so sad. The end of the age has come. And it is an evil generation.

And perilous times have come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves and on and on it goes there in 1 Timothy. We live in those kind of days.

They are perilous days. And the thing that makes them perilous is all of the evil and the sensuality and the promiscuity and the luxury and the wealth and what it does. That's what makes the perilous times.

We live in those. May we purge out worldliness from among us. May we purge it out of our own hearts.

May we this morning, if we find that subtle hankering in our own hearts, you know, that desire to go play out there, if we find that thing welling up within our heart from time to time, let us see it for what it is. God says, I hate it! I hate it! I even hate the teaching of it! May God help us. I tell you, this message to the church at Pergamos is a message for our day and for our nation.

And God is calling the churches to repent of worldliness and to repent of the doctrines that promote worldliness and to repent of having the teachers that teach it. I must say, I struggle a bit to say this next statement, but if God told them to repent, I believe they could have repented. But you know, it's very hard to find a church that repents of worldliness.

When you study it in history, down through the ages, you don't often find revival breaking out where there's worldliness. And in the midst of that, that church repents of its worldliness and turns and goes the other direction. You don't find very much of it.

Maybe there's an account here or there. But for the most part, when worldliness sets in, worldliness stays. And you know why? Because worldliness sets in with wrong teaching first.

And once the wrong teaching is fully settled in the hearts of those people that are hearing, then the wrong living follows in after it. And when the wrong living finds a nice, warm, comfortable place to dwell in the midst of the wrong teaching, you can't shake that thing out of the church. The people don't want to change.

They like their liberty too much. They're free from the law and they don't want to change one bit. Very interesting to watch and see what happens even to churches like the Russian church as it leaves the persecuted lands of Russia and comes to the lands here of America, which is a Pergamos-type society.

What that worldliness does to those dedicated, persecuted Russian Christians, I tell you, it destroys them just like God says in this book. It destroys them. They don't know what to do with it.

They first come and they open their hearts to the teachings. This is okay. And that's okay.

What's wrong with it? That always moves in right alongside of the teaching. What's so wrong with this? Or what's so wrong with that? And little by little, that doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, it just corrupts that purified, suffering church. And in one generation, you can hardly tell that there was ever a suffering church there.

It happens. You can find them even in this land, dear, sweet, old babushkas, Russian grandmas who wept their hearts out to God while their husbands were in prison, walking around down the street with tight pants on, showing themselves in immodest ways and patting their theological hearts while they're doing it, telling you that you don't know what you're talking about, and they're free in the Lord and you're in bondage. It happens.

Another place where I've seen this happen so clearly is in the last ten years watching it happen in a third world country like Africa. Now there it wasn't a persecuted nation, but it was a poor nation. The poor nations of Africa in the last ten years, the, quote, Western progress has come over there and liberated the people.

Yeah, it liberated them, alright. Now they put rings in their nose again like their forefathers did. It sure did liberate them.

You can see what this Western Christianity is doing to the churches in Africa. And I tell you, it breaks your heart and it breaks God's heart too. Because what they've done is they first received the teachings from the, quote, great men of God from America.

The missionaries from America went over there and gave them the teachings first and following the teachings came the worldliness. And I tell you, the churches are a mess over there. They're a mess.

One generation. I've seen all that happen in ten years. It doesn't take long.

How few do repent from worldliness after it settles into the life. Do you know very many? Think. Think through the catalog of your own memory and of the people that you know.

How many do you know that after worldliness has settled in fully well in their life, do they turn around and throw it all away and start living a holy life again? How many do you know? There aren't many. There's one here and one there. I don't know of a church that did.

Maybe there is some. I don't want to be too hard here. So that's the church at Pergamos.

Let us finish. We'll read the words that He says to them. In verse 16, repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Doesn't sound too sweet to me. He that hath ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh.

Now look here. Now that overcome has to do with the context of what we've just been looking at. To him who overcomes, who puts away worldliness and the teachings of worldliness, to he, individual or church, will I give to eat of the hidden manna.

Amen. Would you like some hidden manna? To eat of the hidden manna. And will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.

Alright, now, let's go on to the church at Thyatira. And under the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass. Now, it's good for us to note, I think you can get the idea by now, there's some hot things coming.

