

LANCE LAMBERT MINISTRIES

Living Fellowship

Revelation 3:14–22 · Richmond, Virginia

A TEACHING ON REVELATION 3:14–22

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Living Fellowship

I'm very glad to be able to be with you this morning and to share from the Word of God.

I want to read to you a very well known passage in the Apocalypse, in chapter three of Revelation, from verse 14.

And to the angel of the Church in Laodicea 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 wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest. And eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove 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 sup with him, and he with me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne. He

that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

REVELATION 3:14–22, AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION

Opening Prayer

Could we have a word of prayer?

Beloved Lord, we are so thankful that we're found in your presence this morning. We thank you for the time we've had together as we've thought of you, and praise you for all that you have done for us on the cross. Lord, we praise you and worship you for yourself. Now we come to your word. Dear Lord, we need the Holy Spirit to be with us both for the speaking and for our hearing. To that end, we praise you for the anointing which our Lord Jesus won for us through his finished work on Calvary and has made available to us in the person of the Holy Spirit into that anointing power and grace. We stand now by faith, dear Lord, take the weakness of the vessel and let your flame of fire burn. Take, we pray, all of us, and speak to our hearts. Lord, we are living in Laodicean days, we are living in days of judgment beginning upon the nations and upon this nation. And, Lord, we need you in a way we've always needed you. But we need you even more as we enter into these days of turmoil, conflict and distress. Hear our prayer then, in the name of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Hear our prayer and gloriously answer it. We ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

A Message Rediscovered

Beloved brothers and sisters, this passage is well known to you. And I don't want you to think that I'm trying to bash you, sort of whacking you over the head, as it were, with the word of God.

But some dear sister in California, apparently searching through my website, found some message which attracted her. Now, I don't know her age or anything really about her, but she was attracted by the title. Middle age spread. And I don't know what she thought she would get out of the message, but she began to hear it. And it turned out her life and the life of her family upside down.

Then she wrote to Shirley, I believe, and asked if Shirley would mind if she made a transcript of it. Shirley said that she should ask me. So she sent me the transcript and asked if it was possible to publish it. When I read it, I was shocked. I never thought that I ever had the boldness to say what I said.

One of the things I was asked was, when did you give this message? I realized that it was 60 years ago, at the very beginning of the Halford House story. Then I began to understand. I was young, very undiplomatic, not at all gentle and sensitive in the way I said things. I couldn't believe that I'd said what I said. Of course, there was nothing wrong. It was simply truth unvarnished and not in any way made helpful to the listeners.

Now, I'm a good deal older. I'm not sure I'm more diplomatic. I told the dear sister, you can publish it. She said, this describes the American church scene exactly.

The Key to the Message

Now, with the years that have passed, I noticed something that I never noticed 60 years ago. I noticed how the Lord summed up the whole thing. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man, not if a great group of you, but if any one of you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.

Suddenly I realized that is the key to the whole message to Laodicea. You see, very often it's taken as an evangelistic verse, you know, just to preach to the unsaved — Jesus is outside. Your door is closed. Open the door. Jesus will come in and will be life and power and salvation to you. All of which is right. But as a result, we tend to think that verse has very little to do with the rest of the message. In fact, it is the key to the message.

You see, the Lord Jesus called himself to this Laodicean church. He said, I am the Amen. In other words, amen in Hebrew comes from the root aman. In Hebrew we say Ma amin, which means I believe amen. Amen means let it be. I believe that I have faith for that. It's something that means the end. Do you remember how the apostle Paul wrote in his second letter: how many soever be the promises of God in the

Messiah, in Christ is the yes, and through him is the Amen unto the glory of God. In other words, you find that the promise is yes in the Lord Jesus.

But the Amen is when it's performed in you, when it becomes reality in your circumstances. It's always through Him. It's yes in him and Amen through Him. There's a process. Initially you stand on a promise, then there is a process. And then comes to fruition.

He began this rather shocking message to the Laodiceans with the words, for anyone who has an ear to hear, I am the Amen. Even in a Laodicean situation, Jesus is still the Amen to the purpose of God for the church. He is the Amen to the word of God in its realization in us. Amen.

And then he said, I am the faithful and true witness. They didn't realize in Laodicea, but they were faith — unfaithful, faithless. They thought they had it all, but in actual fact they were unfaithful to the Lord. They had lost their first love. They had lost their passion for the Lord. They were no longer the faithful ones holding the testimony of Jesus. But it made no difference to the Lord Jesus. He is still the faithful and true witness.

And then he said the beginning of the creation of God, the new man, the new heavens and the new earth, the new Jerusalem. Everything to do with the Lord Jesus is to do with newness.

