

The Church of the Closed Door

by Ronald Glass

The sermon addresses the dangers of spiritual lukewarmness in the church of Laodicea and its relevance to contemporary evangelicalism, urging a return to fervent faith and repentance.

Duration: 1:01:11

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Revelation 1:12-16, Revelation 1:20, Revelation 3:14

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the description of Jesus Christ in Revelation chapter 1. He describes how John, on the Isle of Patmos, saw a vision of Jesus standing among seven golden lampstands. Jesus is depicted as a majestic figure with white hair, fiery eyes, and feet like burnished bronze. He holds seven stars in his hand and has a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth. The preacher emphasizes that the church today needs revival because its conduct and worship are not in line with the character of Jesus Christ. He also highlights the lukewarmness and mediocrity of the church, urging Christians to examine their hearts and prioritize their commitment to Jesus over worldly desires.

Transcript

Like last week, I'm going to ask you to come this week to Revelation chapter 3. Revelation, the third chapter, and we're going to begin in the next verse from where we left off last week, looking this week at the letter to the seventh of the seven churches in these two chapters, chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. Seven churches, all located in Asia Minor, and churches that had distinct messages from the Lord Jesus Christ in their day, and messages that are relevant to our day as well. So if you are with us in the third chapter now, please turn to verse 14, and that's where we begin, and it reads this way, To the angel, or the messenger, 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 cold nor hot, 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 eyesalve 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 into him and will dine with him, and he with me.

He who overcomes, I will grant 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. Throughout its history, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been the object of the world's scorn.

Their hatred has been the result of the Church's faithfulness both to its biblical beliefs and to its biblical lifestyle. The Lord Jesus, just prior to returning to heaven, in fact, in the upper room discourse with his disciples the night he was betrayed, said that it would be that way. In fact, he said to them, John chapter 15, verse 19, If you were of the world, the world would love its own.

But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world because of this, the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

And if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But these things they will do to you for my name's sake because they do not know the one who sent me. The world doesn't know the Father, and therefore they hate those who love the Lord Jesus.

In fact, to the point that Jesus says, they will even regard persecuting the Church as doing God a favor. That's the way it has always been throughout Church history. When you read the history of the saints, you find a long trail of blood, of persecuted and martyred Christians who stood for the truth.

But what we see in evangelical Christianity in America today is something quite different. In fact, we as evangelical Christians in America are quite comfortable. We're not only at peace with the world, we are imitating it.

In fact, in many churches today, it's not just imitation. We're actually inviting the world into the Church, intentionally bringing the world's values and lifestyles into the Church. Because of that, we've lost our prophetic voice.

We're no longer able to rebuke the world. We actually, in many of our churches, enjoy it. Now, perhaps more than anything else, it is this which draws the displeasure of the Lord of the Church.

And make no mistake about it, my friends, the Lord Jesus Christ is still the Master, the Lord of His Church. He is still in control, and He's still building it. Now, if the history of revival proves anything, it is that an awakened Church stands in stark contrast to the world.

There's a clear division. It's black and white. That's because a revived Church is a Spirit-awakened Church.

We have seen in our study of biblical revival that revival is that great work, and it is a sovereign work of God, in which God omnipotently moves upon His people. In the words of one that I quoted weeks and weeks ago, He makes bear His holy arm in behalf of His people. It is the Spirit of God breathing new life into the body of His people.

It is God awakening the sleeping Church to do and be what He has told them. Therefore, it may be that the Church at Laodicea most nearly reflects the predicament that we find evangelicalism in here at the beginning of the 21st century. Transformed? Conformed? Reformed? Well, one of these alternatives is clearly unacceptable.

The Apostle Paul, writing in Romans 12, verse 2, says, and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Now, this was the problem in Laodicea. Now, some of you may be saying, I never heard of Laodicea.

What is Laodicea? It was a city. Now, we talked about the city of Philadelphia, not in Pennsylvania, but in Asia Minor, in the western central part of Asia Minor last week. Just 40 miles to the southeast of the city of Philadelphia lay the city of Laodicea.

It was located in the Lycus River Valley of west central Asia Minor, modern Turkey today. The city of Laodicea lay at the intersection of two major Roman highways. It was surrounded by mountains, and in its location, it formed kind of a triangle with two other important nearby cities.