In the verses that follow, we can tell just by the way that Jesus describes Himself. I am the One whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and My feet are on fire like fiery brass. I am a God of judgment that walks in the midst of the church.

That's what Jesus is saying as He's leading up to the words that He's going to speak to the church at Thyatira. I know Thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and Thy patience, and Thy works, and the last to be more than the first. So, we have some good things to say about Thyatira.

There are those among them who still love. They love people. They're there serving.

They're trying to help and reach out their faith. They've got some faith, their patience, and their works, and the last to be more than the first. So, we've got some good things going on in Thyatira.

But there's also some very bad things, some very grave things going on in Thyatira. Notwithstanding, verse 20, I have a few things against thee. Why? Because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Now, I want us to notice here the progression. In the church before, there were wrong teachings. In this church, there are also wrong teachings, but the teachings have gone way beyond that and they're to the place of seduction, where the teachings have seduced the servants of God to go into that which is evil.

And may I say it this way, the church at Thyatira has totally given itself over to worldliness. And you can find them just like that in this land that we live in, where they've totally given themselves over to worldliness. It's a totally accepted thing.

Everybody's happy about it. Go out and knock on the doors of your neighborhood and find out what the people would like to see at church. And then you just have it there.

If you want a Super Bowl Sunday, then you have Super Bowl Sunday. That's what the neighborhood would like to have. If you'd like to have a movie star sing a few songs and give a weak testimony, we'll do that on Sunday morning.

Whatever the crowd wants, that's what we'll do. They have totally given themselves over to worldliness. Now, who's Jezebel? We all know who that is, don't we? In the types and shadows that God uses here, we know who Jezebel is.

Jezebel was the wife of Ahab. Ahab was a somewhat heathen Jewish king. And he married a wicked woman, a follower of Baal named Jezebel.

She was a wicked woman. She was a sensuous woman. She dressed sensuously.

She lived sensuously. She was evil. She led the children of Israel.

I mean, first of all, she put a hook in her husband's nose and led him around everywhere she wanted him to go. And not after she got a hook in his nose, she led the children of Israel and she led them into Baal worship. And Baal worship had sensuality in it.

And sensuality led to fornication. And the children of Israel were living in Baal worship and fornication. And they were following this Jezebel in all of her evil ways.

And it was because of all of that wickedness that God laid on the heart of Elijah the prophet to pray that it wouldn't rain for three and a half years, and it didn't rain. And there we had that beautiful account there on Mount Carmel where God became God in the eyes of the Israelite people again. And we won't go into all of that, but I think it's good for us to look at who Jezebel was.

Because Jezebel took the two and mixed them together. Jewish religion and Baal worship. She took the two and she mixed them together.

Oh my! I'll tell you if that isn't a sermon this morning how that has happened in this land that we live in. That we've taken Baal worship and we've taken Christian worship and we've mixed the two together. And it's so mixed up now that you can't figure out what it is.

And anybody who has any kind of Christianity in them at all can go to a place like that and they wonder, is this Christian? Some of the words are right, but the lives are not right. Some of the words are right, but the actions are not right. Some of the words are right, but the activities of the service and the activities of the people and the church are not right.

And it's because Baal worship and Christian worship have been mixed together. And you say, well, Brother Denny, nobody's worshiping Baal in America. No, I know.

We're not bowing down to any idols in America. We're sophisticated heathen. We don't bow down to idols.

But I tell you, America is bowing down to idols. And thus we have Super Bowl Sunday. On a Sunday morning, we move the holy desk out of the way and we pull down the screen and we put the football game up there on a Sunday morning.

I tell you, it's Baal worship! And some would say, boy, you are a fanatic. Yes, well, maybe I'm a fanatic. But I tell you what, some of these coliseums that everybody runs to and thinks so exciting, you may see Christians in those someday.

Just like they used to be in Rome and Greece and Athens and all of those places in Pergamos. Great big coliseums where the Christians were martyred one after another to the joy and the delight of those that were looking on. The church at Thyatira.

The seeds have grown. Wrong doctrines bring wrong living. And a full bearing of a plant of worldliness and evil and wickedness.