A Church Running on Methodology

The problem with Laodicea is probably they had picked up a whole number of things along the way. They had a routine. They had an organization that was probably good. They had a methodology. They had ritual and ceremony. They had baptism on the Lord's table. They had it all. It didn't really matter whether the Lord was there or not. That is the Laodicean church. It doesn't matter whether the Lord is present or not. They use his name, they praise his name, they pray in his name, they study his words. And he's outside.

I don't want to upset you this morning as good Americans, but the American church is very much like this, by and large. Of course, people read this message and they say, well, this is the traditional church, this is the institutional church. This isn't us. We are evangelical. But this church was made up of born again believers. It was a true New Testament expression of the church. They had everything. They had their meetings, they had the Lord's table, they had their Bible study, they had their evangelistic outreach, they had everything. They probably had very good teaching. But somehow or other they had substituted for a living relationship with the Lord Jesus, a methodology. They had the steps.

I remember years ago in Singapore, when the spirit of God was moving all over Southeast Asia, people were being saved, delivered, miracles happened, but the folk were as green as green could be. I remember after you spoke, you know, people came forward and I remember one case of a man that was

obviously demon possessed, a young man, and the mothers didn't know what to do. They just gathered around and said, Lord, show us what to do. And then one of them said, I believe we should do so. And they all agreed and they did it. And he was delivered.

A year or two later, a brother from the States came with two jumbo jets filled with, they were called prophets. One jumbo and another jumbo was filled with miracle workers, healers and so on. They had seminars for a whole weekend and suddenly everything died. They got a methodology, the four steps to deliverance, the five steps to salvation, the three steps to holiness, or whatever else.

Isn't it interesting, this living — at least in their estimation, this living church with its whole life, its meetings — Jesus was nowhere to be found in it. Can born again believers be so deluded that they believe Jesus is there? When he's not there, he's outside knocking.

Rich, Yet Wretched

And in the most plaintive word that Jesus spoke in the New Testament, he said, if any man hear my voice — their estimate of themselves and the Lord's estimate of them were a million miles apart. They said they were rich, they had gotten riches and they had need of nothing.

Now, Laodicea was one of the wealthiest cities in Asia Minor. Its whole wealth came from wool which was woven black and white, wool which was woven in a special way and was kind of something everyone wanted all over the Roman and Hellenic world. They were affluent physically, but I don't think when they said the church, I am rich and have gotten riches, need of nothing, that it was the physical they were thinking about. They really believed they had everything. They believed that they had seen the deep mysteries of God, that they understood the purpose of God, that they believed in the word of God in its entirety. There were no liberals amongst them, at least as far as we can see. The Lord never said, some of you don't even believe this or that or the other.

But the Lord's estimate of them was he called them the wretched one. Could the Lord speak of born again believers, a company of born again believers, as wretched, the wretched one? Then he went on, miserable. What a description of an evangelical born again church. Then he said, blind, naked.

Is he speaking about believers? Yes. Are those believers so deluded, so deceived, that they believe they have riches, that they have become wealthy, that they're marvelously clothed, that they see the mysteries of God, the purpose of God, and still the Lord says, it's not real, there's no reality.

A Broken Fellowship

How interesting it is that our dear Lord said, behold, I stand at the door and knock outside. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me.

The problem with Laodicea is that they had fallen out of fellowship with the Lord Jesus and they did not know it. This is the thing that wasn't in the message I gave 60 years ago. Now I see it. The key to this whole situation was living fellowship on every level. Leaders, elders, those with ministry, right through the whole company. The key was living fellowship.

Fellowship as a Shared Meal

Not always, so don't get me wrong on this, but so often a meal is just a means to live. We eat to live. Whereas in Asia, Africa, and certainly in the old days in Israel, a meal was a time of fellowship. That's why when you see some of your modern versions, you will see, I will come into him and will dine with him and he with me. Or in another version it says, I will come into and will eat with him and he with me. Because a meal in the Bible is a symbol of fellowship.

Do you remember when God with two angels visited Abraham and Sarah? They had no idea it was the Lord. Abraham, he did realize, I think, that they were angels. And then they had a meal, very unkosher one, because yogurt was mixed up with the meat. And then the Lord sat down with Abraham. You

remember, it was a meal as if God longed for fellowship. Why do you think the Lord visited the garden of Eden every day with Adam and Eve? It was a longing for fellowship. He wanted to sit with them.

Did they eat? We don't know. I imagine they did have to eat. I mean, they weren't in that blessed place in eternity. They were in this particular period of history.