One was the city of Hierapolis, and the other city was the city of Colossae. The city of Laodicea was named for Laodicea. She was the wife of Antiochus II, the Seleucid or Syrian ruler over that part of the world in 261 to 246 BC.

Now, it's interesting that Antiochus and Laodicea eventually divorced, but not before this city was named for her. The city boasted a thriving commercial and financial center. It was a banking center.

It was renowned for its unusual black wool, and it had a prominent school of medicine there in the city. There was also a large and prosperous Jewish community located there. So overall, we're talking here about an affluent city as well as a very pagan city.

It was the center of the worship of Menkaru. Menkaru was a Phrygian god, an ancient pagan god, whose temple was located there. But also, as we clearly see from the text in Revelation, there was a church there.

And we don't know how that church was originally established. The best guess for all of these churches in Asia Minor was that it was established under the influence of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Paul had not gone to this location.

He had never set foot in the city of Laodicea. And yet we know from his epistle to the Colossians, the nearby city of Colossae, Laodicea was on the heart and mind of the Apostle Paul. And so perhaps from his ministry in Ephesus, converts spread out through Western Asia Minor and established churches.

And that's probably how Laodicea's church came into being. Now today, in our final sermon in this series on biblical revival, I want to return to the problem of the Lord's withholding revival. We know that the Lord is sovereign in the affairs of his church.

Revival is God's work, a very real work, a work that has blessed the church periodically throughout its history, a work that has put new life back into the people of God when they've been languishing in unbelief and in spiritual coldness. But what if, in spite of earnest prayer, there is no revival? Now we've already heard in a previous message Jeremiah's resignation, pleading, Lord, renew us, restore us as of old, and renew us unless you're angry with us. And then we've heard the prophet Habakkuk and his resolve.

Even though I know what's coming and I fear my heart is trembling within me, yet I am going to rejoice in God. Even though the economy falls apart, I will rejoice in God my Savior. We've looked at that.

But now I want to bring us forward to the church age. And here John transcribes a message to the pastor of the church of Laodicea, the angel or messenger, probably the pastor of the church of Laodicea. If Philadelphia was, as we said last week, the church of the open door, Laodicea is the church of the closed door.

Its distinctive mark? Luke warmness. This is the church standing in need of repentance and revival but unwilling to seek it, not even realizing how desperately it needed awakening. The church doors are closed to the Lord Jesus himself and to the work of his spirit.

And thus the Lord Jesus Christ reserves the sternest and the sharpest rebuke for them. When you compare all of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, you are impressed with Laodicea in that there is none. And this is the only church of which this is true.

There is no commendation here at all. The Lord Jesus has nothing good to say about this church. And I think one of the reasons for that was that apparently they were busy commending themselves.

In the midst of this dire warning, however, there is encouragement. And I think that the message of this church, to this church, speaks with a powerful relevance to our contemporary evangelical Christianity here in America, perhaps more than any of the other six letters. This church reflects the temperament of the age in which we live.

And so though there is a dire warning, there is also a reason for encouragement. So I want you to pay attention to the following three concerns. First of all, I want you to pay attention to what the Lord says about the lukewarm church.

Looking in verses 14 to 16. Now, the key thought in these three verses can be summed up in one word, indifference. That was the church in Laodicea.

It was a church distinguished by indifference. Now, I want you to notice the way this letter begins. The letter begins by the Lord Jesus Christ, as if He had to do this.

He seemed to have to with Laodicea. He begins by establishing His own credibility. Pity the church that when the Lord Jesus speaks, has to be persuaded that He has a right to speak and that what He is saying is true.

But that's how our Lord begins. He begins by confirming His own credibility in verse 14. To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write the Amen.

The faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, says this. He is the Amen. In fact, that is a transliteration of a Hebrew word.

It's transliterated into the Greek text. It's transliterated into the English language. The word Amen is a Hebrew word that is the word for truth.

And what the Lord Jesus is saying here is that I am the very personification of truth, of credibility and of certainty. What the Lord Jesus says cannot be doubted. There's a lot of doubting going on in the church today about what the Lord Jesus says.

There are many evangelical churches today if you say, yes, but here's what Christ said. Here's what the Word of God said. They just shrug their shoulders and say, well, we choose not to believe that.