And listen to what God says. Listen to how He feels here. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication and she repented not.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death and all the churches shall know that I am He which searches the reins and hearts and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. Now those are some awesome words that we just read that God is saying to one of the churches.

But that's what God is saying. And God would be saying that today also to any who have totally given themselves over to the worship of Baal, to the worships of the world around them and mixed them together with the worship of God. God would say the same thing to them.

I give you a space to repent. And if you don't repent, I'm going to throw you in a bed and ride along with Jezebel. Remember what happened to Jezebel.

And the dogs licked the blood of Jezebel. Well, the Bible says God has some very strong things to say. It seems that the church at Pergamos and the church at Thyatira, they have the same problem.

It's worldliness. One is just beginning to swallow the teachings of worldliness. The other has swallowed it whole hog and they're living it out in the fullness of reality each and every day.

And God is very concerned about them. And He is the One who has flames of fire in His eyes and His feet are like a brass that's on fire. That is what God says to the church at Thyatira.

I cannot emphasize this enough this morning. Worldliness. Worldliness.

People have given it a lot of nice names today. You know that? Association evangelism. Oh, they've given it all kinds of nice names.

They've sanctified it. They've changed its name. But I tell you, worldliness, mixing the world and Christianity together, mixing Christianity with the world, God hates it! It will destroy the church.

It will sap the strength right out of it. It will take the evangelism right out of it. It will spoil the revival fires that are in it.

It will spoil the next generation and they won't even be around. And He even says here, and I'm going to kill her children. I wonder what that means.

That's worthy of some study, isn't it? And I'm going to kill her children. And all the churches are going to know that I am He that searches the heart and tries the reins. That's what Jesus said there.

And all the other churches are going to know when I get done dealing with the church at Thyatira. These are not little issues, brothers and sisters. They are big ones.

And as we rush toward the end, I think it's good that we take a good, long look at these seven churches. And hey, wherever the shoe fits, let's wear it! Let's wear it ahead. Just like God gave each of these seven churches the opportunity to wear the shoe ahead of time, to take a look at it, to face it.

God also is giving us the same as we rush toward the end of the end of the age. Alright, let us finish. Verse 24.

Listen to these beautiful words. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden. So you see, there are those faithful ones in Thyatira.

They are there. They don't like what's going on. They don't espouse those kind of teachings.

They're not living that way. Some of them may be by themselves. By the way, when God said the church at Thyatira, He meant all those that are born again in the city of Thyatira.

That is the way the church was defined in New Testament day. So there were those in that city who were faithful, who loved God, who were not going away of the world, who were not going away of fornication and going to the feasts of the world out there. There were those like that.

And Jesus blessed them and encouraged them and laid no other burden on them but to overcome and be faithful unto the end. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. I am coming.

And He that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end, notice those words, to Him will I give power over the nations. What a beautiful reward. And He shall rule them with a rod of iron as the vessels of a potter.

Shall they be broken to shivers even as I received of My Father. And I will give Him the morning star. He that hath ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

That's the church at Thyatira. The next one we want to look at is the church at Sardis. If you remember, I said that the church at Sardis is the dead church.

A dead church. But I'd like to change that and call it a dying church. As I studied a little bit more in detail about the church at Sardis, I came to the conclusion it's not a dead church, but it's a dying church.

And the Lord Jesus, in His foreknowledge, is looking down the road when He says that you are alive, you have a name and you are alive, yet you are dead. I believe what He is saying is you are a dying church and if you don't stop, you're going to be dead. A dying church.

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write, These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead. You have a name.

Yes, there is a church at Sardis. Yes, people know there is a church at Sardis. People talk about it.

Yes, there is the church there. Yes, there are believers in Sardis. There is a name.

Yes, you are alive. You are still there. But yet, He says, yet you are dead.

You are dead. Verse 2, Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. Now what we get here is a picture of a dying church.

You know, there's a big difference between oh, let's take a lion. Let's take a lion as an example. There's a big difference between a lion who's alive, that's running, that's jumping, that's hunting, that's roaring, and a lion that has been shot and he's laying there by the side of the bush somewhere.

Yes, he's still alive. Yes, he's still breathing. Yes, he's still moving around.

