

Who are You

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung – 2/1/2014

Who **are** you? A good answer is, "I am a Christian." What kind of Christian are you? What defines your Christianity?

Our faith tells us that God wants us to triumph over life; He wants us to succeed; God wants us to be in His eternal Family.

I would suppose that most in the Church of God would accept as true that their faith defines who they are.

Many, perhaps most, of the brethren would define themselves as **Philadelphians**—the **brotherly love** category of God's Church.

Revelation 3:

- 7** 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 opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens;
- 8** 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.
- 9** 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.

Only God is to be worshiped. How then will we be worshipped? It is because we will have been resurrected and born into the eternal Kingdom of God as spiritual God beings. It is too incredible to imagine—as both **Isaiah** and **Paul** said:

1 Corinthians 2:

- 9** But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Isaiah 64:

- 4** For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waits for him.

Then there is the avoidance of the **tribulation** and promise of the **Place of Safety** for those who meet Christ's requirements, specifications and conditions.

Revelation 3:

- 10** 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.
- 11** Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast** which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

God's word contains many warnings to us. **Hold that fast** – The reason this specific instruction is here to the Philadelphians, is because the **Laodicean** era **follows**—the era we are now predominantly in.

God is saying that if you were called into the Church during the Philadelphian era – **do not** become a Laodicean.

Why does God say that? It is because – as we will see in a moment – the Laodiceans have **let down** so much – they will have to go through the most horrible time in history - the great tribulation.

Today, many in God's Church have been led down a path that has lulled them to sleep.

When the true word is spoken – in their slumber they cannot hear – because they are convinced – "I've got it already – I'm already rich and increased with goods – I don't need to rock the boat – just hang on to what I have.

How can those who understand the urgency of these days **awaken those** we love before it is too late?

A lady in England wrote this week and said to me, "Tell it like it is—you **cannot please** everyone."

We have come to **the last** of the Church eras before Jesus Christ returns. A little introspection and evaluation – on our part – according to the Scriptures would reveal **who or what** the Church has become.

Look at the way the Church has lost its zeal. Consider how much like the world we have become. Think about how a general malaise has descended over the scattered and disunited brethren. Recognize that there is a considerable lack of Christian traits and characteristics being practiced by the congregations.

Though the greater Church would like to think otherwise, the overwhelming evidence is that the entire dispersed Church is presently of a **Laodicean** nature. Time is short! God still has a lot of **sorting out** to do. Things are beginning to happen rapidly—because God is not mocked. No one is going into God's Kingdom who has not fully lived a Godly life.

Laodicea is fully forming, and it is a frightening thing to see develop.

God is NOT reaching out to the rest of the world as He once did. God is separating the wheat from the chaff to see who is adhering to His word.

Who are you?

Unless we fully subordinate ourselves —ourselves to God's Will—we will not be in the first and better **resurrection** with the saints of God.

Here is where we find ourselves today:

Revelation 3:

14 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;

Faithful and true witness – means this is the way it really is. Please keep in mind that these verses are from God's **correct** perspective.

Revelation 3:

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

Why does God say that spiritually He wishes it were one way or the other?

Because if we were spiritually HOT – He would have no concerns.

And if we were spiritually COLD – He would reject us out of hand.

But since the Church of God is LUKEWARM—straddling the fence—a difficult sorting out has to occur.

Revelation 3:

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

That word literally means to vomit out.

This Church has been given EVERYTHING—Peace—Doctrine—Convenient Church Halls—Bible Studies—the Feast of Tabernacles—literature and bibles...

Not like earlier Church days with Want—Persecutions—No Holy Days—little or no Literature—hardship and depravation.

We have it all—except for one thing—the **spiritual element** of applying it to our lives.

Revelation 3:

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knows not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou may be rich; and white raiment, that thou may be clothed, and that the shame of thy **nakedness** do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou may see.

God says that this era of the Church has been blinded as to its **Spiritual Condition**—lacking Godly Character—the gold tried in the fire.

Nakedness means that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is missing and absent.

Revelation 3:

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Rebuke and chastening will be in the tribulation if necessary.

John 14:

23 Jesus... said... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we** will come unto him, **and make our abode** with him.

