

The Seven Churches

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[0 : 00] In Revelation, we have a snapshot of seven churches. This is Revelation, really, chapters 2 and 3. These were messages relayed to seven literal, real churches! across the region of Asia Minor, which is now modern Turkey.

And some have reflected on how these seven churches are alike to the church changing down through different phases or stages or ages of history.

We're not going to so much labour on that kind of hypothesis that they reflect different ages as such. But what I'd like to look at is the features of these churches, the characteristics of these churches, and put to you that these characteristics of these seven churches, you could see reflected in our world today, even in the present, in all of those ways that are featured in these seven churches.

And I put to you that we can see that happening right until our Lord comes back for His church, as it will be a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such things.

Nowadays, we see the church on the brink. Many are unwilling to surrender their comforts. It's like there's a virus unleashed and the church has been weakened and is failing of sorts.

[1 : 32] The church as people would reckon the church. But of course, we know that God's church, the church that Christ builds, will always stand and will always be.

The remnant, the godly, the biblical church will always be. But there's like these paralysing issues that are infecting churches as far as churchdom, as far as people would reckon churches as they see different kinds of churches today.

And it's like there's this indifference, there's this negligence, there's this abandoning of biblical values and truth. And we see some weird alliances going on.

You see in recent news reports of these strange alliances between papal Rome and Islam. We're seeing these odd antics from teachers and preachers and these goings-on, these false prophets and prophetesses, so-called.

We see these crazy antics going on of supposed signs and wonders and these extra-biblical revelations that people jump on the latest bandwagon and the latest fad and fiction that is purportedly of God that comes out.

[2 : 39] And people just follow. You see these weird videos. You see clips of these things like in Africa of these supposed prophets throwing money in the air and people just gathering or following them like acting like animals and doing these weird, dramatic kind of strange behaviours, just strange goings-on.

People acting as if they don't have control of themselves. And there's this abundance of false teachings and false revelations. There's a lot that's out there that's called Christianity today that is totally non-biblical and doesn't accord with the Scriptures.

It feels to me like we're in the midst of an upheaval as a church worldwide where just truth is out the window. And we're often seeing this watered-down kind of gospel today that seems to have prevalence.

And there's this escalating opposition to biblical Christianity, Christians acting biblically. And genuine Bible-based believers are seen as kooky, as weird, as the wacko fringe that, oh, they're not going along with what the world thinks is the right thing to do these days.

And fact is, as we know, as we have experienced personally, people hate the name of Jesus. They hate his name. And people are hated for the name of Jesus.

[4 : 04] When you stand up for the Lord Jesus, you will be hated for that. We can expect that. Our Lord says we could expect that to happen. And it is happening now. So we see in Revelation 1 verse 4 where John the Apostle, John the Revelator, comes and he tells about the visions of the future, of the prophetic signs and scenes that he elaborates us with.

And Revelation 1 verse 4, he starts off the book with whom he's addressing. John chapter 1 and verse 4 it says, John, to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace be unto you and peace from him which is and which was and which is to come and from the seven spirits which are before his throne.

John the Revelator sees seven spirits before the throne and he says, I've got a message for you, you churches of Asia, you seven churches, and it's a message from him which is, which was and which is to come.

Christ cares enough to confront his church. Christ cares enough for us to confront us with the truth. And we see firstly the first church mentioned is the church at Ephesus, number one, where we see from Revelation chapter 2 verse 1.

Revelation chapter 2 verse 1 through 3, or through 7 really, it tells us of the church at Ephesus. Ephesus was a backslidden church, a backslidden church.

[5 : 38] It was a loveless church. We read of it in Revelation chapter 2 from verse 1 through 3, it reads, Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things saith he that holdeth thee seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

So here is the one, speaking of our Lord, he has this authority, the sense that he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

There's these seven burning signals of these seven churches, these seven burning representations of the seven churches.

And he speaks to the first one, the church at Ephesus, and verse 2 he says, Notice here about Ephesus, it's commended for some things.