Yes, maybe he's licking his wound. But yet, he's dying. He's a dying lion.

I believe that's the picture that we have here of the church at Sardis. It's a church that is dying. It's not dead yet.

It's not that it isn't there anymore. It's a church. The Lord Jesus loved them.

The Lord Jesus wrote a letter to them. So we know that there was a church there. But the Lord Jesus' word to the church at Sardis was, you are a dying church.

What an awesome word this morning. A dying church. Not a dead church.

And I think many times we don't really say that right. You know, we say, well, that church is dead, or that church is dead. I don't believe that's the right way to say it.

Maybe it's better to say that's a dying church. Because you go to a church and you find a faithful one here, and you find a faithful one there, and maybe they believe the word of God, and maybe somebody gets up to preach the word of God, and no, it's not a dead church. It's not that the life has been totally cut off of it.

But could it be that it's a dying church? That it's just limping along? That it's moving in the wrong direction? You see, that's the most important thing to God. Which direction are we going in? Are we pressing on the upward way? New heights I'm gaining every day. Or are we little by little by little moving in the direction of dying? By the way, I think you're either going this way or you're going this way.

I don't think you can just stand still. It seems to me as I study the word of God, you're either moving forward or you're moving backwards. And both of those happen one day at a time, and one decision at a time, don't they? Little by little by little, the church at Sardis is a dying church.

It's not doing very well. It's still a church. They gather on Sunday morning.

Yes, they pray prayers. They go through the motions of their prayers. They sing songs.

They open up their hymn book and they sing the songs. But yet, there's not much on the inside. You know, the Word is preached, but it's not very interesting and it's not of interest to those that are hearing it.

Maybe the preacher is dying and the hearers are dying, and so there's not much food. There's not much bread there. There's not much excitement.

There's not much going on there. Not a soul's getting saved anymore. There's no spark of revival here and there.

God isn't at work in this life or that life, but they're there. And if you go there on Sunday morning, they'll be there and you can go through the door of the church and you can sit down with them and you can talk to them and they're there and they're alive and they'll welcome you and they'll say thank you for coming. But the fact of the matter is, if you look at it from the eyes of Him whose eyes are like a flame of fire, it's a church that is dying.

The direction of it is going down. Little by little by little it's going down, down and down. Oh, we do well this morning to take heed to these words, lest we be one of those kind of churches that is dying little by little by little by little.

That which made the name is gone. That breath of life which makes the activity is dimming. The Lord Jesus says to that church, Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die for I have not found by works perfect before God.

That's interesting. The word perfect there means mature. And I believe what that means is that the works, they're there, they're doing things, but their works are not mature.

They're not the way they should be. Even as I already described. God would have us going through our prayers with a spirit of prayer on our heart.

God would have us sing songs with a spirit of worship and praise unto God. God would have us hear the Word of God with an open interest in the Word of God. There the works are perfect.

They're mature. They're the way they should be. That's the way God wants us to be here this morning.

We go out to win a soul. It's the desire of a heart. We don't do it just because we have to.

We do it because we want to. Our works are perfect. They're mature.

But the other, the works by duty, the works by drudgery, the works by going through the motion without that spark of life motivating, those works are not perfect before God. That's what the Lord Jesus was saying here. Your works are not perfect.

Look what He says in verse 3, Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. Beautiful words. He says to the church at Sardis, I want you to remember, just like He said to the church at Ephesus, He says to the church at Sardis, I want you to remember.

Remember. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Interesting words in light of the book that we're in, the book of Revelation.

It talks about the end. Jesus says, I'm going to come. And for those that are not watching, I will come as a thief in the night.

But He said unto us, in the book of Thessalonians, but my brethren, my brothers and sisters, we are not of those who sit in the darkness. We are not of those of the night who are sleeping, but we are of those of the day who are alive. We are the children of light.

We are alive. Our eyes are open. We know what's going on.

And the coming of the Lord does not need to come as a thief in the night to us. We can have our eyes open and be watching. And the word that our Lord Jesus gives to the church at Sardis is a word of watching and alertness.

Open your eyes, Sardis, lest I come when you are not watching. Look at verse 4. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. Isn't that beautiful? I'm glad He put those words in there.