No, the Lord Jesus is establishing His credibility and His certainty and in so doing, His authority. What He says cannot be doubted. He is also, according to this verse, the faithful and true witness by which He means that whatever He says is accurate and whatever He says is trustworthy.

Unlike human witnesses, He never forgets, He never exaggerates, and He never misrepresents the truth. We can be absolutely certain of that. So when the Lord Jesus speaks, it behooves us to listen.

Not only that, He goes on to say that He is the beginning of the creation of God. Now, lest you make a mistake here, He is not saying that He is the first created being. There are those heretics who would like to say that.

No, the word that is used here, beginning, means the source. He is the source of creation. He is no less than the Creator Himself.

You need biblical proof for that? Well, then I direct your attention back to the book of Colossians 1. Colossians 1, verses 16 and 17, For by Him, the Lord Jesus, all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. He's speaking there of angelic beings. All things have been created through Him and for Him.

He is before all things. And in Him, all things hold together. That's what He means when He says, I am the source of creation.

Who is this Lord Jesus? The evangelical church in America, just like the church in Laodicea, needs to understand this. And all we have to do is go back two chapters to Revelation 1. I want you to listen to this description. When John one day heard a voice behind him, there on the Isle of Patmos, and he turned around and what he saw absolutely astounded him.

I turned, verse 12 of chapter 1, I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the middle of the lampstands, I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe, reaching to his feet, and girded across his chest with a golden sash.

His head and his hair were white like wool, like snow. And his eyes were like a flame of fire. And his feet were like burnished bronze, and wind had been made to glow in a furnace.

And his voice was like the sound of many waters, a massive waterfall. In his right hand, he held seven stars. And out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.

And his face was like the sun, shining in its strength. Now, what's John's reaction? When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. And he placed his right hand on me, saying, Do not be afraid.

I am the first and the last, and the living one. And I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of death and Hades.

Oh, ladies and gentlemen, if we ever had that experience in the flesh, to have a confrontation, a meeting with the risen Lord Jesus Christ like this, we would do the same that John did. We would fall on our faces as dead men. Since He is the Sovereign Creator, since He is Lord of the Church, holding the seven stars in His hand, the symbols of the leaders of these seven churches, which are portrayed as seven

lampstands, the Lord Jesus has the right and He has the authority to pass judgment on any church.

And one reason for evangelicalism's anemic condition today, one reason why we desperately need revival, is our loss of the biblical view of the Lord Jesus. One way it shows up, for example, is in the way we worship. This is what's so disturbing to me about so many churches today that have bought into the world standard of worship.

Repeatedly in the Old Testament, for example, we have this statement, Worship the Lord in holy array, which is worship the Lord in clothing befitting the majesty of the One we've just read a description of. And yet today, it's all sloppiness and informality. And that is a statement, my friends, that's an evangelical church quote-unquote statement about what they think of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, the way they appear.

Pastors in flip-flops and blue jeans and shirts untucked in and just standing before their congregations looking like that. I don't know how they do it. Think of the Lord Jesus, the description we have just read of Him.

The way we conduct ourselves, the kind of music we use, the kind of demeanor that we bring to the worship of God is so out of character with the Lord Jesus Christ today, it's no wonder we need revival. This is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Pay attention.

So he confirms his own credibility, but then the Lord Jesus goes on in verses 15 and 16 to condemn the church's mediocrity. Again, pay attention to what the Lord says about the lukewarm church here. He says, I know your works.

Every church is under the piercing eye of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the inspector of His churches. Now again, when you go back to that first chapter, John said, I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me.

Having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. What are the lampstands? Verse 20, as for the mystery of the seven stars, which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, the pastors. That says He has the spiritual leaders of His churches in His hand.

And the seven lampstands are the seven churches. He has the leaders. He is walking among the lampstands.

And He's inspecting His churches. He's watching each one. And when He has a word to speak, He speaks to His churches.

Because He is the faithful and the true witness, no one can doubt His condemnation. Nobody in Laodicea, if they grasp the truth of verse 14, could come back and argue with what the Lord Jesus says in verses 15 and 16. The condemnation can be summarized in one word, lukewarm.