What do we notice here? It says it's a working church. It's a church that's active, it's activated. It tells us here that our Lord notices that it is a church that labours, a church with works, a church that has patience, that has endurance.

[7 : 07] And this church, the church at Ephesus, was commended for this. It was acknowledged for this, for their works, for their labour, and their steadfastness, and their stand against sin, and their loyalty to the truth.

The church at Ephesus, it says, the church at Ephesus takes action against false teachers. This was a positive. Big tick for that one. Addressing false teaching, confronting and opposing false teachers.

We need to do that as God's people. We need to know the right, the wrong, the truth, the error, the false, the godly, the biblical. And this was commended of the church at Ephesus.

But it goes on, verse 4. Revelation chapter 2, verse 4, it says this. Nevertheless, a big but here, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Ephesus had forsaken its first love. What a reproach to be a loveless church, a church that did not love the Lord. Their love had waned. Their love had grown dim, grown weak, and waned away.

[8 : 13] Their love had gone flat. Thou hast left thy first love. What can we learn about the church at Ephesus? How can we apply that today?

Now, when I think of Ephesus, it makes me think of churches alike to a weak kind of, maybe a weak kind of Baptist church, a weak kind of Baptist union church, or a Church of Christ kind of church.

Now, let me say this now. This is not to say, as we think of these negative features, it's about all the other churches and not us. Because we can all be subject to these things, can't we?

And when I say these things, just the kind of church that comes to mind for me that reflects these negative features, where we can see the faults. And it's so easy to see the faults of other churches and not see the faults that are right here at my feet, in our service, in our gatherings, in our assembly.

And that we could possibly fall into all of these negative things ourselves. The church at Ephesus was a backslidden church.

[9 : 28] Something to guard against, isn't it? That we don't backslide, that we don't lose our first love. That we keep that zeal, that passion, that burning delight in our God, in our King, in our Saviour, in our Master, in our Lord.

That we love Him enough to obey Him. We love His truth. We love the brethren. We love the gathering of His saints together. We love the Word of God. These are the things.

We want that love to be restored, to be refreshed, to be refired in us. To not become a church like the church at Ephesus, where you see a church that's kind of weakly.

It's become weak. It's become... It's lost the passion. It's lost the zeal. It's lost that fervour, that love, that burning love. Let's guard against that.

Number two, the second church of the seven. We see the church at Smyrna. We see the church at Smyrna, which is in chapter 2, verses 8 through 11. Another church.

[10:27] We're not covering all the verses here, but just picking out some that reflect on the characteristics of the church at Smyrna. The second church. The church at Smyrna was a persecuted church.

A church that was persecuted. A church that was in a place of a crucible of suffering, of testing, of trial. In Revelation 2, verse 9 through 10, Our Lord says, I know thy works.

This was another church that had some works. And tribulation. This church was a working church that had tribulation. And poverty. They had nothing to speak of.

This was a church that didn't have all the bells and whistles and some great fanciful sanctuary. He says, I know thy works in tribulation and poverty, but thou art rich.

Jesus saw this church was a rich church. A rich church in terms of rich towards God. Rich in spiritual truth. Rich in spiritual treasures. And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

[11:29] Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried. And you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death.

And I will give thee a crown of life. Smyrna was impoverished. Had next to nothing. There was nothing to speak of.

And yet the Lord calls this church rich. It was a church that knew suffering and persecution. It's noteworthy that of the seven, only two churches received no rebuke from the Lord.

And this is one of them. The church at Smyrna and the church of Philadelphia. This was a church. It's noteworthy. There was no rebuke of this church.

Suffering produces a pure church. And when you think about it, what does it take to gather together in Australia? To get together, to come to a meeting, to come to fellowshiping.

[12:37] It's very easy, relatively simple and easy for us to get to church. But you see, in some countries, in some nations, where it's illegal to do what we're doing here tonight. For you to hold in your hands the Bible.