You know, as we go down through each one of these churches and realize that others will hear the message and they're in all kinds of different situations, I'm glad that the Lord put that in there. That there in Sardis, there were those that were faithful. There were those that were alive.

There were those whose works were perfect, whose worship was pure, whose service was out of right motives. And by the Spirit of God, they were there. And the Lord Jesus blesses them, for they are worthy.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. Now, I think it's good for us just to note verse 5 here again.

I know that I brought this out in one of the other ones last week, but this one is so clear. Look what God is saying here. And remember, he that overcomes, the overcomer is not some super spiritual person who finds some super high experience with God that is greater and higher than what the normal Christians live.

That is not what the overcomer is here in the context of these verses. The overcomer is simply the ones who make it true and wake themselves up and become alive and are not dying anymore. And look what He says to them.

The same shall be clothed in white raiment. That's what every one of us children of God are going to receive. We're going to get white raiment.

And I will not blot out His name out of the book of life. Well, that's very interesting. Is your name written there on the page, wide and fair? Is your name written in the book? Is it written? Oh, we say, praise God, I'm a child of God.

My name's written in the Lamb's book of life. And amen! We should! That's the assurance, the sweet assurance of the child of God. My name is written in the book of life.

But here God says to the church that is fast moving toward the end, that is not watching, to the individual that is not watching, that is dying, yea, that has a name, yet is dying, He says, if you don't overcome, if you don't wake yourself up out of your sleep, I will blot your name out of the book. I mean, that's what it says. I mean, do we believe the Word of God? That's what it says.

If you don't wake yourself up, I will blot your name out of the book of life. I didn't say it. God said it.

He that hath ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Alright. We're going to move on to the angel of the church at Philadelphia and the church at Philadelphia.

If you remember, I call the church at Philadelphia the faithful church. There's nothing bad said about the church at Philadelphia. It gets a word of blessing from the Lord Jesus.

There are a few things that lean toward giving us an indication that the church was not at its peak, it wasn't at its top, it wasn't at its best, but yet God had nothing bad to say about it. It is a faithful church. Let us read about the church at Philadelphia.

These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. Notice the note of victory in the description that Jesus uses as He speaks to the church at Philadelphia. Words of strength, words of encouragement, words of blessing in His description of who He is.

I know thy works. Behold, I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little strength and hast kept My word and hast not denied My name. It's from those words, thou hast a little strength, that we get the indication that this church is maybe not where it should be, but in Christ's

evaluation of it, He gives them a blessing and doesn't tell them anything in a corrective way, but simply that He says, you have a little strength, the faithful church.

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee. Now, in these words, as I pondered and meditated upon these two verses, it doesn't give any direct inference to persecution, but it seems to infer indirectly that there's persecution there, because He speaks about religious persecution.

He talks about the synagogue of Satan, and they say they are Jews. There's religious people there persecuting the church at Philadelphia. And He says, when it's all said and done, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee.

Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Now, I don't understand that any other way than that that has to do with a rapture right there. A snatching away, a pulling you out before the hour of temptation comes upon the world which shall try all the people on the world.

That's what it seems to be saying to me. But God says to the faithful church at Philadelphia, you have a little strength, but you've not denied My name. And you've kept My word.

And you've kept the word of My patience. And you're going on. And you're being faithful.

And you're keeping your heart clear. And you're still walking with Me. And you're still obeying Me.

And you're still loving Me. Oh, listen, because you've kept the word of My patience, I'm going to keep you from the hour of temptation. Hallelujah.

That shall come and try all the peoples of the world. It sounds like the day of the Lord to me. When God shall come and try and purge and purify the world of evil, I'm going to keep the faithful church in that hour of temptation.

I'm going to keep them from that hour. That's what the Lord Jesus says. Beautiful words to the faithful church.

Keep on going. Keep on going the way that you're going. Keep on serving.

Keep on loving. Keep on walking. Keep on keeping your heart clear.

Keep on serving God. Keep on praying. Keep on preaching.

Keep on living for God. A faithful church. As we rush toward the end of the end, toward the day when the Lord Jesus will come, God's word is to us.

