

# Two Churches

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 27 November 2011

[ 0 : 00 ] A story of two churches. Revelation 3 verse 6 through to the end.

! He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.! And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 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.

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.

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.

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. Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

[ 1 : 18 ] Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God. And he shall go no more out, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, and the name which is near Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.

And I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 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 work cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, are 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.

[ 2 : 31 ] And anoint thine eyes with thysel, 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 into him, and will suck with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in 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. Answer the churches.

Two churches. Two assemblies. And a contrast there, isn't there? The Church of Philadelphia. The Church of Laodicea. A message that God repeatedly says he wants us to hear right through the seven churches in this context.

We're looking just at two tonight. A message that God repeatedly says, Let hear the heaven. Ear. Hear what the Spirit says. And I pray that, as I speak, that these would be God's words.

[ 3 : 41 ] It says in 1 Peter 4, 11, And if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it, as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom he prays and dominion forever and ever.

Amen. It's an awesome privilege to be able to speak to you tonight. I pray that God would use my lips to give a word to everyone here for his glory. For the church in Philadelphia, we see the message is mostly commendation.

They're commended. They're doing a lot of good things there. They're recognised for faithfulness. In verse 8, we see that there's faithfulness in the Church of Philadelphia. He says, Faithfulness.

The church at Philadelphia was a church with faithfulness to the word of God. He says, You've kept my word. He says, You've got a little strength.

You know, we can all feel, following on really from Brad's message this morning, about how we can feel weak and inadequate. That that is the time when God can really move.

[ 4 : 57 ] And God can really use us. When we're feeling at the end of our strength, that he steps in. But he wants us to use even that little strength that we have. Even though we might feel inadequate, he says to this church, Thou hast a little strength.

And even when you're facing lost, troubles and tests, that little strength that he gives to you, it can be enough. He can help you to battle those storms with his strength.

And God looks for those who keep his word. He looks for the faithful, the faithful ones. In Proverbs 20 verse 6 it says, Most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness, but a faithful man who can find.

A faithful man who can find. Where are the faithful ones? We know our Lord says, When he comes back, will he find faith on the earth? Will it be a faithful church when he comes back?

God uses those who will be used of him. Even with your little strength, the little talents that you might have, those little abilities that each one has, that they can be used for his glory.

[ 6 : 03 ] That you can be a useful Christian, a useful one. That God can put you in a place of usefulness for his kingdom. That he can give you those doors of opportunities. It says here that there's doors that he gives.

Open doors that he gives to this church. The open door in other scriptures, for example, 1 Corinthians 16, 9, 2 Corinthians 2, 12, Colossians 4, 3.

It speaks about open doors. God opens doors. Sometimes he shuts them, but he opens doors. And it says here that this church had the opportunity afforded to them, and they used the little strength that they had for God's glory.

Will we keep his word? Will we be that kind of church that will keep the word of God? I pray that we can be.

Even in this very day, this very time in world history, that we are an assembly. I trust an assembly joined together by God's spirit. People pulled together to be a visible expression of the kingdom of God in this local place, in this community where we live.

[ 7 : 11 ] That we can be a faithful church. A church that is faithful. A church that is faithful, true to the word of God. Not deviating from it. As much as there might be various views in our midst that we hold to the word of God.

And that is that which guides us and which strengthens us. A church that is faithful to the word. A church that is marked by devotion to the word. We see in Isaiah 59, verse 14, that a time will come, and we could say, really, this is evident in our time, truth is fallen in the street.

That's Isaiah 59, verse 14. Truth is fallen in the street. We're living in a time where, I know I've said it of late, that men call that which is evil good, and that which is good evil.

And truth is just cast on the street like someone's rubbish. You know, I often walk around here and I see bits of rubbish, and I open them up. It's usually someone's shopping list that just goes to the shop, and they just throw it on the floor as a piece of rubbish.

That's how some people are treating the word of God today. They're throwing it on the floor like a discarded piece of rubbish that they don't take heed to. And we need to preach it like it is.

[ 8 : 22 ] We need to believe it like it is, to be a church faithful to the word. And of this church, we see that it had the authority of the word. In the context, it says, our Lord says that he has the key of David.

And the key of David could speak to us as a symbol of authority. A key is something that, you know, not everyone has a key. In fact, I've got a key to give Roy that I, he's going to have some authority. I'm going to give him a key. So he's allowed to open and shut the door and lock up the place. You know, there's a degree of authority. Some people don't have that authority here today. You may not be one of the select people who have a key to this building.

