

See how much I love you

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: 25 August 2024

Preacher: Johnny Prime

[0 : 00] Revelation chapter 3 verses 14 to 22 and Morteza is going to come and read for us. Morteza, come to you. Good morning church. Revelation chapter 3 verses 14 to 22.

To the angel of the church in Leodicea write, These are the words of Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot or cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

You say, I am rich, I have acquired wealth, and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in a fire, so that you can become rich. And white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness.

[1 : 08] And salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see. Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

Here I am, I stand at the door and knock. If anybody hears my voice and open the doors, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcome and sat down with my father on his throne.

He who has ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Amen. It is a great privilege to be with you this morning.

And I'd ask that you keep your Bible open with me there at Revelation 3. And as we do so, let's bow our heads and let's pray together. Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you that part of your wonderful kindness to us is that you speak to us through your written word.

[2 : 20] Thank you that every part of your word has been written down for us, for our good, that we might know you, that we might know your Son, the Lord Jesus, that we might, as we heard earlier, be disciple-making disciples, obeying everything the Lord Jesus has told us to do, trusting that he truly is always with us to the very end of the age.

Father, please, in your kindness, would you speak to us now? Help us not to think how your word applies to someone else. Please speak to us, individually, directly, personally.

We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Smiley. Smiley. It was a special game played by an elderly married couple who had played this game throughout more than 50 years of married life.

The goal of the game was to write Smiley, S-H-M-I-L-Y, in a surprise place for the other person to find.

They took turns leaving Smiley around the house, and as soon as one of them discovered it, well, it was the other one's turn to write Smiley somewhere. So they dragged Smiley with their fingers through sugar and flour containers in the kitchen.

[3 : 51] They wrote it in the condensation on the windows on cold winter mornings. They wrote it on the steamed-up mirror in the bathroom, and at one time the old lady even unrolled an entire roll of toilet paper to leave Smiley on the very last sheet.

There was no end to the places where Smiley would appear. Little notes with Smiley scribbled hurriedly were found on dashboards, under car seats, taped to steering wheels.

The little notes were stuffed in shoes or left under pillows. Smiley was written in dust on the mantelpiece, traced in the ashes of the fire. And when the old lady died, the floral tribute from her husband simply said, Smiley.

Have you guessed what Smiley stands for yet? See how much I love you. See how much I love you.

A foundation truth of Christianity is that the Christian man or woman is someone who is dearly loved.

[5 : 06] Dearly loved by the Lord Jesus Christ. And Smiley, see how much I love you, is written repeatedly on the pages of Scripture.

Now of course the clearest place that it's written in Scripture is those that point us to the supreme demonstration of the love of the Lord Jesus.

His sacrificial death on the cross in place of undeserving hell-bound sinners like me. So Smiley rings out when we read words like, But God demonstrates his own love for us in this.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Or Galatians 2 verse 20 where Paul says, The Son of God loved me. And he says he's wondering that.

And gave himself for me. If you're a Christian believer this morning and you need reassurance of the love of the Lord Jesus for them, Well I would urge you to look at the cross through which God says, Smiley to you.

[6 : 15] This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we love God, but that God loved us.

And sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice from our sins. That is the love from which nothing can separate the Christian believer.

But here's my question this morning. Is the cross the only way that our Lord Jesus displays his love to his dearly loved people?

It is to three further proofs of his love that this letter to the church at Laodicea points. The majestic, all-powerful, awesome Lord Jesus is giving his message to this church in Laodicea.

A message if you look at verse 22 that's also for us, where we are told whoever is here, let them hear what the Spirit says to the church. And as our brother read it, did you notice how solemn the message is?

[7 : 25] Jesus pulls no punches. He highlights the sinful, casual, half-heartedness and the complacent self-sufficiency of this church in this place called Laodicea.

Look at verse 15. Their casual, half-heartedness. He says, I know your deeds, that they are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were either one or the other. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth.

Verse 17, he speaks of their sinful, complacent self-sufficiency. You say, I'm rich, I've acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, naked.

Imagine you were sitting in Laodicea Baptist Church or Free Church when this letter was first read out.

You're thinking everything's going okay in your church. And then you hear these words of the Lord Jesus directed at you. Perhaps they were left reeling with the shock when they heard them.

[8 : 38] Perhaps there was a stunned silence came upon the congregation. Perhaps as they heard these words, some of the members were left wondering, look, if the awesome Lord of the universe is saying this about us, that he wants to spit us out of his mouth, is there any hope for us?

Is he going to write us off? Well, look at verse 19. This is where our focus is this morning. Verse 19, Those whom I love, I rebuke.

Let me tell you something, says our awesome Lord Jesus. My rebuking of you is a proof of my love for you. It's a smiley.