This is something that the people there in Laodicea would have understood very, very clearly. The city of Laodicea had grown rapidly, and it had outgrown its water supply. They could not supply water for their own city.

And so they had built, and this is amazing for the day in which this took place in the first century, but they built an underground system of pipes of water mains that conducted water from its two neighboring cities, the city of Hierapolis and the city of Colossae. Now, it's interesting because the city of Hierapolis was known for its warm springs, its hot springs. It was known then, as places like that in more recent days have been known for its medicinal or healing qualities.

People love to sit in a hot tub, as it were, just like people do today. And so the hot water of Laodicea, of Hierapolis, was conducted to Laodicea through an underground system of pipes. Now, on the other side was Colossae.

Colossae had nice, fresh, cold water springs, and that water also was piped to Laodicea. But the reality is that by the time the hot water from Hierapolis got to Laodicea, it was lukewarm. By the time the cold water from Colossae got to Laodicea, it was lukewarm.

These people understood perfectly what it meant to be not cold and hot, but lukewarm. So our Lord takes exactly the situation they had in their city, and he uses it to illustrate the truth that he is proclaiming here. He uses it to describe them.

And the key term is indifference. Lukewarmness is indifference. Here's why they need revival.

They are not cold. They are Orthodox Christians. They believe the right things.

They haven't fallen into apostasy or immorality. There's no condemnation for tolerating error here. I mean, you go back to chapter 2 and at verse 20, the message to the church there in Thyatira, and he says, but I have this against you that you tolerate that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads my bond servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and they eat things sacrificed to idols.

He doesn't say anything like that to Laodicea. Apparently, they were a fairly Orthodox community. They weren't tolerating error.

They were not cold. But the other problem is that they weren't hot either. And the word hot you hear means boiling.

Their commitment was minimal. There was no zeal. There was no passion.

There was no fervor. Listen to what the Apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 12, verse 11, when he exhorts the Roman church that they are to not be lagging behind in diligence, but rather they are to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. As we serve the Lord, we're to do so with passion, with zeal, certainly with a sense of commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and desire to obey him.

So what was the problem with Laodicea? They were religious, but they were hypocritical. They don't live what they say they believe. They say they believe the right things.

But then when it came to living it, they didn't do it. And the Lord Jesus makes a really amazing statement here. He says, I'd rather have you people deny me.

I'd rather have you people deny my word than to have one foot in the world and one foot in the church. Lukewarmness is utterly disgusting. And here's what Jesus says, literally, I will vomit you out of my mouth.

We have something in the medical world called an emetic. It's a medication that induces vomiting. It is that word emetic is directly from the word in the original text here.

That's what he's saying. I will vomit you out of my mouth. What does that mean? Well, that's a very vivid way of putting it to a city where the church was lukewarm.

But here's what it means. Revelation chapter 2, the message to the church at Ephesus. Here was his message there.

Remember from where you have fallen and repent and do the deeds you did at first or else. Now, here's what it means to vomit out of his mouth. I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent.

I was handed this morning by someone a magazine article. I haven't had time to digest this whole thing yet. But here it is losing our religion.

Now, here's the subtitle of this article. The ranks of the nation's religiously unaffiliated, so-called nuns, N-O-N-E-S, that is, they have no religion, are growing rapidly. Now, here's the question.

Is organized religion fading? You look at the statistics, it would appear so. Well, that's not surprising. Why? Because the Lord Jesus said, if you don't repent, I'm going to come and remove your lampstand.

And the Lord Jesus has been removing lampstands throughout 2,000 years of history. For example, the great, strong church of North Africa in the early centuries of the Christian church now are totally gone. Totally gone, replaced by Islam.

Why did the Lord Jesus remove the lampstands? Well, that's his business. He has the answer to that. But largely, I think we are justified in saying it's because the churches refuse to repent and go back to their first works.

And so it's a very sobering message. Pay attention to what the Lord says about the lukewarm church. But now let's come to a second part of this important letter in which we need to pay attention to what the lukewarm church says about itself.

And this is verses 17 and 18. And the key thought in the first verses was indifference. Now, the key thought is indulgence.

Indulgence. Now, listen to what he says. Let's begin with the first part of verse 17, where we find that the Lord Jesus passes this judgment.