Wow, you could be literally killed for that. Couldn't you? Could be killed for that. This is a banned book.

And so suffering produces a pure church. And of course, these ones, when they gather in their nations, it's all kind of whisper, whisper. We've got a meeting here at such and such a time, at such and such a person's house.

It's such a public place or a secret place. They've got to gather secretly, undercover, under threat of their very lives. Suffering produces a pure church.

How are we to handle oppression and suffering and trial and testing? What about me? About you? What tribulation? Relatively minor, yet we still have it here in Australia, don't we?

[13:43] How should we respond? We should be fearless. We should be faithful. And know that the Lord will bless, as he did the church at Smyrna. As he does. Church is just like the church at Smyrna. There's a purity.

There's a purifying. And when I think of Smyrna, it makes me think of churches in nations like China, for example. In nations where there's persecution and suffering. In nations behind the bamboo curtain, as it's called.

Or nations behind the iron curtain, as it was. And there's still that of some degree now. And then we see oppressive regimes. In oppressive nations like North Korea, for example.

And in such countries, the Christians are gold. Aren't they? It's like there's a gold quality. You see, nations where they might be poorer nations than Australia, where they suffer when making a living, you know, just to have enough food to sustain themselves and their families.

When just the privations of life and the hardships and tribulations that they suffer. There's gold quality Christians there. They're like the Christians at Smyrna.

[14:53] The church at Smyrna. A persecuted church. But a pure church. A godly church. Then we see number three. The third church is Pergamos. Pergamos. Number three.

It's in Revelation 2 from 12 through 17. Pergamos, you could say, was a worldly church. A worldly church.

A compromising kind of church. Revelation 2.13. It says, So Pergamos knew persecution also. There was persecution in Pergamos. And there were some good qualities. It was commanded for some holding fast. But the Lord rebuked them. The Lord rebuked Pergamos because there was this, they allowed false doctrine.

And it speaks to us of the constant danger of doctrinal compromise. James 4 verse 4 tells us about the friendship of the world, this enmity towards God.

[16:06] Pergamos had these good qualities and yet there was these, they allowed some things that made it a weaker church. A weaker church.

This is Revelation 2.12 through 17. It talks about the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. So there's this sense of, it's kind of like a mob rule kind of thing.

It was just, it wasn't decent and in order. There was just a, there was an accommodation of the era of the time. And when I think of Pergamos and churches like the church at Pergamos, I think it makes me think, and you might think of other churches of situations or examples that come to your mind.

But when I think of Pergamos, it makes me think of churches alike to maybe charismatic churches. Or the Salvos. You know, the Salvos, they were strong.

They were once a strong church. It was built on winning souls. It was built on reaching out. It was built on forthright declaration of the gospel. On the streets, reaching people with the message that saved their soul.

[17:13] That saw them transformed from darkness to light. What the Salvos used to be, it's not what they are now. And so we see this weakening where they've allowed some things to creep in.

They've allowed a doctrinal mishmash. And they've allowed, they've let their gospel zeal weaken. And they've lost the truth. And it's such that error has been so accommodated that it's just a confusion.

And we see in the charismatic churches now where it's just the latest bandwagon. They all just jump on board. And there's all these extra biblical revelations such that they're really astray from the Bible.

It's all just revelations of men and not the revelation of God. And so there's this sense where the church of Pergamos became worldly in its accommodating of error and falsehood.

Number four. Church number four is Thyatira. This is Revelation 2 from verse 18 through 29. Revelation 2 from verse 18.

[18:22] We see the angel of the church in Thyatira is addressed. Thyatira was a corrupt church.

An adulterous church in the sense that there was an unfaithfulness. It wasn't a dedicated church. There was this divided loyalty, adultery.

There was a corrupting, there was a confusing, a disloyalty in the sense of to the Lord. And Satan targets such churches because Thyatira had some strengths.