A see how much I love you. And it is the first proof of the love of our Lord Jesus to which these verses draw our attention this morning.

See how much I love you. The Lord Jesus, because he loves his people, here's the first thing, he tells us off.

[9 : 47] The Lord Jesus telling me off is a proof of his love for me. Have you ever had a verbal dressing down by someone for something you've done wrong?

Have you ever been rightly rebuked in such a way that you've been ashamed of the action that you're being told off for? Well, that's actually what's meant by this word rebuke.

It carries the idea of putting someone who has done something wrong to shame. It's the idea of a telling off that brings conviction of guilt to the person rebuked.

It's the same word translated rebuke here that is used by our Lord Jesus in John 16 when he speaks of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

And he said that the work of the Spirit is to prove the world to be in the wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment. That's what the Lord Jesus was doing to the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3.

[10:55] It's what he continues to do for us as this message is read. Jesus exposes sin in a way designed to bring conviction of guilt and shame.

And in doing so, says our Lord Jesus, I am acting in love towards you. It's those whom I love that I rebuke. This is real love.

This is the unique love of God that is always for the good of the other. This is true tender affection, a tender affection that doesn't ignore sin.

A love that doesn't sweep sin under the carpet as if it isn't important. That doesn't treat sin as something that doesn't really matter. No, the love that rebukes is the love that knows the serious consequences of rebellion against God and therefore tells off and warns.

And will you notice two things about the loving rebuke of the Lord Jesus? First of all, it's always accurate. Now that can't be said when we rebuke others, can it?

[12:16] My wife Sandra and I and Jen were at a camp this week called Contagious for Young People. It was great fun, wasn't it, Jen? But I'm reminded of another camp I used to help on.

And during this camp, on two occasions, I was aware of one of the older campers being really unkind to one of the younger campers. And when I saw it happening a third occasion, I kind of stepped in and boy, did I give this older camper a telling off.

But I discovered later that on the third occasion, I jumped to the wrong conclusion. On that third occasion, the camper wasn't being unkind. He was actually trying to be helpful to the younger camper.

My rebuke was inaccurate, unjustified. I remember I had to go and apologize to this young camper. Our Lord Jesus never has to apologize for his rebukes.

His rebukes are always spot on. Look back to verse 14. We discover why. It's because of who he is. He says there, these are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

[13:36] In other words, Jesus is the one who sees everything. And if he says something about us, well, it's reliable, it's precise. So if he rebukes me this morning for half-heartedness or self-sufficiency, his rebuke is accurate and justified, whatever protestations I may make.

The second thing to notice about his rebuke is that his rebuke is what every believer needs all the time. Look again at verse 19.

Those whom I love, I rebuke. Jesus doesn't say, those whom I love, I may need to rebuke.

He doesn't say, those whom I love, I occasionally rebuke. No, those whom the Lord Jesus loves are those like me who need to be rebuked because those who he loves are sinners.

We may be saved sinners. We may be justified sinners. We are because of his great love for us, but we are also ongoing sinners. Why this morning did we start our service with a prayer of confession?

[15:00] Because we muck up. We regularly fall into sins like the sins of half-heartedness and self-sufficiency. I was asked this week at this camp in an interview about what it's like living as a follower of Jesus.

And I said, well, I need to be told I muck up, which is what the Lord Jesus does. We receive his rebuke as we expose ourselves to the sword of the Spirit, his words.

The scriptures, do you remember how they're designed? They're designed to teach us and to rebuke us, to tell us off, along with correcting and training us.

So actually, every time we read God's word or hear it read or preached, it's right to be praying something like this, Lord Jesus, you love me. Lord Jesus, you're the amen, the faithful and true witness.

You see every nook and cranny of my life. Lord Jesus, you're the ruler of God's creation. Lord Jesus, please in your love rebuke me. Show me where I'm grieving you.

[16:08] Show me where my behavior is repulsive to you. Show me where my thinking, my speaking, my actions are out of kilter with your will for me. Lord Jesus, because you love me, please tell me off where I need to be told off.

I don't know about you, but I don't like being told off. I resent it when my wife tells me off. We rebel against being convicted and made to feel ashamed.

But when that's our response, we miss a wonderful proof of the love of Jesus for us as his blood-bought people.

In love, he rebukes us. Why? Because he wants to change us. He wants to change us for our good and for his glory.

Which leads to the second proof these verses give of how much the Lord Jesus loves us. He loves his people, he tells them of. Second, he trains us up.

[17:19] Look at the verse again. Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. Now, like the word rebuke, discipline is one of those words that perhaps we hear and we think negatively about it.

Discipline is actually a really positive word. Behind it's the idea of training and education, of correcting what is wrong with a view to putting it right.