But Roy's going to have some more authority because he's going to have the key. But the Lord that we serve is the one who has the key of David. He's the one who has the authority.

And we have the authority of God's word to guide us, to lead us. It's God's authority. The word is our authority. And yet today, the preaching of the word has been diluted and it's been forgotten.

[ 9 : 25 ] So the Philadelphiaian church is a church with faithfulness. We want to be faithful. Faithful to God. Faithful to his truth. Secondly, we see that the Philadelphiaian saints were marked by faithfulness and by love.

In verse 9, we see that there was love there. He says that he's going to make people come and to know that I have loved thee. I have loved thee.

He says of this church that he has loved this church. And of course, we know the word Philadelphia, it actually means philo meaning love and delphia meaning brothers.

It means a love of the brethren. It means brotherly love. I know someone this morning said to me, there's brotherly love here. There's that atmosphere of brotherly love in this fellowship.

You know, we try to make it a church that is welcoming and receptive and shows the love of the brethren. Love for one another. That we would love one another as Christ has loved us.

[10:24] And this church at Philadelphia, not only was it a church of brotherly love, but it was a church loved by God. It was loved by him. Elsewhere we read, our Lord says that those that he loves, he rebukes and chastens.

He reproveth, he disciplines. And so there's a time where we might face such seasons as we heard about in the morning message. How sometimes when we're going through some troubling times, that that could be our Lord chastening us and disciplining us, helping us to trust him more, helping us to lean more upon him.

So do not shy away from his chastening. Walk in his love and the love of the brethren. I pray that that will be a mark that marks this church. We won't be a church that is standoffish or toffee-nosed or holier-than-thou looking down upon others.

But we'll be a church that embraces people with his love. Just as if our Lord Jesus would be here this very day. And he is. If our Lord Jesus was here, he would embrace.

He would welcome. He would receive. And he would bless. And we want to have that same spirit of his love. So the Philadelphian saints were recognised for their faithfulness.

[11:39] They kept the word. For their love, love by God and loving one another. And thirdly we see they had an overcoming power. We read there that our Lord says, He that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.

He says that there's an overcoming that we can know. And we're living in a world where we're constantly besieged by frustrations and the enemy.

We read in the scriptures that there's fighting within without. You know, there's a constant warfare going on. Of course, we all have the day-by-day concerns of making ends meet of the everyday needs that everybody has in our world.

But as Christians too, we face the adversary who's committed against us and wants to see us discouraged and deterred. But the church here is marked by victory.

The church here in these verses is a church that will overcome. And friends, if you're saved today, you're assured of victory. It's like someone else was saying to me this morning.

[12:52] You read the back of the book. It says who's going to win. And that's so true, isn't it? In the back of the book, you know, if you take this whole book, there's 66 books that is your Bible, and you look at that last chapter of your Bible, the last chapter of Revelation.

It talks about heaven. It talks about the victory. It talks about the eternity that awaits those that trust Him. And there's a wonderful victory. And this church has chosen that victory.

It's chosen wholesome words. It's chosen sound doctrine. It's a church of overcomers. As we sang earlier, victory in Jesus. My Saviour forever.

There's a victory for you. And it's, again, as was referred to this morning, it's not by our own doings. It's as we surrender. It's as we give up that He takes over. It's as we let Him have the victory in us. We let Him fight the battles for us. We can be that church of overcomers. Here's a quote about the church scene. Christianity of old quenched the flames of oppression, lit the fires of freedom, and led two continents out of the darkness of paganism.

[14:02] Christianity of old. Today's Christianity is known for bingo games, softball leagues, and milquetoast preachers. Christianity of old toppled the Roman Empire.

Today's Christianity cannot even rid the nation of legal abortion. Now we should be more of a force on this world. More of a force of God's overcoming power.

A church of overcomers. So we see the church of Philadelphia. Faithful, loving, and overcoming. Now we see in contrast the church of Laodicea.

The Laodiceum church. The other church in Revelation 3 that we read about here. And this church was noticeably unhealthy. It was not marked by commendation, but by condemnation.

Everything was going wrong at the church of Laodicea. Now it's interesting. The word Laodicea, I'm told, can mean... It can be understood to mean various things along these lines.

[15:06] People's opinions. Or people judged. Or human rights. Now there's a lot of talk about human rights these days, isn't there? Even in the church scene.