They are deceived by their apparent prosperity. Because you say, I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing. That's what the lukewarm church says about itself.

We are rich and wealthy, and we don't need anything. Now, again, Laodicea was a wealthy city, and the church's prosperity apparently had led them to complacency. The church was a reflection of its environment, of its culture.

They lived in a wealthy city, a commercial and banking center. And the church followed suit. I mean, who knows? Maybe there were bankers and wealthy merchants that were in the church.

And they put big bucks into the offering every week. The treasurer's report glowed with the amount of money that was coming in. But the Lord Jesus is not impressed.

What do you see here in this banking commercial center? This is where it gets close to home today, folks. The church had capitulated to a market-driven thinking. What are they thinking about? Money.

Possessions. They're thinking about being wealthy. That's what evangelical Christianity today has its mind on.

I want you to notice, too. This is something else that bears thinking about. The letter itself, if you were to read this in its original language, you would realize that the U's here, Y-O-U's, are singular.

Remember, it's to the angel of the church. Now, I think it's true that it is a reflection of the entire church, but the message is directed to one man, the leader of the church. When you look at the leaders of evangelical Christianity today and the leaders of many churches today, this is what you have.

You have self-satisfied, smugly, complacent people who are in it for the money. So much so that in the last few months, you've had a committee of the Senate, the United States Congress, asking questions of some of these religious leaders because of their obscene lifestyles, their corporate jets, their mansions, their sumptuous vacations, and all of that. Laodicean from beginning to end.

What kind of an environment was this church living in? I can't help but think that it was in fact the same environment that the Lord Jesus, through the Apostle Paul, said would distinguish the last days. 2 Timothy 3, but realize this, in the last days, difficult times will come. Men will be lovers of self, and notice the very second thing, lovers of money.

One and two, lovers of self, lovers of money. Boastful, arrogant. Well, that described Laodicea.

Revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. You've got to think that Laodicea was distinguished by all of that. Because in the next verse, Paul says, holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power.

That's exactly what Laodicea did. Paul tells Timothy to avoid people like that. Several years ago, over a period of several years, one of America's leading evangelical thinkers, theologians, philosophers, David Wells, wrote a series of books that are very well worth reading, but they're not easy reading.

One of those books was called *Losing Our Virtue*. It is a critique of modern evangelicalism, and he's right on target in all four books. *Losing Our Virtue*.

Listen to something that he said here. The evangelical church today imagines that it can be on friendly terms with both God and the world. This attitude, more than anything else, accounts for the church's diminished spiritual stature for why it appears as a moral pygmy among the dilemmas of the modern world, which seem to be giants.

Amidst enormous pain and confusion, evangelical faith seems by comparison to be trivial as it indulges itself with happy, clappy praise songs, light Sunday morning dialogues, or worse yet, drama in their place. Contemporary evangelicalism places a premium on being amused, and like a petulant consumer, makes its salespeople in the pulpit tremble. The consumer, after all, is always right.

And unless it recovers some spiritual gravity, some seriousness, some authenticity, indeed, unless it recovers the substance of classical spirituality, the evangelical church will rapidly become an irrelevance in the modern world. That was written 10 years ago. The same trend continues unabated today.

The church at Laodicea was deceived by their apparent prosperity. And here's what was worse. They are not distressed by their spiritual poverty.

Listen to those words in the middle of verse 17. And you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. You don't have a clue.

Now, the Lord Jesus speaks here in terms that these people would readily understand, just as He did with the lukewarmness. The Lord Jesus brings it right back to Laodicea. They need revival.

And they need to buy some things from Him. This wealthy church that says, we're wealthy, we don't need anything. The Lord Jesus says, it's time for you to go shopping.

And you need to buy some things from Me. What, Lord Jesus? Well, they are dependent upon Him. And revival comes only from Him.

And so here's what He tells them. First of all, He says, you are poor. And because you are poor, I counsel you to buy gold refined by fire.

Now, again, Laodicea was a financial center. The trading of money, especially banking, gold, that was big business. And what He is saying is, I counsel you to buy gold.

What does that mean? Well, as usual, I would encourage you to remember that Scripture is its own best interpreter. So let's find out what it means to have gold. 1 Corinthians 3, beginning in verse 12, Paul says to the Corinthians, if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident, for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire.

