

# Message to Laodicea

## Part 1

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*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:00] We have not finished Malachi, and we won't be able to do that, even if I start speaking on the remaining verses of the chapters. We might touch on some points, but I want to look at a comparative passage in Revelation chapter 3, verse 14 to the end. Right, I'll read the epistle to the Laodiceans, verse 14.

[00:01:06] And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith thee, 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, neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art 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 thysel, [00:02:03] that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Thus far the word of God.

This is the final epistle of a series of seven written for the benefit of the churches. Just [00:03:10] as the prophecy of Malachi was for the benefit of all readers in his day and since. We have been reading that ancient prophet as if the Spirit was speaking to us. Now you're living in Melbourne or Sydney or in some place in New Zealand, you say I'm not living in Laodicea. But we want to hear what the Spirit is saying to us through this epistle. Now we're going [00:04:16] through the verses more or less one by one. It's the angel, the messenger, just as we've had in Malachi being addressed in verse 14. You know there are some people, this is a footnote really, there are some people say they speak in the tongues of angels. Did you meet with anyone like that? I'm not saying he speaks in the tongues of angels. When they are pretending to speak in tongues, they say well no one understands it. It's neither Arabic nor Dutch and it's the tongues of angels. If you get two angel talkers together, they won't understand [00:05:15] each other. It's true isn't it? If you haven't found it, you can test it. But you know the purpose of an angel is to give a message clear and plain. And the announcement of Samson's birth to Manoah had to be in plain language that the couple understood. If I should choose to deliver my message in low Saxon, you wouldn't understand a word. And so it would cease to be a [00:06:11] message. It would just be a terrible noise. When the angel Gabriel announced to Joseph and Mary the birth of Christ, then it obviously had to be in the language they understood. So here the

angel has a responsibility to communicate the mind of the Lord. Now what we want really in our assemblies is faithful angels. People who faithfully [00:07:07] communicate the mind of the Lord. They don't get it simply from the pages of the sacred text. But they learn the significance of the Holy Scriptures by prayerful communion with the Lord.

Now the Lord presents himself as his characteristic in a special way to each assembly. And here it is no less particular. He says these things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. When all else had failed, the Lord Jesus [00:08:10] is the solitary and faithful true witness to what the new creation should be. It's in that situation where there had been great failure, the Lord presents himself as the unchanging, spotless and completely reliable one to whom you and I may turn. He says to the Laodiceans, I know your works. Perhaps in the Ephesian epistle in chapter two, when the Lord says, I know your works, they're works of a different character. The Lord still standing in the midst [00:09:16] of the assemblies and saying, I know your works. I know what you're up to. I know what you're doing. And sadly, the Lord's knowledge of their works was not very pleasing to him. And he tells them very straight. He says, you're neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one thing or the other. Just like in Malachi's day, strongest religious indifference prevailed. The mass still having some [00:10:10] religion, but really their hearts completely unmoved by the privilege and the responsibility. The Lord, it's understandable. The Lord says, I wish you were one thing or the other. I wish you were cold or hot. Then I could deal with you according to that condition. Now in these seven epistles to the churches, verse 16 is the greatest expression of contempt. And we've had Thyatira referred to this morning in our reading.

They had that terrible woman that caused Israel to sin. A woman who harlocked like put paint to [00:11:17] her eyes. And ultimately only eaten up by dogs. Jezebel, she caused Israel to sin terribly.

And there was no lesser terrible influence come in the church of Thyatira. And if that represents Rome, well, it's a very poor and dreadful condition. Nevertheless, the Lord speaks more [00:12:10] contemptuously to those in Laodicea. What he says here, he doesn't even say to Thyatira.