And over the top. Way over the top. People's opinions. The rule of people. Laodicea. And this was a church that was governed by human will.

It was governed by the will of the people. It was governed by the kind of popular view of the time.

And how we see that mirror today in many quarters in churchdom around the world today.

Where churches are governed by the will of the people instead of the will of God. Some churches have traded the word of God for the opinions of men. That's a real danger.

Or where they have the word of God. Some kind of watered down paraphrase that really stands so inadequate.

[16:10] It's not the word of God anymore. Friends, the church of Laodicea is recognised for a number of things. We see, for example, number one. Lukewarmness. The church of Laodicea was known for its lukewarmness.

He says, I want you to be either cold or hot, but you're lukewarm. Lukewarm. And I'm going to spew you out of my mouth. This was a church, an assembly of people, who had a wishy-washy kind of faith.

Just an airy-fairy, warm and fluffy, fuzzy kind of God. Everything was all pretty easygoing and casual. A backsliding church.

A social club. Really nothing more than a social club. You could join this church without being saved, if you like. There was no stand of truth.

Dead, cold, liberal. Indifferent. Superficial. Spiritually sick. Anemic. Spiritually dead. We see that today.

[17:12] We see that today. Where there's churches, where there's ministers who aren't saved. Preaching the gospel that won't save you. With people going there who are lost as hell.

It's a dead, cold, liberal church. And it's seen in many quarters of today. Many quarters where the church has been infiltrated by Satan himself. And the people behind the pulpits are ministers of Satan.

The word says such a time will come. Where the preachers are preaching a false, lukewarm, diluted gospel. Or the pulpits are silent altogether.

And this church, friends, this church of Laodicea. This kind of church is going to face God's wrath and anger. God's sick of it. Literally makes him sick to the stomach.

And friends, this is the kind of church that has lost its first love. Has our heart grown cold? Are we like this church lukewarm? God forbid. Friends, I urge you.

[18:15] Instead, let's be zealous and repent. Renew that passion. Restore that love. Roll up your shirt sleeves. Stir up your zeal.

And be that one who will refresh that relationship with God. The Lord wants us, each one, to be on fire for him. On fire.

Someone said this. Everyone wants to follow Jesus until they find out where he is going. He's going to a cross.

And he's asking you to take up yours as well. And Christianity is not for the gutless. Christianity is not for the weak and anemic.

It's for those who will have the gutsy kind of faith. So stand up and not be lukewarm. Don't be wishy-washy and superficial. But be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

[19:17] This church was known for lukewarmness. Secondly, it was known for its worldliness. Worldliness. There was no difference between it and the world around it. In verse 17, we read that our Lord says of them that they're saying, I am rich.

I'm increased with goods. I've needed nothing. And he says to them, don't you know that you are wretched and miserable, poor, blind and naked.

Laodicea, this city of history, I'm told it was noted for its wealth, its luxury and its fine living. It was the place to be. It was really a fancy place to live.

And they had that kind of attitude that everything was laid on. And the church had this kind of attitude too. It was claiming this great success and power.

It was increased with goods. Now we could reflect how perhaps you could see that in some quarters of the church today. Where it's become some great merchandising machine.

[ 20 : 24 ] Some great propaganda machine. It's all about marketing. They're increased with goods. You know, you get some entertainer come and they're selling their CDs after the event.

They're selling the DVDs. They're busy merchandising the self-help books of the latest guest preacher. Or their cool t-shirts. Or caps and pens.

It's as if you've got to have the trademark of the church. And some churches have become this merchandising machine. We're witnessing a church with a preoccupation with the world.

A marketing mentality. Where you've got Christian psychology, so-called. Or hip Christian clothing. You've even got Christian weight loss programs. Or Christian diets.

And I've heard apparently even a Christian Rubik's Cube. You know, it's anything to make money. And you see the TV preachers and all the gimmicks, you know.

[ 21 : 29 ] Send in a certain amount of money and they'll send you some holy anointing oil. Or some prayer cloths. Or some other gimmick or gadget for you to be coaxed into giving them some money.

And this is the kind of church that Laodicea was. You could see some of that kind of characteristic about them. And there's a lot of arrogance and ignorance and exaltation of man that is about in the church scene today.

And we can all be subject to this. Where we might think more of ourselves than we ought to think. And God help us not to. Help us to crucify the flesh.