Thyatira had some strengths. It was commanded, as we see from Revelation 2 verse 19. This fourth church, Thyatira, from Revelation 2 verse 19.

Our Lord says, I know thy works and thy charity and service and faith and thy patience and thy works. And the last to be more than the first.

[19:21] So many things commended there. Works, charity, love, service, faith, patience, perseverance, thy works, thy service. Verse 20.

But notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce my servants, to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Thyatira allowed this false teacher, this false prophetess, Jezebel, to teach. And they tolerated her teachings.

Jezebel was the most wicked woman in the Old Testament, you could say, because she allowed, she was a mover and shaker to introduce Baal worship to the nation of Israel.

Jezebel was really a very wicked person. And when I think of Thyatira, it makes me think of churches, and we could think of churches of all kinds and types and sizes and shapes and persuasions, but for me it makes me think of Pentecostal churches.

[20 : 34] That these days, as much as I can reflect back how they had more conservative intent in the old days, now it's like anything goes.

It's just open slather. As much as I know it was built on false doctrine from the beginning, it's like the cat's out of the bag and it's completely gone berserk.

Such we see Pentecostal churches overtaken by false teachers. We've got Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Joyce Myers, all of these ones, the big names.

They've taken over and they call themselves a prophet. They teach and seduce my servants. They're directly taking them astray from the Bible, from the Word of God.

And that which was good in that church has kind of been diminished now because it's been taken right out, left field, overtaken by false teachers. And you can see video clips of some of these men and women who teach and preach falsehoods, such as things as the false wealth, health and prosperity gospel, that it's always God's will for you to be well.

[21 : 50] Well, we know that's not true. You see, Job, the most just man in all the earth, God directly allowed that he would become sick and sustain great loss and tragedy and punishment as far as afflictions and boils and such.

That sometimes it is God's will directly that we are unwell, that we suffer and we sustain difficult times. And yet these false teachers would say, your best life now, as in, you know, you never have a problem as a Christian and if you don't get healed, it's your fault, you lack faith and such.

There's a whole lot of false teaching out there and that it's just totally accepted and followed. And it's like the church, as we're talking about here, Thyatira, there's a sense where it's corrupt.

It's allowed Jezebel to bring in teachings that are controversial and contradicting the Bible and contradicting righteousness.

What's more worse is, as we know, in some quarters there's this, where the gospel they preach is not the gospel anymore. It's just not the gospel.

[23 : 06] And we can say that about Calvinistic churches too, where the gospel they're preaching is a gospel that's not founded on the Bible, on the grace of God, on the faith that sustains and gives us salvation.

We've got to add to it with works and such, and there's all manner of such kind of falsehood out there. So I guess it's false teaching in a general sense we could see as Thyatira. Now we see number five, the fifth church.

We've got two more after this one. The fifth church, Sardis. This is from Revelation chapter 3, from verses 1 through 6. Next up is Sardis. Sardis is the fifth church.

It was a dying church. Revelation 3 verse 1. And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.

How sad to be in a church that is a dying church, a dead church, a deaden church. We could reflect on what kind of church is that? A church that is cold, that is lacking in the fervour of God, the life of God, the life of the gospel, spiritual life.

[24 : 25] It's a cold church with lifeless formality while lacking a living heart of affection and devotedness to Christ. A dead church.

What a reproach. We see those churches all around us where we see churches that are closed on a Sunday night that would have formerly had services on a Sunday night.

We see churches dead and dying. There's a deadness to them, a spiritual deadness. They don't care about souls. They don't care about the life-giving message of the gospel.

Their heart, their love, their zeal has weakened and been stifled such that they're as dead as a dodo. It was a church with apostasy. The church at Sardis.

A church with apostasy. They had grown careless and weak. And we see churches like that, not that numbers are everything, but it's kind of dwindled down and it's almost on life support.

[25 : 26] And we see that the Lord calls on this church to be watchful, to be sensitive to sin, to be submissive to the control of his spirit. We see Revelation 3 verse 3, to hold the authority of God's word, to hold it fast.