I don't know if you remember your school days. I remember Miss Simpson. She was scary when you were a 10-year-old. You didn't misbehave in Miss Simpson's class and actually you could smell her because of her perfume kind of 10, you know, before she arrived at the church and then it hung around the class as she left.

She knew how to control us. But I have reasons to be grateful for Miss Simpson because she noticed that when I held my pen on my pencil, I was doing it in a really weird way, which meant I had terrible handwriting.

And she took steps to correct the way I held my pencil. Now I can tell you as a 10-year-old, I wasn't happy with her correction.

[18:36] Look, I was comfortable with the way I held my pencil. The way she told me to do it initially was uncomfortable. But I still remember, I can visualize it now.

Me sitting in a corner of the class being told to write out the same thing over and over again with her watching me to make sure I kept my pencil in the right way of my fingers. What she disciplined to me became natural to me.

I'm actually really grateful she did that. and in love, the Lord Jesus disciplines us.

He takes steps to correct us where we're going wrong that we might conform to his good, pleasing, and perfect ways. It's what Paul says in Titus 2 when he describes the grace of God as teaching us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, godly, and upright lives in this present age as we wait for the return of the Lord Jesus.

Those the Lord loves. He disciplines. You may ask, well, how does he do it? Well, he does it in many ways.

[19:56] He does it through his word which rebukes and corrects us that we might be trained in righteousness. He does it through others whom he sets over us in the Lord to teach us his ways by word and example.

That's one of the reasons he gives churches pastors. As the word of God dwells in believers, he uses us to admonish each other and train each other.

And as I look back over my life today, boy, am I grateful for those the Lord has given me who have disciplined me and trained me in godliness.

And he also does it through the hardships and trials of life. Now, I stand here as a visitor. I know some of you.

But I don't know what's going on in your life at the moment. There are many mysteries about suffering. But the Bible teaches that no suffering is senseless.

[21:04] No pain is pointless. No adversity is absurd or meaningless. Every heartache has a divine purpose.

Not least to cause us to abandon our self-sufficiency that we might rely more more on the Lord Jesus. That's actually a truth taught throughout Scripture.

Psalms 119, David writes, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey your words. He then goes on to say, it was good for me to be afflicted that I might learn, that I might be disciplined in your decrees, in what you want me to do.

In 1 Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians 1, sorry, the Apostle Paul gives his testimony about a situation in which he and his companions, he says, we were under great pressure. It was far beyond our ability to endure it.

He says, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. Look, it was a pretty serious situation, whatever it was. And then he says this, but this happened so that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

[22 : 27] If you want to read something else later today, Hebrews 12 says that the Lord's disciplining of us through the hardships of life is part of his training of us in the ongoing battle that we have with sin.

when I was a teenager, I was given a book which I didn't read until I was in my 20s. I was given it for winning a table tennis competition at a youth weekend away.

So that was a long time ago, right? That was probably, how old am I now? 62. I was probably about 14 at the time. You can do the maths for me. I can't work it out. Anyway, it was a long time ago. But in this book, Knowing God by J.I. Packer, he says this. He says, God spends much of his time bringing home to us that we are weak, both mentally and morally, and dare not trust ourselves to find or follow the right road.

He goes on. When we walk along a clear road feeling fine, and someone takes our arm to help us, as lightly or not, we will impatiently shake them off.

[23 : 44] I don't need you. I'm all right. But when we're caught in rough country in the dark with a storm getting up and we're exhausted, when in that situation someone takes our arm to help us, we thankfully lean on them.

Packer says, and God wants us to feel that our way through life is rough and perplexing so that we may learn, so that we may be trained to thankfully lean on him.

He takes step to drive out of us self-confidence that instead we might trust in him. The truth that the Lord disciplines those he loves is a truth every believer needs to hold on to in every time of difficulty.

Smiley! See how much I love you, says the Lord to his people Laodicea. I love you enough to discipline you, to wake you up from your half-heartedness, to wake you up from your self-sufficiency mercy, that you might trust me wholly, that you might be wholly dependent on me.

Are you still with me? See how much the Lord loves you? Us, tells us off, trains us up, and thirdly, he keeps knocking at the door.

[25 : 19] Verse 20. It's one of the most well-known verses in the Bible, but we often forget that its application is first to Christians, not non-Christians. It's to Christian people that the Lord Jesus says, here I am, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. Have you ever been shut out? Knocking at a door, knowing someone's inside, but not responding, knowing that someone's inside, but they're not answering, they're not willing to open the door.

Despite their many failures, the whole message of the Lord Jesus to that church at Laodicea was him knocking at their door.