The self-life. There's a lot of bragging goes on in churches. Bragging about their power. About the things that they have. But it's an unholy mixture. It's idol worship.

And there's a focus on goods. Worldly pursuits. Self-reliance. You know, we see that they're really saying, I've needed nothing. I don't need God anymore.

[ 22 : 29 ] It's virtually what they're saying. And whereas for the Christian, our sufficiency is of God. That's our sufficiency. It's not in self-righteousness. It's not in self-reliance.

It's not in self-confidence. There's nothing that we can lay claim to of our own strength. Of our own merit. But our sufficiency is of God.

He is the all-sufficient one. When we come to the end of our strength, that's probably the best place we can get to be. So we can truly see the one who absolutely, ultimately, and totally meets our real needs.

And the Laodicean church we see was marked again to repeat by lukewarmness, by worldliness. And thirdly, we can see it was recognised for shame.

There was a shame. There was a reproach. There was a terrible lack. A terrible exposure of this church to the piercing eyes of Christ.

[ 23 : 31 ] As those flames of fire would look down from the eyes of our Saviour. And penetrate the shallowness and the emptiness of this church. And he says to them in verse 18, Our Lord counsels this church to have that gold that will withstand the fire.

We can see that elsewhere spoken of as faith. Faith that will go through the trial. A white raiment we can see that spoken of elsewhere as the righteousness with which we are robed of his righteousness.

That the shame of our nakedness do not appear. And that the eyes will get anointed with some medication. Some anointment. That those eyes can see.

But friends, this church was marked by shame. And I believe we're seeing a church that is a reproach to the name of Christ.

A reproach to his name. It's a shameful thing. Some will be ashamed when he comes. They are a disgrace to the name of Christ.

[ 24 : 53 ] We saw a video of a man dressed as a woman preaching. And this is going on.

This is sick. Sick, sick, sick. And yet some churches would accommodate such things. It's sick. No wonder God says it makes him want to spew.

You know, literally as we read here. It's something that is repulsive to our Lord. And some will be ashamed. It's a disgrace to the name of Christ.

And the problem is sin. That is the problem. The problem is sin. Sin. Not addressed. They're spiritually naked. It's a shameful thing. God forbid that we would have any of those characteristics of the church of Laodicea.

In a way it boils down to this. I've heard this comparison. It makes you wonder. Just to consider this.

[ 25 : 57 ] Are we a crowd or a church? Now we can pull a crowd. We can pull a crowd by putting on some spectacles. Or putting on some exciting special meetings.

Or having some big name person come and speak to us. We could draw a crowd. But would it be a church? And when we say church, we don't mean a physical structure.

The physical building is not the church. It's the people of God. That's the church. You, me, we of us that know Christ as our Lord. Every one of you.

You're my brother. My sister. If you love Jesus as your saviour. If you belong to him. If you're part of his family. If he's ransomed you by his shed blood.

If you repented of your sin. And put your heart's trust in his saving grace. You're my brother. My sister today. You're the church. And we need to be a church.

[ 26 : 57 ] It means an assembly. A gathering together. A group. Called together. As one. Gathering. Of people. To be a church. Not a crowd.

We see that really what's going on in some so-called churches. It's just a crowd. It's just some concert. Just some spectacle. Just some. Gathering together.

But it's not a church. Friends. I want to be a shepherd. Not a goat herder. Alright.

And in the Bible it talks about sheep and goats. If you're a Christian. You're a sheep. And he is your shepherd. He is the shepherd. The good shepherd.

The great shepherd. The chief shepherd. The senior pastor. The Lord Jesus. He is the shepherd of the sheep. And then we see. The goats.

[ 27 : 54 ] The goats are those who do not know Christ. The goats in the Bible are distinct from the sheep. We want to be a gathering together of sheep. And if you're a goat today.

You can become a sheep. That's good news. Isn't it? I always want to go to myself. Amen. But Jesus saved me by his blood. And changed my nature. Changed my direction.

My destiny. And saved my soul. And he can do that for you too. But we pray that we might be gathering together a sheep. Are we following the truth?

Are we bold for the truth? Do we stand up and declare it? Unreservedly. Unashamedly. Or where we follow after fictions. The time is coming.

And I believe we're getting ever closer to our Lord's return. We've seen much to show us that time is short. It is the last hour.

[ 28 : 52 ] Will we be a church? A gathering together of sheep? Do I hear a few bars here tonight? Well, there's a few sheep here. Amen.