In everyday language, verse 16 could be rendered, you make me sick. Lord will spew them out of his mouth. They're going to be completely rejected because of their low and terrible lukewarm condition. Are you fervent for the Lord or are you indifferent? If you could do a little chart, [00:13:05] let's have a little chart made up now. Okay, we're going to have three categories. Four, medium, good. We might even have excellent if you want. And then we're going to put a big list of things here. Private prayer. Private reading. Tract distribution. Care of the sick. Giving to the poor. You can put some other good works down there. And now, where are you going to put the crosses? Well, go home and write a little sheet of paper like that and see how many come [00:14:04] in the excellent box. Well, we might as well forget the excellent box. Any ticks in the good box? Most of it will be in the poor and the medium. The fervency which should mark us, the freshness of first love to Christ has largely disappeared. Now, if this simple, we might say mechanical checklist reveals to us our low condition. A little [00:15:01] self-appraisal in the light of God's word will do its deeper work. That's rather solemn, isn't it? The Lord's going to reject us because we're lukewarm. And then the Lord says in verse 16, because you say I am rich and increased with goods and of need of nothing. You know, God has ordained that the poor in this world should be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. You think of the people in India, the people in Sudan, the thousands of brethren in the Congo, [00:16:01] and many other places where poverty is a grinding poverty as their daily portion. And how is it for us? Increased with goods. We've been weaned away by wealth from a deep communion with the Lord. We're doing all right. We're doing very well. You know, I've often suggested that the Laodicean assembly didn't have a prayer

meeting in the week. You know, in Acts 2.42, they continued steadfastly in prayer. But if you're rich, if you've got need [00:17:03] of nothing, if you've got everything that your heart could desire in the material world, well, you might think I don't need to go to the prayer meeting to ask for anything at all. You know, when Peter was in prison, they made prayer to God. A funny thing, isn't it? Scripture tells us they made prayer to God. Who else would they make prayer to? By this observation, I want to point out two things. Firstly, we want to be sure that we're praying privately and at the prayer meeting. Day by day, as you go along with your heart elevated to God, Lord, help me, Lord, [00:18:07] help me. Constancy of prayer ought to mark us privately and corporately. Don't be like the Laodiceans who ostensibly didn't at least need to go to the prayer meeting. Home late from work, no time for dinner, get to the prayer meeting. It won't kill you to eat afterwards. Make the Lord's priority your priority. It was at the prayer meeting the Lord first disclosed, it was in [00:19:02] regard to the prayer meeting the Lord first disclosed his promise where two or three are gathered together. There I am in the midst. Prayer meeting is a wonderful meeting. It's the best meeting of the week in some ways. The Lord is there. In Acts chapter 2, we learned it was at the prayer meeting the Lord chose to launch the church. Great things can happen at the prayer meeting. Be there. And the second thing, be there and pray. And pray for the whole hour that it's [00:20:02] worth. Silent prayer, uttered prayer, pray, pray, pray. It's not just say prayers but get into the presence of God like they did when they prayed for Peter. Prayer was made unto God for him by the church. Don't open your mouth until you are conscious that you are in the presence of the Lord who said he would be in the midst of the twos and the threes. Now the Lord is going to put his finger on the true condition. Self complacent, we think it's okay. But the Lord [00:21:16] gives the true measure of the condition that they were in at Laodicea. And if I recollect correctly, there's a definite article before all these words. You are the wretched, the miserable, the poor, the blind, and the naked. They exemplified that rotten condition through and through. Right. What are we going to do with this lot? What are we going to do? Put them out of [00:22:04] fellowship. Get rid of them. Have nothing to do with them. Look at the condition they're in. We can't go on with that lot. No, that's not how the Lord deals with them. As many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens. He says you need some medicine. You need some help. And here he says, I've got counsel for you. Counsel thee to buy of me gold dried in the fire that thou mayest be rich. You see, a man's wealth doesn't consist in the things that he has in the material world.

We want investment in the heavenly bank. And there the Lord will give an abundant interest and rich [00:23:18] blessing. No, it's not like this that I put a dollar in and he gives me ten dollars. No, but I give to God and he uses it for his glory. Present devotion, present obedience brings reward in due time. The Lord, just as in Malachi, he desires that the tithes might be brought in to his house.

[00:24:02] Well, now the Lord here, he says, buy of me gold. Now, it's customary amongst us to say, oh, well, gold speaks of divine righteousness. Now, I'm going to say it doesn't mean that here.