Keep on going. Keep on serving. Keep on praying.

Keep on walking. For unto you who keep the word of My patience, I will keep you from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world. The church at Philadelphia.

The faithful church. And the last one. The church at Laodicea.

The lukewarm church. And under the angel of the church of Laodicea write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Interesting words, aren't they? Written to the church at Laodicea.

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth. The lukewarm church. A youth worker, some time ago, having about a hundred youth in a meeting.

And mind you, these hundred youth didn't know their Bibles very well. But a youth worker, gathering about a hundred young people together, said to them, How many of you would say, I'm on fire for the Lord Jesus. I love Him with my heart and my soul.

My spirit is burning with love for the Lord. How many of you would say, That's your testimony today. And nobody raised their hand.

Then he said, Alright. How many of you would say, I don't care about the Lord. His Word doesn't mean anything to me.

My heart is cold. I don't care. I'm indifferent.

How many of you would say, That is the way you are today. And nobody of the one hundred raised their hand. Then he said, and you can never do this to a bunch of people that are sitting in this room here because you know your Bibles too well.

But then he said, Well, how many of you would say, You're somewhere in between of those. And everybody raised their hand. Then he opened up his Bible to Revelation chapter 3 and read the discourse that we're looking at here this morning.

So you say you're not hot. But you say you're not cold. Oh, you're somewhere in between.

That means you're lukewarm. That means you're lukewarm. Awesome words.

Awesome words. Now, I know. I know.

Out of wisdom and humility it takes a pretty bold one to say, I'm hot for God. I know that. I know that you would hesitate to say that out of humility.

I know that and I want to give you that here this morning. But nevertheless, in the heart of our hearts, we need to give ourselves a spiritual evaluation this morning. Are we hot? Or are we cold? Is our fire burning? Or are we just indifferent? Or are we somewhere in between? If we're somewhere in between, that is not a good place to be.

Because God says, I will spew you out of my mouth. I don't get a bit of blessing out of those words. I don't see any blessing in the picture that God gives there.

Because you are not hot and you're not cold, but you're lukewarm, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth. I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth. I'm going to spit you out.

If you ever put lukewarm water in your mouth, you will know what God meant. Lukewarm water, all you want to do is spit it out as fast as it comes in. It's not very pleasant.

Alright, let's look at this church just a little bit here. We get a little bit of insight into this lukewarm church. We see their blindness.

Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. There we see their blindness. You remember we talked about the poor rich church? The church at Smyrna was the poor rich church.

This is the rich poor church. They're rich. They got lots.

And by the way, if you study the history of the city of Laodicea, you will find it was one of those kind of cities. It was a port city. It was big business.

It was a money maker. There was a lot of money flowing in Laodicea. And the people had everything they needed.

Because you say, I'm rich and increased with goods and I have need of nothing. And that's where they were at. They were rich.

They were increased with goods. And they have need of nothing. And from that, we can make a physical application this morning.

And from that, we can make a spiritual application this morning. Because it's that way. A lukewarm heart usually does not know that it's lukewarm.

It's blinded. And it says, I'm okay. It says, Hey, we're okay.

We're having revival. We don't need revival. We have revival.

Oh, awesome words. We don't need that revival stuff. We already have revival.

I've heard preachers say that. Not once. Not twice.

Many times. Different. Different settings.

Different denominations. We don't need revival. We're having revival.

We are rich and increased and in need of nothing. Awesome words. And God says, And you know not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

The poor, rich or the rich, poor church. It's rich, but yet it's poor. It's rich in this world's goods, yet it's poor in spiritual goods.

You do not know that you're wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich. And white raiment that thou mayest be clothed.

And that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. And anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Be jealous therefore and repent. Now, they're strong words that our Lord Jesus uses. But I'm so glad that He finished by saying it's those that I love that I rebuke and chasten.

I've said strong words to you, but I say them because I love you. Repent. Repent of your lukewarmness.

First of all, open your eyes so that you can see your lukewarmness. Then, repent of your lukewarmness. And verse 20 is an awesome word speaking in the context because the context is speaking to a church.

Jesus says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with Me. That puts Jesus on the outside.