Is Jesus Christ pleased with the Laodicean performance, or is He distancing Himself from what should be the **closest association** with us? Jesus is not pleased. He says:

Revelation 3:

20 Behold, I stand at the door [**outside**], and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that **overcomes** 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.

We see that those Christians who have not yet – up to the very beginning of the Tribulation - fully indicated to God that they are willing to lay down their lives – as Christ did – in a spiritual way – will have to **lay down their lives** by physically shedding their blood in the Tribulation.

Speaking of the **successful overcoming** Laodiceans, Herbert W. Armstrong said that they become “converted during the Tribulation.”

Will it take the realization that the **terror** of the Satanic Beast Power is about to **take their life** for the Laodiceans to wake up and start being the Christians that they should have been all along?

Few realize that though the Tribulation is Satan’s Wrath – it is also the Last Act of Love from God for His Brethren to come out of the World.

During the Tribulation, God will graciously present one last opportunity to those Laodicean Church brethren who have not yet learned to lay down their lives, to do so.

Those in the Tribulation will **physically** lay their lives down in death for having neglected to be **spiritual** sacrifices prior to that time.

Romans 12:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Revelation 12:

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they **loved not their lives unto the death**.

Why does Jesus specifically tell the end-time Laodiceans to be zealous and repent? The answer is that He does not want them to miss out. He wishes for them to partake of the wonderful promises He has made to the Church.

Revelation 3:

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

They will be the modern day **martyrs** in the tribulation.

Revelation 7:

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou know [who these people are]. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

We are warned of pitfalls and dangers. And we are told to be overcomers. God's word has taught us that the conduct of the Church should be of the highest standards—and yet we see the Church, ministers and brethren alike, letting down in every way. Laodicea describes the Church brethren's spirituality as being in a state of severe decline.

We have become Laodiceans if we do not come out of the world; if we conform with the world; if we compromise on doctrine and truth and are not on fire spiritually; if we do not heed our calling and we do not fill our lives with Christ and follow God's way. Laodiceans have ceased growing in grace and knowledge; they do not use God's Holy Spirit, and they have ceased to be serious about their calling. Laodiceans have become blind and unable to see that they are vulnerable.

Thankfully, there are a few brethren who **are still diligently** striving to keep their eyes wide open to the lukewarm and **watered down** nourishment the brethren are receiving from those who should be faithful shepherds.

Thankfully, there are a few brethren who **are still diligently** building Godly Character – and speaking boldly for God's truth. But, what do you say to your brethren who are not getting it?

What do you say to your brethren who think that they have it all – and are not willing to open their blinded eyes?

Those who are alert to the **dangers** facing the Church today must in turn do everything possible to forewarn their brethren who have been caught up in the downward spiral.

As we have seen, laying down our life as a living sacrifice is a prerequisite to qualifying as the Bride. Those who are not willing to **spiritually** lay their life down as living sacrifices – now – will have the opportunity to lay their life down – **physically** – in the tribulation.

If the improper administrations and abuses of the brethren have not caused **enough of a concern** for us to stand up and be counted – laying it all on the line, as Christ gave us example, we should question whether **we are** awake or asleep.

There are some brethren – members and ministers alike – who have not found cause to rock the boat in their political corporate organizations. As far as they are concerned – so far, everything is okay. They have been able to put up with the doctrinal changes, political deception, substitutions for pure religion, and the way just members have been mistreated.

Their personal philosophy is to “play it safe – and keep their nose clean, and **save their own skin.**” They are literally not concerned whether or not others make it into the Kingdom or not.

God says that it is your attitude – you are not going to make it into the Kingdom yourself. This lesson is so important that God has placed it in each of the four Gospels. Let's look at five places – and there are other places as well – it is that important.

Luke 17:

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall **preserve** it.

Mark 8:

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life **for my sake** [Jesus says] and the gospel's [looking to the Kingdom], the same shall save it.

Matthew 10:

39 He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:

25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

John always has that **extra** finishing touch.

John 12:

25 He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Those who are content with their little **comfortable** corner of the world – to the exclusion of the rest of the Body of Christ – are looking out for themselves – saying in effect, “I’ve got mine – you get your own.”

There is a cost to Christianity.

They are not yet prepared to be the Bride because they are not considering one another to provoke unto love and to good works (Hebrews 10:24).