So perhaps I tread on a few more toes. Perhaps fine gold or pure gold may suggest the concept of divine righteousness in some places. You know, but the Lord says to Nebuchadnezzar, thou art that head of gold. I suspect there's not much divine righteousness there. No, no, what the Lord is [00:25:15] saying, he's saying, you know, your form of government, Nebuchadnezzar, this benevolent dictatorship or so it should be, that's the most excellent form that I approve of. Now, remember on this diagram, perhaps a lot of the things, prayer and reading, have come into the mediocre, in the median line. Not so poor that we don't do it at all, and not good that we do a lot of it, but it's just about in the middle, lukewarm condition. [00:26:09] The Lord says, I want you to go for the gold standard. I want you to get a gold medal. Don't be satisfied with the mediocre. The Lord says, come to me and have a transaction with me and I will help you to spiritual excellence. Gold generally speaks of what

is excellent. Now, where else can we get what's excellent in this world? You know, people are buying, in the states now an ounce of gold is a thousand dollars. No confidence in the mighty dollar [00:27:11] anymore. I'm even worried about the UK pound. But you know, even that gold which is worth so much, it's going to be worthless in the day to come. It's a spiritual gold we want. You know, we want to be rid of the mediocre. Often we're governed by mediocrity in our assembly life.

I don't know if it happens. I don't think it happens here, but it's happened in Britain. I've [00:28:10] seen it. Someone had six cups and three had got chips. And they bought six new cups.

Different pattern. Now, what should I do with these six chip cups? Oh, they'll be useful at the meeting room. And after a while we have a cupboard full of junk. We're happy to offer to the Lord what's lame or what's torn. The Lord doesn't want us to be like that. He wants us to [00:29:10] be fervent for him. Oh, it doesn't matter. It's just for the meeting. That's the wrong attitude. You won't say it's for the Lord. I want to do the best for him. Then he says, I want you to have white raiment that you might be clothed. That's very important to be clothed properly. It's very important for brothers and sisters to be clothed in a modest fashion. It's important for the standards of righteousness and holiness in the companies which gather to the Lord's name, [00:30:02] that modesty and proper dress is seen among our people. Rob people of the concept of modesty and you can't reach them with the gospel, for they have then no shame. You steal modesty from people, they can't hear the gospel, they have no shame. You know, when the Lord speaks to Philadelphia, he says, see that no man take thy crown.

Now, long ago, in the regulations pertaining to the Nazirite, the men had to have long hair.

[00:31:19] The long hair of the Nazirite was the crown of his consecration. And you know, in Corinthians, we learn that the long hair of a woman is given to her in place of a veil. Not in place of a head covering, in place of a veil. And just as the Nazirites had to be separate from the world, so sisters present what is true of the assembly, that they should be [00:32:04] separate from the world on account of their long hair. In fact, Paul goes further, he says, the long hair is a woman's glory. It's a shame for a man, of course. And now, in Revelation, it says, see that no man take thy crown. The crown of consecration, the veil of separation, see that you don't lose that. That's the beauty of being brethren, we can help one another.

[00:33:13] But you know, the situation in Laodicea is they'd lost their covering.

They'd lost their consecration, they'd lost their Nazirite character, they'd lost their distinctive position. And they were naked. Exposed. Separation and consecration were no longer considerations at Laodicea. So the Lord says, I've got some covering for you, and it's white, it's pure, it's clean. That the shame of your nakedness [00:34:09] does not appear. So I want you to think about this. It's a very important consideration in relation to physical dress, and also your spiritual condition. And then he advises them to obtain, anoint their eyes with eye salve, that they may see. The trouble is they were so blind, they couldn't see they were blind. You know, physical blindness is a very great disability.

[00:35:03] It's so, isn't it? But you know, spiritual blindness is a much greater disability. Physical blindness, you can fall in the ditch, but spiritual blindness, you can fall in hell. And any other trouble on the way there too, you can fall into. And the Lord desires that they might see.

And that's what I'd like you to do, to see. See things as God sees them, see things God's way. And then verse 19, we've already alluded to, as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, [00:36:07] be zealous

therefore and repent. Why does the Lord say all these uncomfortable things about us? You know, a faithful preacher may put his finger on points that are very uncomfortable and irksome. I have a sense that I'm not faithful enough. But the Lord can put his finger on those issues that are wrong in our lives. And He doesn't want to stir you up because He hates you, it's because He loves you. [00:37:06] He wants the very best for you. He wants your blessing and your spiritual prosperity. He says, be zealous, this is the exact opposite to being lukewarm.