And, you know, we could make it personal here this morning and say to each and every one of us that the Lord Jesus is there. If your heart is lukewarm, the Lord Jesus is on the outside of the heart knocking, pleading with you to open the door of your heart with a beautiful promise. If any man will hear My voice and open the door, oh, blessed be God, I will come into him and sup with him and he with Me.

Sweet fellowship. Sweet relationship. Beautiful food together.

Communion together. I will come into him and we'll have a sweet relationship. And by the way, that will be a hot relationship.

It will be a hot one. Not a lukewarm one. Or we could say the same to a church.

To the church that is lukewarm, the Lord Jesus says, I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. I want to be in your midst. I want to move among you.

I want to breathe on you. I want to pour My grace upon you. I want to show My mighty works among you.

I want to show Myself strong in your midst. I stand at the door and I knock. Would you hear My voice and open the door and let Me come and be the head and be in charge and be the one who walks in the midst of the church.

Let Me come in and be that. And oh, He says to the church corporately, I will sup with you and fellowship with you and we'll have sweet communion if you would just open the door and let Me come and take My place among you. Verse 21, to Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne even as I also overcame and am sat down with My Father in His throne.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. So now we have looked at the seven churches. All seven of them.

As I said in the beginning, we can apply these to any church. We can apply them to us as a church. But we can also apply them as individuals.

How is it? Have you lost your first love? How is it? Are you ready for persecution? Are you enduring persecution now? Are you ready for it? How is it? Have the doctrines of worldliness been slowly creeping in to your heart and your life? Do you find yourself saying and thinking, what's wrong with this? What's wrong with that? Everybody else is doing it and all the other things. Have the doctrines of worldliness began to move in? How is it? Have they taken over? Maybe that's where you're at. Are you dying? Just little by little, moving in another direction that you know you shouldn't be going? Are you dying? Do you have a little strength and your desire is to keep on going? Is that where you're at? Then keep on going.

Do you find yourself somewhere in the middle? Not hot. Not cold. Just somewhere in the middle.

Is that where you're at? Brothers and sisters, the book of Revelation was written to the seven churches, but the book of Revelation was also written to us. And the time is at hand. It's not time to play games.

The time is at hand. It's not time to sleep. The time is at hand.

It's not time to get distracted. The time is at hand. Surely I come quickly, Jesus said.

The book of Revelation was written to us also. May we read it in the spirit that it was written in. And allow the awesomeness of judgment, of fear to settle down over our hearts and our lives as chapter 6 unfolds and chapter 7 and 8 and 9 and 10 and all the way through.

And don't be so foolish as to say, oh, none of that book has to do with me. I'll get raptured before any of those things happen. Don't you be fooled by that one.

If that was the teaching of the early church, why did Jesus write to the seven churches all of the book of Revelation? That's a good question for you to run through your theological mind a bit. If the whole thing doesn't matter and in chapter 4 we all get snatched away and none of that matters, why did He write it to the seven churches? And tell them, behold, I come quickly. Repent.

Get it right. May God help us to make a spiritual evaluation. And I say to all that hear, what kind of church do you go to? Shall we kneel together in prayer? Our Father, God, it's with praise and adoration that we come to You, the end of this service.

Lord, God, I admit that it's a little hard to put my mind in all this in light of the funeral this afternoon and all that has happened. But dear Father, maybe it's just what we need to hear because of the sobriety and the brevity of life has come to us again face to face. Maybe it's just what we needed to hear, Father.

God, we thank You for the message that You gave to the seven churches and I pray that You will take that message, God, and apply it to our own hearts and our lives. And Father, we pray, we at Charity Christian Fellowship, O God, we pray, what is the Spirit saying to Charity Christian Fellowship, Lord? O Father, God, we know that we have needs and we do acknowledge that, God. We do not claim to be a perfect church, Lord.

We are not sitting here today saying we are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, God. That is not our heart, Father. None of us.

But O God, we do acknowledge that we have needs. Lord, speak to us. Speak to our needs.

We want to be one of those faithful churches who is watching and waiting for the coming of the Lord. Dear Father, I pray that You will just take these words and apply them wherever they need to be applied in each and every heart. And God, we trust the rest of the day to You also.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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