And the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. You remember how John says to the Lord Jesus, through John, says to the Laodiceans, I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, so that you may actually become rich. Paul says, if any man's work which he has built on remains, he will receive a reward.

If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, yet so is through fire. What Paul is saying is, it matters how you build the church. There are things you can do to build the church that please the Lord Jesus.

Those are represented as gold and silver and precious stones. There are things which displease the Lord Jesus. Things that have no eternal value.

Worldly things that don't matter. Those things are pictured as wood, hay, and stubble, and they will be burned up in the judgment. Get back to the truth.

Get back to the unadulterated Word of God. Go back to preaching and expounding the Scriptures and worshiping God in spirit and in truth with a holy dignity and reverence. I think those are the things he's saying to the church at Laodicea when he says, buy gold refined by fire so that you may become spiritually rich.

Secondly, they are naked, and so they must buy white garments. Again, right on target with Laodicea, because Laodicea was known for a unique glossy black wool. It was nobody else that produced this.

It was a black wool that had a glossy finish to it, and it was unique in that part of the world. Laodicea was abounding in black cloth, and the Lord Jesus says, I counsel you to buy white garments. Why? Well, come now to the 19th chapter of Revelation for just a moment and look at verse 8, and this is a picture of the church clothed and ready to enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Listen to this description. Revelation 19, 8, It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. So what is he saying when he tells them to buy white garments? He's saying, I demand that you go back to living in a godly, righteous way.

Enough of the world, enough indulging in sin. Put all of that away and come back to godliness. Thirdly, he says, you are blind.

And so they need eye salve. Now, Laodicea had a famous medical school, and it is known from history that that medical school developed a popular eye powder. Now, I don't know exactly how this was administered, but it's interesting because the word eye salve here is actually a word that meant an oblong loaf of bread.

What's that got to do with eye salve? Well, you know what a poultice is? That seems to be what this was. That this eye powder that they had developed was apparently sprinkled on a loaf of bread, which would then be put over the eyes. You know, you've seen people put cucumbers over their eyes and things like that.

The problem is a loaf of bread that they would put over their eyes with this powder in it that would help eye diseases. The Lord Jesus says, you need to pay some attention to your eyes. Well, the Lord Jesus in his earthly ministry had said as much, right? You remember the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 6 of Matthew? Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust and all of that.

He says, don't be materialistic. Now, here's the problem. When your focus is material stuff, where your treasure is on earth and your heart is there with it, verse 22 of Matthew 6, the eye is the lamp of the body, so that if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

If your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness, the problem with their eyes is directly related to their attitude towards material wealth. And essentially, that's what Jesus seems to be saying to the church in Laodicea, get your eyes and your minds off all of the material garbage that is your priority in life.

Quit worrying about gold. Quit worrying about silver and precious stones. And quit worrying about your houses and your buildings and all of your wealth.

Everything like that is of irrelevance when it comes to your relationship to the Lord Jesus. Get your eyes where they belong, as Paul would tell the Colossians. Set your affections on things above.

Get your eyes off the world and on to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, here's a church that needed discernment. They needed to see things as they really were.

He said, you do not know that you are wretched and miserable, poor, blind and naked. So, he's telling them, open your eyes and look and see what you really are. And what you need is a little humility.

And you need a little sorrow here. And you need repentance. And you need to return to the truth of God and the genuine worship of God.

And you need to return to holy living. Now, the thing that you notice about all of this is that there is a cost involved. It's interesting that the Lord Jesus did not tell this church, I want you to get gold and I want you to go find white garments and I want you to find yourself some ice.

No, he says, I want you to buy it and buy it for me. That means you got to pay a price for this. And that price, my dear friends, means breaking from the materialistic, self-centered, complacent world.

It means breaking from an attitude that says, my whole life is consumed in just being comfortable. I want to work so that I can make money so that I can have the stuff I want. I want to make money so that I am reasonably comfortable so I can come home and kick my feet up on the sofa with a beer and pretzels in hand and watch TV all night.

Or I want to be able to have the toys that the rest of the world has, whatever those toys may be, the latest sports car, the fastest speedboat, who knows, whatever it is. Now, again, this is addressed to the pastor and I'm afraid today in many churches, materialistic pastors who are leading complacent churches. Many contemporary churches are accumulating massive amounts of money.