He wants you to bubble up and boil for Him. He wants that revival of devotion and consecration that has long been absent. And then He says a word which is very uncomfortable for all of us.

It's a nice word in the Gospel. Yeah, the sinners need this. [00:38:02] Yeah, the man at the gutter, he needs this word. You need it too. Repent. Stop going your own way. Maybe until this conference time you've been going your own sweet way. You may even have had notions that you were going the Lord's way, but really it was just your own sweet, happy way. And the Lord wants us to go in exactly the opposite direction. We thought being at the meeting was a social club. No, it's not for you, it's the testimony to the Lord's name. [00:39:05] Maybe in your private life you've been doing things that have been wrong. Even robbing God.

That's got to stop. He says repent. There needs to be the big change. It doesn't say let him that stole steal a little less. Let him that has been sinning and being lukewarm be a little less lukewarm and a little less with his sin. He doesn't say that the one who steals a little less or the one who steals a little less should reduce his sin. But the book says that the thief should not steal again, but rather do good with his own hands. The old prophet Isaiah long ago said cease to do evil learn to do well. [00:40:13] Repent, repent dear friends this is what we need. We need the searching beam of God's word shining into our hearts and consciences. Things long neglected. Things left undone and things not done the Lord wants us to get right. There's a whole range of things that need sorting out I'm not going to give you a list. There's a whole range of things that need sorting out I'm not going to give you a list of these things. [00:41:08] When you preach state name the sins.

I might as well give you a dictionary. You know how you stand before the Lord. You know what needs sorting out between you and the Lord. Maybe there was a man I think Boyd Nicholson a preacher in Northern Ireland. He didn't name all the sins he just named one sin. He says there's a man in the congregation here who beats his wife. You know there was violence in Malachi I'm sure. [00:42:07] He says the man in this congregation who beats his wife if he doesn't put ten dollars in the collection box I'll name him publicly. The box was full of ten dollar bills. No but listen you know there are so many things wrong in our lives. Domestic violence is a terrible thing. And maybe a whole range of sins that need dealing with. Yeah if it was ten dollars every sin the collection box would be full wouldn't it? [00:43:07] The Lord's not wanting your ten dollars he wants your repentance. Now let's go on to verse 20. The Lord's standing at the door. We've already alluded to this in our days together. The Lord now obliges to be outside instead of in the midst. Any of you ever come home and you found the door locked? You've left the key at home and your wife's not yet back. [00:44:01] It may be an hour or two before they come back. And the sense of frustration that you should be inside and you're obliged to be outside. And the neighbors are looking what's he doing? You know it's a very uncomfortable feeling isn't it? Anyone that's ever experienced it it's uncomfortable. Well especially if you're impatient like me it's uncomfortable. If you're impatient like me it's going to be difficult. You know this is really a studied insult against the Lord. It's an insult against the Lord that he's obliged to be outside. But he says behold behold look. [00:45:05] Their attention needed to be drawn to the fact. You see they were inside at the meeting.

And they thought the Lord was in the midst. They probably sang the hymn gathered to thy name Lord Jesus. They sung and said wonderful words. They still had assembly characters to the church of the Laodiceans. They still had the apparent right to assembly to the name of the Lord in the church of the Laodiceans. Maybe they didn't leave the right of the presence of the Lord and this teaching yet but they still knew it and maybe they're doing it in a physical way. [00:46:03] But they couldn't see that the Lord wasn't in the midst. The warmth and cheer his presence brings was unknown by the company. The Lord calls look look I'm here at the door. He says if any man hear my voice. What a plaintive pathetic appeal. If any man hear my voice. The longing in in in these words of the Lord just to be heard. Are you listening to the Lord's voice? [00:47:02] Do you hear him? Can you hear that little voice by the door? I want to come in. You know when we have lunch at chapter two we have a doorbell and we're so busy talking someone rings it and we don't hear the bell. We're having a jolly good time eating our lovely dinner and there's some poor fellow like the postman ringing for all he can. One of the sisters says I think someone's at the door. [00:48:01] You've got good ears. She goes down and does the business with the postman at the door. It's a bit like that. Is there anyone who will hear? So much noise going on inside. A lot of activity a lot of energy but not much listening to the voice of the Lord. There's not much waiting for that gentle patient knocking at the door. Yes there was a lot of talking but it wasn't of the talking in Malachi 3:16. [00:49:02] They spoke often one with another. But the Lord was a delighted hearer. And he observed that they they were those that feared him. That's a very important brothers and sisters the fear of the Lord. In Titus it speaks of godliness according to the truth. Is this the character of our God fearingness? Do you come to the meeting as if you're going to a sports hall or whether you're going to a dance or something like that? How do you come to the meeting? How do you come to the meeting?