Revelation 3 verse 3, the exhortation to this church is, remember therefore how thou hast received and heard and hold fast and repent. This term repent is a repeated theme really for all the churches here that are falling down.

It says, if therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. The church is commended for some qualities.

Some had not defiled their garments. Amongst their number, there are those who are righteous. They had not defiled their garments. They were walking in holiness and truth. They were commended for walking with their Lord.

But Jesus' word to Sardis summons a sleeping church to wake up. This is a church about to die. Wake up out of your slumber.

[26 : 37] Return that spiritual life. A church in need of revival. May we all be aware of such a thing. That we consider our state, our standing. The danger of spiritual deadness.

And of course we know the sun that have a lot of noise and hoo-ha that are just as dead too. It's just a smoke screen for how spiritually dead they are.

Because you can have a church with a blaring rock band and the smoke machines and the dancing girls at the front. And yet it's as dead as the churches that look dead.

Because there's an emptiness there that they're trying to manufacture life. We all need to be conscious of spiritual deadness in ourselves.

When I think of Sardis, it makes me think of churches alike to formalistic and ritualistic churches.

You know, we could think, for me, what comes to mind is, for example, in some quarters like the Anglican Church or the Lutheran Church, where it's all ritual and pomp and ceremony and liturgy and this formalistic dog collars or headdresses and all of this fanciful garb or fanciful decorations of their places they meet.

[28 : 03] But it's all just a deadness. It's just a painted corpse. It's a dying, dead, deathly, lifeless church. Sad.

Sad to see. Well, these churches were built at times by some who were godly men and women who made these church buildings and beautifully made them.

But yet now they're dead and dying and taken over as mosques. It's a dying, dead church, the church at Sardis. God help us not to be such a church.

You know, churches such as ours can get dead too, where it's about dead formalism. It's about procedure. It's about meetings in the sense that we're not meeting with God.

We're just having a meeting because it's seven o'clock on the calendar or whatever it be. We don't want to have that mindset where we're meeting out of rote, out of ritual, out of tradition or practice of the time, and it becomes just a going through the motions kind of thing.

[29 : 10] We want to be alive, don't we? We want to be a church with revival, with life, with the life of the gospel, with the life of Christ in us, with the Holy Spirit empowering us and sending us a church not like Sardis.

A church rather, number six, number six, we're getting there, number six, the sixth church is the church at Philadelphia. We see Revelation 3 from verses 7 through 13.

The church at Philadelphia. I'd like to hope that that's a church just like this one. That's what we'd hope to be, isn't it? To be a church just like the church of Philadelphia, as we saw Smyrna and Philadelphia.

The Lord doesn't say anything against those churches because the Lord commends those churches. He commends the church of Philadelphia as the church, as a biblical church, as a model church.

Of course, the word Philadelphia, it means brotherly love. That's something to aspire to, isn't it? To want, to have, that we have brothers and sisters in Christ who love one another, that we lay down our lives for one another, that we care for one another as closer than our blood relatives because we're bought with a price.

[30 : 30] We're brothers, sisters together, eternally in Christ. Brotherly love. It was so named because the king who so named this city had a love for his own brother.

And he wanted to honour his brother in loyal affection. And so he named that city that he built brotherly love. Because he loved his brother. And it speaks to us today, the church of Philadelphia speaks to us today of a church with steadfast loyalty to Christ.

Such that we have that familial, we have that family bond, that we have that bond, we're part of the family of God together. And there's a knitting together in love.

There's this closeness that we know that we love one another. The brotherly love. The Philadelphian church had only a little strength, but it was standing in that strength.

This was a faithful church, a rock solid church. And we see verse 8 of Revelation 3, that it had open doors of ministry.

[31 : 34] And I like to reflect on this as there is a correlation of cross-referencing of Bible verses that talk about an open door, a door open to me of opportunity, a door open to me of the gospel.