We want to be sheep. Amen. We want to belong to the good shepherd. Our Lord. The Lord is our shepherd. We want to be sheep together. And we don't want to be a crowd. We want to be a church.

An assembly of God's people. And we want to be coming to that place where our pride is brought low. And we realise our great need of Him.

That our sufficiency is of Christ. That we're not going to be like the church of Laodicea and say, Oh, we've got it all together. We don't need God anymore. We have need of nothing. There's some churches like that today.

The Bible's thrown out the window. They don't care about the truth. But let us take heed to our Lord's rebuke. Be zealous, therefore, and repent.

[ 29 : 47 ] Be zealous. There's a time for zeal. There's a need for zeal. Zeal. Now, some people are absolutely zealous for different things. There's some footy fans here.

There's some people that love different sports and different activities. And we can have a zeal for those things. There was a time when I had a zeal for learning about aircraft.

And that was what I spent my time and energy in. But it just went on the shelf. When I found Christ, it was just no comparison. So that which I had zeal for before.

But he wants us to be a people with a zeal for God. A zeal for his truth. Be zealous, therefore, and repent. Be zealous of good works.

What kind of church will we be? Will we be a church like the church of Philadelphia? The church of Philadelphia. The church of brotherly love.

[ 30 : 43 ] The church marked by faithfulness. You have kept my word. That must be front and centre. If it's not according to the word, there's no light in them. It must be search the scriptures and see if these things are so.

That must be the ultimate timeline. The ultimate guide. If it doesn't measure up, don't wear it. Don't hear it. Don't follow it. A church with faithfulness to the word.

A church with love. Love by God, loving one another. A church with overcoming power. We're going to overcome as he has overcome. We're going to be seated, reigning with him.

By the victory that he's purchased for us. Or will we be a church like Laodicea? Laodicea. A church marked by its sin. By its lukewarmness. Its shallowness.

Its sloppiness. Lukewarm. It's lost the zeal. It's lost the fervour. It's lost the fire. A church marked by worldliness. I've needed nothing.

[ 31 : 46 ] God forbid. A church marked by shame. When our Lord comes, it says that some will be ashamed before him at his coming. Let's not make that mistake.

Brothers and sisters, repent. Repent. The word says much about repenting. It's really his last words to those churches in Revelation. He says, be zealous therefore and repent.

There's time for churches to repent. There's time for God's people to repent. You know, the word instructs all to repent. Lost and saved. Repent. It means to do a U-turn.

That's what it literally means. It means a change of direction. A change of course. It's as if you're going in one direction and you do a 180 and go the other way.

That's what happens when you're saved. It means you do a U-turn. You stop going your own way and you start going God's way. And friends, that's possible by his grace. He calls you to himself.

[ 32 : 44 ] And he that has an ear, let him hear. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can put our trust in your saving grace. Lord, that we can find wonderful mercy and forgiveness at the cross.

Lord, because the blood was shed there. That blood, that precious blood, that holy spotless blood, was shed for such sinful ones as me.

Lord, that blood was shed. That we might know everlasting life. Lord, we can't imagine what it cost you at the cross. Lord, what it meant. But mostly our sin was there.

Our sin was nailed there in your body on that tree. Lord, your sin was nailed as they drove the spikes. It was our sin nailed there. As they cursed you, it was our sin that placed you there.

Lord, we thank you for that mercy that you give to us. Help us, Lord, to be a church, an assembly of your sheep, of your people that will be gathered together to the glory of your name.

[ 33 : 49 ] Faithful, loving, not ashamed, Lord. Not lukewarm, not worldly. Not facing your wrath, but facing, Lord, your commendation. As we will be those overcoming ones.

Not by any doing of our own, but by virtue of that purchasing blood that saves us and cleanses us, that redeems us, that sanctifies us.

Lord, that makes us more like you. We pray if there's any present, Lord, that have yet to put their trust in you, that even now might be the accepted time. Behold, today is the day of salvation.

Let it be that salvation will come to someone's house tonight. Lord, that salvation would come to someone's heart tonight. As we would repent. As you would turn from our wicked ways.

As we would seek your face. As we would find your mercy. As you would look with grace upon us, Lord. Lord, as your eyes would look with love upon us, undeserving as we are.

[ 34 : 49 ] Because of the virtue of your blood. Lord, we pray, bless each one in Jesus' name. Amen.