[00:50:11] Is there a reverence and a respect for the things of God? Psalm 89 verse 7 we've already quoted but let's read it again. God is greatly to be feared. God is greatly to be feared. Verse 7 greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. Good text to get printed up and stuck on the notice board. [00:51:05] Isaiah would ask later I think in the 50th chapter. Who is there among you that feareth him? Verse 10 I think.

Who is there among you that feareth him? Well, it's an appeal to the individual. Who is there? Don't wait for the others. Make sure it starts with you. Get right in relation to the Lord. He says if any man [00:52:01] It's the individual now. Are you going to be one of those individuals that will go and be a component of a faithful remnant that continues to the moment of the Lord's return? It would be a good thing if you were one of those. And the Lord says I'm going to come in to you. If others aren't you will be conscious of my presence. And there's going to be communion. You see that's what the Lord's delighted to see in the end of Malachi. [00:53:01] He's delighted to see the communion they had one with another. He regarded them as his own treasure. He speaks to them about what his heart's disposition is towards them. He reveals his thoughts to them. They shall be mine. And I make up my jewels. And here he says In verse 20 of Revelation 3 I will sup with him and he with me. [00:54:01] In verse 20 He's not inviting us to breakfast but to supper. Not so much the supper But the closing meal of the day. The Lord is coming soon. These opportunities of communion with him in the place of his rejection are being limited by the moment. Now is the opportunity to be identified with the Lord. To get things right And that these closing moments of our testimony Might rather be Not the weak failing things that they've been until now But rather successful and blessed and triumphant. [00:55:15] That we might truly seek first the kingdom of God. That the things of the Lord Jesus Christ Might receive 100% priority in our lives. Now we're going to read verse 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne. All the churches had overcomers I got the biggest surprise of my life When I discovered there were overcomers in Philadelphia Even in that attractive assembly there were

overcomers [00:56:01] There had to be overcomers We want overcomers in every section And every community We want overcomers in every place But at Laodicea Oh the need for overcomers how great Are you prepared to be an overcomer? Or is it getting too difficult in your meeting? Too many trials and tribulations in your life And you're almost overwhelmed The Lord doesn't want you to be overwhelmed [00:57:01] He wants you to be an overcomer And what will enable you to do this? It's our faith Faith in him Who's able to strengthen and encourage us And then we'll sit down On his throne It's wonderful It gives us a place on his throne Revelation 5.10 tells us And we'll reign with him over the earth Amidst lukewarmness and difference The Lord calls the overcomer to share with him The Lord calls the overcomer to share with him [00:58:07] From the unrepentant Laodicean He refuses their testimony But as a distinctive blessing of the overcomer He says we'll reign with him And then Then the world will know That as the father has loved the son So we too have been loved Now verse 22 Physical blindness is very terrible And Physical deafness Is also a great great inconvenience [00:59:05] But spiritual deafness Is a terrible thing The communication of The communication of The mind of the Lord through the word Coming to our hearing How's it with your ears? The Lord wants us to Take heed how we hear What we hear He wants his words to sink Deep down into our ears And here he wants us to hear What the spirit is saying to the churches The Lord speaking today When he comes That voice won't be heard on earth anymore [01:00:01] In that fashion This is the scene of adjustment This is the place where We can live for the Lord Amidst difficulties and obstacles In the place where He was rejected We can stand up for the dominical rights Of our saviour May the Lord help us each one To be brighter And better testimony to his name Than we've been hitherto