There's that sense where this church could see doors open. This church could see opportunities to reach out beyond its borders, beyond its locality, that this church could see open doors of opportunity, of missionary effort.

In Revelation 3 verse 8, the Lord says, I know thy works. Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, for there hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

So when I think of Philadelphia, I'd like to thank God helping us that we can be such a church, that we can aspire to be a church just like the church of Philadelphia, a church maybe with little strength, but trusting in the Lord to supply and to strengthen us, and use what little strength we have, that we'll invest that little strength that we have to do something great for God, and that we'll be a faithful church, that we'll, as it says, thou hast kept my word.

We care about the word of God. We care about this book, such we will not deviate from it. We will be a Bible-based church. We care about what the Bible says, and we want to deliver what it says.

[33 : 04] We want to obey the Bible. We want to act on what the Bible says to do. We care about the King James Bible. We care about the Bible and what it says, what it is, that it's truth, it's soul-saving truth, that it's got a veracity, it's got an infallibility, it's got an inerrancy, and we can take heart in that, that God has given us a word we can trust is true and sure.

And it's a Philadelphian church kept the word of God, and they did not deny his name. So let's aspire to be such a church, amen, to be a Philadelphian church.

And then we see the last of the seven. Number seven, Laodicea. Laodicea. Revelation 3, 14 through 22. Laodicea, the seventh church.

The name Laodicea, it means the people ruling. The people ruling. Laodicea. The people ruling. It was a self-serving church. A light to the political system of democracy.

As much as we know, it's probably the best of the worst, is the democracy that we have. And we know that the ideal would be theocracy, when the theo, God is in power, crassy, theocracy.

[34 : 21] The moment we've got democracy, democracy, where the people rule, which is governed by the people. But in a church setting, it's not always a good thing. Where people want to govern themselves according to what they think and do things their own way.

We know that can be a recipe for problems. Because this is what should dictate our way. This is what should dictate our decisions, our governance, our administration as a church.

That this is what rules our way. This is the rule of faith and conduct. The Bible. Not what we want or do of our own way and thinking. And you could say this church of Laodicea of people rule.

It was a useless church. A lukewarm church. It had gone astray from the word. It was an apostate church. It tells it was a lukewarm church. A church with lukewarm faith.

They could not see their problem too. It was one of the big failings of Laodicea. They saw themselves as rich. As in need of nothing. A church can get that way, can't it?

[35 : 25] We've got everything. We don't need to update anything. We don't need to... Everything's just perfect. There's no need for improvement. And we've got the sound system.

The video system. Everything's working perfectly. We can get so self-assured that everything is perfect. We've got tons of money coming in to support the ministry. They're locally and beyond.

And a church can get self-satisfied. And that's what the church at Laodicea was like. There wasn't a problem with their bank account. There wasn't a problem with their circumstances.

And they had all their programs. Everything was there. You know, you could imagine all the bells and whistles. As we could imagine churches like such today, where it looks like everything looks perfect.

They saw themselves as rich and having need of nothing. They didn't even need God anymore.

That's kind of the angle, isn't it?

[36 : 22] They didn't need God anymore. They just had everything just down pat. And this was the only church that the Lord gave no commendation to. Laodicea was not commended for anything.

It wasn't doing anything right. That the Lord said in Revelation 3 verse 15. Revelation 3 verse 15. Our Lord says, I know thy works.

As he said to them, oh really? I know thy works. He knew Laodicea's works. You are neither cold nor hot. I would you were cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, are neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. And these are strong words. The church literally made the Lord sick to the stomach.

He was sick of this church. And we see examples of such situations where the Lord rebuked situations where that he was sick of the solemn assemblies.

[37 : 21] It's like the meetings were done without God as the centre. It was all done in vanity and shallowness and without the spiritual content.

And verse 17, it goes on. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. And knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, 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 thyself that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent. Laodicea was a city that was boasting great resources but it had a poor water supply and ancient sources tell how the system was failing them.