They have built huge buildings that now they are stuck with, with huge mortgages, and they have to keep these things going. And so it means constant compromise to try to attract people from the outside so they can pay for all of this. Our materialism has blinded us to God's truth and to the needs of a dying world.

So pay attention to what the lukewarm church says about itself. Keep your ears to the ground today and listen to what evangelical Christianity is saying about itself. That's one reason I read magazines like Christianity Today, though there's not much in it that's of worth in terms of its articles.

But there's a lot of news and a lot of things that show me what's happening out there. That's one of the reasons why I encourage you to read every other week when we put in the bulletin that little What in the World. I hope you read those.

That gives you a taste of where we are today in our culture. So we must listen, pay attention to what the Lord says to the lukewarm church, but also we need to be paying attention to what the lukewarm church is saying about itself. Which now leads me to the encouragement part.

Thirdly, pay attention to what the devout Christian does for himself. Verses 19 to 22. The final key thought here, we've seen the first indifference, then indulgence.

Now the final key thought is invitation. The Lord Jesus actually reaches out to this lukewarm church in love. Notice how he addresses it.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. The Lord Jesus is saying, I'm not just saying this to be hard on you. I love you.

The Lord Jesus loves his church. His reproof and his discipline are evidence of his love for his church. Now the church needs to replace lukewarmness with zeal and repentance.

We can see that. But within the broader scope of these lukewarm churches, as in Laodicea, there are a minority of members who still have a heart for Christ. You see, we can look even at these evangelical churches today that are just where Laodicea was, but you can find in each one of these churches, a few men and women here or there, who really have a sincere love for Jesus Christ.

In many cases, they're not happy with what's going on, but that's their church. What if the Lord Jesus chooses not to revive the church? We've already asked that question. Here's another question.

Are they left without hope? Well, again, we go back to Lamentations and we hear Jeremiah saying, well, Lord, I want you to restore us. I want you to renew us again, unless... That's such a sad tone that he closes that book with. Unless you are angry with us.

And Habakkuk saying, Lord, even if the world falls apart around my ears, yet I'm going to rejoice. Well, that's all well and good. But I want to suggest to you that we as Christians today can take a step beyond where the prophets were.

Now listen carefully. In spite of the church's complacency, those who seek the Lord are invited to fellowship with Him. Verse 20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will dine with him and he with me. This is the church of the closed door. Do you see it? The Lord Jesus Christ is where? He is outside knocking, trying to get in.

And his next words, I think, are very important. If anyone. You see what he's done? He now brings the focus from the corporate body of the church down to the individual Christian.

His offer is made to the individual believer here. Here's what he's saying. If the church, the broader church, if your own church body, your own local assembly fails to respond, if there is no revival, no heart for God, if you can read this letter to Laodicea and walk away from it and say, oh well, if that's the way the church is, there is still available to any individual who will open his heart or her heart to the Lord Jesus to come in and fellowship with him.

Notice he uses the most intimate terms here. I will come into him and will dine with him and he with me. Usually, most people, when you open your homes to someone for dinner, you're not opening to total strangers.

And the fellowship that you have over the dinner table is some of the most rich and rewarding and intimate fellowship to be had between friends. Jesus says, if the whole church is drowning in apostasy, but you, dear child of mine, are sitting in that pew and your heart is crying out in agony over what you see going on around you, and your heart is crying out for me, and you come home and throw yourself on your face before me and you pray and you say, Lord Jesus, they may not want to know you. They may not want to be faithful, but I do.

The Lord Jesus says, I'll come in and I'll sit down and have dinner with you. Not literally, but figuratively. It means that he will carry on an intimate relationship with you.

Now, what this is saying is that an indifferent church does not mean an inaccessible Savior. If the Lord Jesus does not revive a church, that does not mean that it is impossible for you to have a meaningful, fulfilling relationship with Jesus Christ. You can.

So in spite of the church's complacency, those who seek the Lord are invited to fellowship with him. Look finally in verse 21. In spite of the church's complacency, those who overcome are invited to reign with him.

Ah, rejoice, brethren. What we see here is that the dining room leads to a throne room. They're connected by a little hallway.