But everywhere you look. Do you remember when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead? Do you remember how he walked with the two to Emmaus? Do you remember? They had no idea who he was till they asked him, don't go further. Come in and have a meal. And he came in, and when he broke the bread, which is the kiddush, as he broke the bread, they suddenly saw it. It was Jesus.

Do you remember when the Lord appeared again to them in their place, he said, have you any broiled fish? Have you anything to eat? Well, it's a very strange thing for the Lord to say. Why did he need something to eat? And they said, we have a little bit of broiled fish. That'll do. He said, let's eat it together. They ate broiled fish.

Do you remember in Galilee when the Lord said to them to put their nets out? And they brought in the fish and he cooked them. He grilled the fish on the seashore. Out of that fellowship came those wonderful words to Peter, do you love me more than these — three times the Lord said it.

Slipping Into Routine

Dear folks, this matter of fellowship is essential, foundational. The problem with us is we fall out of fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Somewhere along the line. Laodicea was so thrilled with their teaching, so thrilled with their initial experience of salvation, that they fell out of fellowship with the Lord. Then it was methodology, routine, ritual.

Beloved brothers and sisters, I don't want to upset you. You're good Americans and I imagine, for the most part, patriotic Americans. But the American church, by and large, is a whole matter of getting something off the ground. We get a methodology, we get a routine. We build an organization. And the danger is that it can run on whether the Lord is there or not.

You can have fitted carpets from wall to wall. You can have magnificent choir. You have ministers of education, ministers of youth, ministers of age, ministers of theology, all kinds of ministers. And the Lord is a stranger.

A. T. Pierson's Dream

You remember, I think it was A. T. Pierson who had a dream. He dreamt that the church of which he was pastor, a stranger appeared in the packed church. But he said he couldn't take his eyes off him. And all the time he was preaching, he looked at this man and then went on with his preaching. And then he looked back again, the man vanished. So he was unable to

reach the door to shake his hand. Then the Lord spoke to A. T. Pierson and said, I was at your church. And then Pierson said, nobody knew it. Nobody knew that you were in the church. And if I had known, I would have preached a very different message.

Laodicean, you are very clever in this country, in business, at least you have been up to the present time. Very clever in the ways you have built businesses which are now worldwide and the machinery that goes with it and the whole thing. But that's what's happened to the church.

What is the key? How wonderfully the Lord speaks to this church of which he is outside. He says, as many as I love, I reprove and chasten. Be zealous. Get out of that lukewarmness. Be zealous. Let a passion fill you to repent.

A Shocking Word, Revisited

Now, I go back to what I said 60 years ago, unashamedly, actually. But I must say, it was a bit shocking the way I put it, but I said, can you believe that the Lord could ever say of a company of born again believers, you make me sick. This is the Lord we sing about. We pray in his name, we study His Word. And he says, you make me sick. The actual Greek is dreadful. You make me vomit. My version puts it so beautifully, I will spue you out of my mouth. Your modern versions say, I will spit you out of my mouth. But just think for a moment, they come home to you. It's as if the Lord is saying, I've got nausea

over you. I'm sick to the eyeballs and the only way I can get this thing out of me is to vomit. What a dreadful thing for the Lord to say to a company of born again believers.

And yet the promise stands. If there is a passion with us to turn to the Lord, to repent, then the promise comes. If any man open the door, I will come into him and will dine with him and he with me. The greatest single need for believers is to have a living, ongoing, continuous experience of the risen Lord. Then every trial, every tribulation of which we have many, will only force you nearer to him, will only bring you into deeper experience of Him.

Lady Ogle's Peace

I've told you the story. Years ago, I was convalescing in Lady Ogle's home in the south of England because I had been ill. And she had said, well, as soon as you are not infectious, come and convalesce at my home. And I did, and I very much enjoyed everything about it that time. But I remember looking up on the wall. And I saw on the wall this little text on a piece of wood. My peace I give unto you. And I thought to myself, what a trite little saying to put up on the wall. My peace I give unto you.

And then in some way the matter came up. I never said to her, well, that's a very trite thing to put up on the wall. I wasn't that rude. But she began to tell me an experience she'd had. She said, I think it was over her husband's death. She was only 23. They'd only been married for three or four years, and he died

in the great flu epidemic after the First World War. She was in absolute agony of spirit, didn't know what to do, where to turn, or what the way ahead was. And she said suddenly into her heart came the words, peace, I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.