These terracotta pipes had thick lime deposits and it was this heavy contamination. The water system was failing the city of Laodicea. They had some pipe in water and it grew lukewarm because the water system was failing.

[38 : 39] And so there's this very real tangible physical reality in the city of Laodicea that when you got the water out of the pipe it was this lukewarm this kind of tepid disgusting lukewarm.

It was disgusting. It wasn't useful hot water and cold water it was this lukewarmness. And the Lord Jesus reflects how here this church was lukewarm too in a spiritual way.

That wasn't either cold or hot it was kind of just sitting on the fence. It was self-satisfied. Instead of refreshing water it was this water that they wanted to complain about.

It was this spiritual lukewarmness that was in them. They had this outer religion you know I'm rich I'm increased with goods you know everything looks fine and dandy on the outside but on the inside they lack that spiritual seal and fervour the reality.

When I think of Laodicea when I think of Laodicea when you think of Laodicea what churches do you think of? Maybe for me I think for example churches alike to the Uniting Church sadly I know there's some former Uniting here I was Uniting many years ago but they've lost most of what they once had John Wesley think of the John Wesley of old thousands brought into the kingdom of God through faithful preaching and witness and outreach and we see now where is the Uniting Church today?

[40 : 15] It's just totally weak and lukewarm and failing and faulting just accepting any madness of the world that the world wants to do and say it just goes along with whatever the world wants to say and do and it's got no voice at all it's totally lost its voice and as I said earlier friends again I'm not wanting I really want to press this point that we can think oh we must be Philadelphia and the other six are everybody else we don't think that I'd like to think that but we've got to have a reality check don't we don't we that we can be just as subject to all these other things as far as we'd like to be like Smyrna a persecuted church that was pure or we'd like to be like Philadelphia a brotherly love church that was biblical and faithful but we see all of these failing churches that were commended in part largely we see Laodicea very lukewarm we see the various weaknesses of churches across Christendom and we are not immune to any of these things we are not immune to it we aspire to what is positive as some of these positive signs but friends we all have to think how can we be like the church

Philadelphia and for me as the angel of the church you know the buck stops with me in a sense that the Lord addressed the angel so as much as I don't look like an angel I don't act like an angel there is a sense where I'm a messenger an angel is a messenger of God and the angel of the church was really the pastor of the church and it makes me mindful of my own accountability my accountability I've got to answer for your souls I've got to answer for this ministry I've got to be accountable for what I accept or allow or who preaches or what is said and done and practiced in this local assembly there's a great burden upon me and I want to get that right what words of praise would he give to the angel of the church for you right here what would I'd like to think there'd be some praiseworthy things or maybe there'd be some words of rebuke where I've missed some things

I've failed I've not delivered strongly enough I haven't been strong enough about truthfully urging and contending and not accepting compromise not accommodating the world not accepting what is wrongful you know there's times I could reflect where I could have been sharper and quicker to act on situations that I missed and there's been tragedy because of that and I feel deeply hurt deeply saddened about where I've missed it or I haven't acted strongly enough or straightforwardly enough I haven't been hard enough maybe I've been too soft maybe I've been too hard with some it's finding what is God wanting me to do what is God wanting us to do as a body of people other words words of praise I pray so but let's be mindful words of rebuke and repent and get things straightened out as our Lord calls these churches to are we too tolerating or accommodating of false teachers or practices

I know I hear some saying oh I'm tuning into Joyce Myers I think oh no are they not listening to me what is going on why is someone tuning into Joyce Myers for goodness sake why is someone reading a book by such and such a teacher or tuning into such and such a broadcast or such a website or such a Facebook and I think honestly please let's be mindful against false teaching about false practices are we too unloving when we say these things I think maybe we're not strong enough that we should want to be aspiring to God's standard which is so rightful and righteous whilst loving the unlovely loving all to come to the cross to come to Christ what areas of warning can we take heed of today are we just going through the motions do we become too formalistic in the sense that we're just going through the motions let's not fail that way where we become too stuffy and such that we're too constricted in certain thinking let's not be like that it's about what's biblical that's what constrains us what's biblical constrains us are we guilty of pride such that we think we've arrived and everyone else is wrong