We should reach out to our **network** of relatives and friends. But how is it possible to reach out? How do you alert those who are waiting for some **grand signal** that everything is amiss? Something like – “We are doing away with the Feast of Tabernacles – then I’ll stop supporting them.” “If they move away from the Sabbath – I’m not going anymore.”

What can we say to them so that they might hear? ... That they might wake up?

What do we say to those who have had the wool pulled over their eyes—almost **precluding** the possibility of their minds being opened to true Christianity – before it is too late?

If they cannot find the **courage** to take a stand NOW – in peaceful times... How will they find the courage to physically die in the tribulation for their faith? ... their **unexercised** faith?

This trap, that Laodiceans find themselves in, is of **Satan’s making**, and he is subtle enough this time not to utilize the big apostasy doctrines of the ‘Trinity,’ ‘the Law is nailed to the cross,’ or ‘it is okay to eat pork chops’ heresies to lead the weak away.

Satan is satisfied to watch the Church slowly grow complacent and lackadaisical to the point where they forget who Christians are.

To be effective in waking up a Laodicean attitude we must first have **some standing** with them. They must trust us and know **our character** – of what sort it is. To be an influence in their understanding we must first have a right relationship with them. They must know that we truly have Godly love and care for them – and want only the very best for them – that they make it into God's kingdom. They must be able to see our Christianity in action.

And so, I ask the question: **Who are you?**

Are you repentant, forgiving, loving, sacrificing, giving, merciful... every Christian trait?

Matthew 5:

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Before we can "step up to the plate" and help others – we must have our own **spiritual house** in order.

I have **a List of Christian attributes**: We should actively be making these attributes part of our lives – this is what Christians should be learning.

Repentant saints – we've turned our lives around – and yet we come so far short of being like Jesus Christ.

Christians **follow Christ** – not substitutes. We do not follow men, not organizations, not fads, not corporations, not trends.

We do not take up an adversarial stance against them—but we do—we must in fact, speak out when God's **doctrine or law** is being disfigured and maligned.

It seems that when we say that weaknesses and **false** teachings and **wrong agendas** have crept into some of the political corporate organizations—and somehow it is not enough to awaken our brethren who have been lulled to sleep there.

Let's talk about what is no longer being taught there: List Repent, faith...

Broken spirit – contrite heart

The Church is letting down into a mindless stupor when it comes to overcoming and holding fast.

Are we agents of **reconciliation** with all others within our network of acquaintances? – we have been given the ministry of reconciliation:

2 Corinthians 5:

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath **given to us the ministry of reconciliation**;

Humility, and Patience

If we are going to effectively help Laodiceans to wake up and **avoid the tribulation** – and qualify to be the Bride of Christ—we need the “Be—Attitudes.”

Who are you? This is what our attitude must be.

Matthew 5:

3 Blessed are the **poor in spirit**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The world teaches “I’m #1,” we’re the biggest –we’re the best. Jesus says to be the least, be **poor in spirit**.

Matthew 5:

4 Blessed are they that **mourn**: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the **meek**: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are they which do hunger and **thirst after righteousness**: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the **merciful**: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the **pure in heart**: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the **peacemakers**: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed are they which are **persecuted for righteousness' sake**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

If we are unwilling and unable to awaken our loved ones – who will do it?

Have we lost our ability to **transmit and confer** on them with our zeal?

Matthew 5:

13 **You ...Who are You?** You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? [If we are unwilling and unable to awaken our loved ones – who will do it?] it is thenceforth **good for nothing**, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

The word "savor" here is an interesting one. It is “moraine” from "moros" and means "to be foolish." Breaking it down further, it means "dull or stupid." That is where we get our derogatory word “**moron**” from—strong words from Jesus!

Brethren- are we **worth our salt**—or **foolishly** missing our opportunity to save a brother or sister?

Matthew 5:

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so **shine before men**, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Who are You?

God says that we are able, **individually**, to make a difference.

The great majority of Laodicea cannot be reached – Jesus said it would be that way – but there are some that we rub shoulders with that can be reached.

Make a difference in the lives of others through personal intervention – light to the World.

Kindness, Forgiving and forgetting

Who is teaching meekness and lowliness of heart? ...Selfless sacrifice, ...Courage, ...Obedience to the Father's laws, ...Sanctification – be ye holy as I am holy – God says.