And she said, in a flash, I suddenly realized that the peace he left, he never needed. It was peace for sins forgiven. It was sin — the peace of having your sins washed away, blotted out, forgiven, being justified. Because he became our sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. But when he said, my peace I give unto you, it was the peace he had in Gethsemane when he was in an agony and said, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And then the same peace on the cross after he had cried out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He suddenly said, not only finished, but he said, into your hands, I commend my spirit in peace. That peace, she said. He said, that's my peace. I experienced it. I will give it to you.

Now, that trite little piece on the wood had a whole history behind it. The word of God had come into her life and become her. It had become flesh and blood in her, her own experience. You can never take that away. That's forever. That's fellowship.

Hearing His Voice

To be able to walk with the Lord, to be able to follow him, to hear his voice and to follow him. Now some people say, oh, I'm sick to death of these people who all the time say, the Lord

said this. And the Lord said, well, there are people who've got balmy ideas. We have to recognize that they're overboard. But the fact of the matter is, Jesus said, my sheep, hear my voice.

In every single believer, there is an organism. It's a spiritual organism. It's in your spirit, not your soul nor your body. It's in your spirit. And that spiritual receiver picks up the voice of the Lord. If the Lord Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice, he obviously means it.

Now here is the key to this hard word of the Lord to Laodicea. He said to them, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me. What went wrong with Laodicea? Just that kind of fellowship.

Buying Gold Through Experience

Now he says, I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire. But how can we buy gold when everything to do with the Lord Jesus is God's unspeakable gift to us? The only way is by experience. It is a free gift. But for there to be gold in your being, eternal gold, you have to go through deep experiences. Are you ready? When you go through those experiences, you come out the other end with real gold. The gold of his life, the gold of his nature. It's in you forever. Fellowship.

You see, this word fellowship in Greek *koinonia* really speaks of having something in common. Well, do we have anything in common with the Lord Jesus? No. But in the most wonderful way he puts something into us. Then there is something in

common. He puts into us the gold of his own life and nature through salvation, through his finished work. But the price is experience. And sometimes that experience is unbelievably costly.

And he goes on and says, you're naked, wretched, poor, miserable, blind and naked. What a catalog for a living church. A church of godly baptism, evangelical church, born again believers. I say, if any Christian leader said this today, they would howl him down. You can't say things like that to those who are born of the spirit of God. But the Lord Jesus did.

He said, you need white raiment to clothe you. That's the finished work of the Lord Jesus. That's justification. Not your righteousness, but his righteousness. And eyesalve, that you might see.

It's one thing to mug up doctrine, it's another thing to see spiritually what it means. Why do you think I've said it before? And I must be careful that I'm not just boring you with what's already been said. I mean, I have a wonderful Jewish imagination. And I imagine everything. And I think of the letter to the Ephesians, and I see the Apostle Paul dictating to this poor secretary, this poor amanuensis. He's saying now, let's start here, you see? And then he goes and he comes out of him phrase after phrase after phrase that are mind blowing. No one's ever thought fully plumb the depth of the meaning of these incredible things that the Apostle Paul wrote. And then he stops for a while and then he says to the amanuensis, to the secretary, just wait.

Do you think we should tell them what we're praying? And the secretary says, I do, I think you should. I think it would be very good for them to know exactly what you were praying. Otherwise, he said, all this marvelous material that you've given by the Spirit of God will become stuff for theological seminaries. It will become material for sermons.

And then the apostle says, right, put this down. We are praying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, that he would grant to you the Spirit, a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Messiah. The eyes of your heart being illumined, that you might know — not know about, know. What is the hope of your calling? What the exceeding greatness — sorry, what the glorious riches of his inheritance in the saints and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us, what you believe.

Well, that changes everything. It means you've got to have eyesalve. It's not just an academic thing, not just study up the truth. You've got to see. It's when you see something that you're changed.

Isn't it true? How did you get saved? Only when you saw that Jesus was your Savior, then it happened. How did you come into something more of the Lord? Again and again, when you saw.

A Question Worth Asking

Well folks, I think that's it for this morning, if I haven't shocked you all. But the thing is, basically, let me just say this last thing, and I'm not getting at you, please. Do you think it could be possible that a company such as this could get into such a place that the Lord was outside knocking at the door?

Well, are you asking me this question? I'll answer it. If we look at church history, there is not a single initiative that Jesus launched by the Spirit of God that in the fourth, fifth or sixth generation went off the rails. Look at church history. Everywhere you turn you will see at the beginning passion, experience, fellowship with the Lord, fellowship with one another. Sometimes by the second generation, third generation, it had become a methodology, a routine, an organization. In some cases it lasted even a hundred years. I think of the Moravians and I think also of the Brethren, but so very little did it last in the history of the Church. Why? Because somewhere, somehow we fell out of fellowship.