I don't want to do that either I want to be humble I want to know I've got to learn I'll keep learning myself are we subject to flaky doctrine are we allowing things in are we not speaking strongly enough against some things are we allowing worldliness how do we determine worldliness how do we assess someone as worldly and someone as not worldly how do you make that judgment it's really about ourselves isn't it we look at ourselves am I worldly and hope that then others will see let's be like him or her let's set the example let's be the standard are we defiled or are we as those that are defiled not their garments there's something about them they're shining they're bright they're glowing with the love of Jesus with the person of Jesus they've not defiled their garments they're walking rightly with him all these factors we can all think of and for me as the angel of the church as it were there's a sense where I want to be under his hand totally under his hand as we know in our church circles we don't have some hierarchy that

[46 : 07] I report to some headquarters in Melbourne or something or whatever it be as denominations would have but that we all would come under his mighty hand and I would be answerable to you where you see me needing correction I'm receptive to that that we can learn from one another that you can exhort me we can exhort one another and are we a Smyrna friends suffering is coming we could we could have to be like Smyrna not just like Philadelphia biblical faithful brotherly love but we might have to be like Smyrna one day amen where testing will come who knows we've not experienced that in Australia to much degree we hear of laws there's laws coming into California in America where they're telling pastors that they can't counsel people to leave the LGBT lifestyle they're telling pastors what they can say and what they cannot say well friends we can't be constrained by government we've got to be constrained by this book this is what says what's right and what's wrong this is the book that says what we preach and what we don't preach and if it's according to the word that's what we're going to preach whether it's favourable to government or not whether it's lawful or not and that might mean

I might have to spend some time in jail you might have to find someone else this is the reality isn't it we might have to be this church at Smyrna the church that and let's pray that we'll be a church like Philadelphia a church that kept his word that this is what matters not tradition or statements of men but the word of God from A to Z from Genesis to Revelation that what's ever in the cover of this book this dictates what we believe and practice and we'll be a church of Philadelphia that keep his word Revelation 3 verse 8 and we'll be a church that has a testimony such that we see the open doors when's one of these doors going to open so we can get out there and spread the gospel and take the message where we take and seize every opportunity for testimony that we can be a church that seizes the open doors and that we can be a church that even sends people from here to elsewhere that we won't be selfish about our own little patch as much as there's lots to do right here

that we want to send people out and we want to see people taking those opportunities those open doors for testimony so let's pray to be such a church let's pray
Lord we thank you that your church is ultimately going to be glorious without spot wrinkle or any such thing and Lord we see these seven churches we see Smyrna and Philadelphia and we want to be like them Lord we don't want to be taking the negatives of the other churches as much as they some were commanded Lord we know we want to be a church of brotherly love we pray that is any here present that they're not in the church yet they might be in a church building yet they do not know you as Lord that they might come to trust in you even now to know that you died on the cross for their sin and that you are calling them to trust in you to be their saviour Lord that they can hear your call and say yes Lord I trust you I receive your salvation that gift of faith of salvation of eternal life Lord we pray for each one here Lord that we be that church that will be glorifying your name and lifting up your name taking your word keeping your word holding it fast holding it forth to take those open doors of opportunity Lord lead us as a people help me prayerfully Lord as the one who really I stand under your strict answerability to you Lord as to what you said and done and
Lord give me wisdom I pray that I will be a godly pastor Lord that I will be to your praise not for any praise of me but that I won't be ashamed before you Lord when I have to give account for these souls Lord and that we can give account with not with grief but with joy to see the growing of people in spiritual life to see people saved and radically transformed to be children of God that's our prayer Lord that would be such a church in Jesus name Amen