You have dinner with the Lord Jesus Christ. You open your heart to him. He'll conduct you through that hallway into the throne room.

Of his universe. Fellowship implies faithfulness. Faithfulness implies perseverance.

He who perseveres overcomes. Here's the Christian who's on intimate terms with Christ, who stands out as different, who's not afraid to be called a fanatic or risk his reputation or his security or even his life for the Savior. Here's a Christian who doesn't shrink from defying the world.

Now, if the Lord Jesus sits down with us now, he is promising that we will sit down with him in the future. This is not symbolic language. When he says that he who overcomes, I will grant him to sit down with me on my throne.

He means that literally. How do I know? Because we are told 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 2. We are said, do you know that the saints will judge the world? We are going to reign with him. We see that in the chapters that follow.

In Revelation 4 and 5, we are going to reign with the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, he who is faithful and true has already sat down in the throne with his father. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool of your feet.

The Lord Jesus has ascended and is at the right hand of the throne of the father. And the promise of the Lord Jesus is that if you will just be faithful and fellowship with me, regardless of the condition of your church body or the church at large in the world, whatever happens, I will fellowship with you. And then someday, you will reign with me.

But that promise is made to overcomers. And thus the final caution, verse 22, he who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. Again, the watchword of this entire letter, pay attention.

Today, the same Savior continues to stand at the door and knock, seeking admission into the hearts of his people, corporately as a church and individually. Many Christians are refusing to answer. And I'm asking you to look at your own heart today.

Many Christians are refusing to answer. They know Christ is knocking. They don't want to let go of the world.

You and I need to ask ourselves, are we committed to the Lord Jesus Christ with this burning zeal for his cause? Or are we indifferent, self-indulgent, and like Laodicea, lukewarm, at ease in the comfort of our prosperity? Let me ask you this telling question. What are you willing to put ahead of the Lord Jesus in your life? In fact, what I ought to say is this. What are you actually putting ahead of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life? Is your heart a closed door or an open door? As a Christian, as a believer, what about the door of your heart? Men and women, young people of Waiting River Baptist Church, are our hearts a closed door or an open door? Which will it be? To him who opens the door of his heart, the Lord will open

the door of his heaven.

If you look at the very next verse, chapter 4, verse 1, And after these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, and said, Come up here. Many of us believe that that is a reference to the rapture of the church.

If you are in Christ today, if you love him today, if you have an open heart to him today, it is coming a day when the voice from heaven will sound, and the shout of the angelic voice, the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise as we hear that word, Come up here. And we will be with the Lord. There are many people today who will not hear that call, who will not be invited to the open door of heaven, because they have closed the door.

So when all is said and done, we're left with a deep sense of our own sinfulness. As I look at evangelical Christianity today, it's drowning in lukewarm complacency and smug self-sufficiency. I don't think we understand how really spiritually poor we really are, and how deeply we have grieved our Lord, and how much we've grieved his spirit.

And that's why I've preached this extended series. Ladies and gentlemen, we need revival. I'm through preaching on revival, at least for now.

But we must not be through hoping and praying for revival. Every time you think of it, I hope you will cry out to him, in words that we have studied, Will you not yourself revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Revive us, revive us, according to your word. Revive us in your ways.

Revive us according to your righteousness. Lord, I have heard your report and I'm afraid. Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years.

In the midst of the years, make it known in wrath, remember mercy. Restore us, O Lord. Renew us.

We will not let you go until you bless us. O Lord, open the door. Come in, Lord Jesus.

Let's pray together. Utterly yielded, longing to know all the blessed fullness love can bestow. Ready and willing, eager to give perfect obedience, bravely to live, raise up a people holy and free, hearts with a vision, like unto thee.

Souls that would rather die than give in, lives with a passion, victory to win. Spirit divine, O quicken us now, while in thy presence humbly we bow. Set our hearts ablaze with thy love.

Teach us the secret of life. From above. Yes, Lord, open the door.

Come in. Revive us again. For Jesus' sake we pray.

Amen. Our last hymn is number 291, but we're going to sing it to a different tune, the one that we've sung. So it's not the same tune as in the book, but the words are the same.

You know the tune. So Kevin, come and lead us as we sing. Please stand.

Thank you.

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