1 Peter 1:

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Sharing the truth personally – not allowing a few presenters to do it

God wants us to take personal ownership of the Gospel message in our lives.

Zealousness for the Truth. The way we **live our life** must be evident to **our loved ones** before they will listen to us.

If we hope to help them, we must be practicing Christians. When they see **our sacrifices**—we are letting our light shine for them. Our lives—**who we are**—will give them **a contrast** that they **can actually** see.

If God is working with them at all – they should be able to see **the difference** between the shallow practice of religion, on one hand—and the practice of true Christianity on the other.

This is the Laodicean era. Only a few will respond and awaken. The great majority of this generation is slated to go into the tribulation. Only a relatively small number will qualify for the place of safety.

God has intervened in our lives once, and He has given us a clear warning of what is immediately ahead of us.

For those we know and love—who have placed a wall of resistance up so that they are not hearing—we can pray that God will effectively **use our lives** to clearly demonstrate to them that there is more to Christianity than what they see every Sabbath in the Laodicean congregations.

What is the cost of Christianity? All of the biblical saints paid a great price. We need to ask ourselves, "What cost—Christianity?"

In the Ephesian era where the saints possessed a "first love." Stephen, stoned to death, Paul executed, Peter crucified...

Hebrews 11:

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

Hebrews 12:

- 1** Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses [Hebrews 11 the cloud of witnesses who will be in the first resurrection – look at how many were martyred for the faith.], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,

One of the first things we should prove to ourselves is whether or not we are pleasing in God's sight. What are His standards -- what does He expect of us.

1 Thessalonians 5:

- 21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

By sound doctrine we demonstrate the truth. The Kingdom does not come without cost. Jesus tells us to count the cost before we even get started. In other words the price a Christian is going to pay is far in excess of what you can imagine when you are a beginning novice.

Luke 14:

- 28** For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

How many of us signed on to Christianity for the long haul – through suffering, persecution and to death if necessary?

Only those who are laying their lives down in true Christianity right now have a glimmer of a chance to be protected in that dark day. Zephaniah means hidden by Yahweh.

Zephaniah 2:

- 3** Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be **ye shall be hid** in the day of the LORD'S anger.

The brethren who are wide awake are **ever watchful** for **attacks** on our faith. I received a few questions with regard to James 2:13.

James 2:

- 13** For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and **mercy rejoices against judgment.**

Recently a sermon was given in one of the organizations that caused concern that the organization is moving toward the world's Protestantism – and one of the members became quite concerned at some of the language.

"What does it mean, "God's mercy triumphs over **God's Law**?"

Though the sermon had disclaimers that, "God's Law is not set aside," there was still room for concern.

Paul used the phrase "Under the Law," in a way that is somewhat unfamiliar to us in our language today. Here is an example:

Romans 6:

- 14** For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not **under the law**, but under grace.

What Paul is saying there in shorthand is, "Because you have repented and been forgiven by Jesus Christ, and His blood has covered your sins - the death penalty for sin no longer governs in this case because you are **no longer under or subject to the penalty of the law** - which is death - and God has granted you mercy and His pardon."

Toward the end of his sermon, the speaker said, "Mercy triumphs over judgment." That is a good paraphrase of the scripture:

James 2:

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and **mercy rejoices against judgment.**

In other words, God's compassion and Mercy triumph over the **condemnation for sin**. God was **merciful** when He **saved us from Death**.

I too am concerned that some of those men are going **soft on God's Law** - just like they have done on **Doctrine**. It sounded to some almost like the speaker was saying "Go ahead and sin—break the Law of God—and He will be merciful to you."

If that was the case, that is heresy—that is what the Protestants teach—and it is flat out wrong. The speaker explained that it is God's discretion to extend mercy where He chooses - because He is a compassionate God.

It would have been better if the speaker had added more about **repentance** and how we extend **mercy to a brother** in the Church without going **soft** on God's Commandments.

For example, when Jesus extended mercy to the woman taken in adultery - He knew her state of mind, sorrow and repentance - and still He told her **not to break the Law** any more.

John 8:

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: **go, and sin no more.**

I just hope and pray that the big Laodicean organizations do not take sermons like that one to say 'the Law has been done away.'

Once they go off course—as they have on doctrine—I'm wary, cautious, and suspicious of everything they say and do. I think we should be.

End: Who are You