I was away this week at a camp. I prepared what I've done this morning before I went to camp, but during the week, a very old friend of mine who read the Bible with me in my 30s, he sent me a WhatsApp.

He didn't know I was preaching on this verse. Can I read his WhatsApp to you? It simply said, on a hotel door room was a notice. On one side it said, do not disturb.

[26 : 40] On the other side it said, I am in an awful mess, please come in and sort me out. Then my friend wrote, here I am, I stand at the door and knock.

Why should he, Jesus, ever wish to gain access to such a pit of foulness as me? Jesus knocks on the door of Christians who actually are a bit of a mess.

That's what he was doing with the church of Odysseus. His loving knock is a persistent knock. He says he's knocking again and again and again. He wants to come in.

And it's a promising knock for he promises amazing grace to anyone who will open the door and say, Jesus, please come in. Look at verse 20.

The word for eat there was the word used for the main meal of the day, a leisurely affair, not a hurried snack. The idea is of an occasion which allowed for intimate conversation between close friends.

[27 : 55] And that's what the Lord Jesus desires with those he loves. Why does he rebuke us? Why does he discipline us? Because actually he wants to share with those he loves in intimate friendship.

He wants those he loves to welcome him into every part of their life, to share every part of life with him. And in love, he tires not of knocking on the door, even of those who have become half-hearted

in their devotion, even those who have started to live as though they're not totally dependent upon him.

half-hearted. Now I don't know you. But perhaps some of us here are half-hearted.

Perhaps some of us here have become complacent and self-sufficient. Perhaps the reality is that we need to hear the same rebuke our loving Lord Jesus gave to that Laodicean church.

Perhaps we've lost sight of our need for his rebuke. We've forgotten that we're sinners who need that rebuke. Perhaps we've become lazy in the disciplines of the Christian life and thought, no, I'm all right, I'm saved.

[29 : 23] I can just stay as I am until I get to heaven. perhaps we need to be those who learn to respond to his loving knock on the door of our lives.

You see, look at verse 13 again. It tells us how to respond. Verse 19, sorry. Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline so, be earnest and repent.

We live in a generation where it's okay to be earnest and zealous about your career, to be earnest or zealous about your family or your hobbies, but few are willing to be seen as zealous for the Lord Jesus.

But the one who loves us most says that this is what we need to be in response to his rebuke and discipline.

We should earnestly desire it. We should earnestly confess our sins when he reveals them to us, earnestly turn from them, seeking instead to live in wholehearted devotion and total dependence on him.

[30 : 35] We should earnestly open the door afresh to him each day, saying, Lord Jesus, please share your whole life with me. Please come in and control every nook and cranny, shape, mold me according to your will.

At this camp we were at last week, which I really enjoyed, it was really great, I was with Josiah's dad, which made it extra special. But I was asked in an interview, how do you keep going?

As a Christian, it's a good question, and there's 200 young people and they were all looking at me, they were all really eager, God gave us a great week. I was simply asked, how do you keep going as a Christian?

And the answer I gave was this, I said only by having breakfast every morning with Jesus. See, do you remember what happened on the Sunday a week after Easter day, do you remember?

When the disciples had gone back to fishing on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus appears on the shore, and there's a miraculous catch of fish, do you know what Jesus shouts to the disciples as they make their way to shore?

[31 : 54] He says, come and have breakfast with me. And I found it really helpful to put that verse next to Revelation 3.20, and to recognize that every morning when I get up, it's as if the Lord Jesus for that day is knocking on the door of my heart.

saying, here I am, Johnny, I stand at the door and knock, I want to have breakfast with you, and then I want to walk with you through this day.

And the advice I gave to the young people was the advice I was given as a teenager at camp.

Before you start the day, take time alone to pray and feed upon God's word to know his way, so walk the way with him, so start the day with him and walk the way with him and come to evening time with praise to him.

I told these young people, I remember as a teenager sitting in church, and there was a visiting preacher, he was an old man, and he told how he'd become a Christian when he was a coal miner, and he'd gone down the mines at age 15, because that's when you could leave school in those days.

And he said he loved the Lord Jesus so much, he had to get up at silly o'clock every morning to go down the coal mine, and he described how every morning he had breakfast with Jesus. He got up, he got his Weetabix in his bowl, he put the milk in the bowl, he propped his Bible against the milk bottle, and he read his Bible before he went down the coal mine.

[33 : 37] That's having breakfast with Jesus, isn't it? That's responding to his knock. That's saying, Lord Jesus, I'm still a sinner, I need your rebuke. Lord Jesus, I'm someone who needs to be trained in godliness.

Lord Jesus, I want to share my life with you. Lord Jesus, thank you that you love me that much, that you tell me off, you train me up, and you knock on the door of my life, and you keep knocking. Lord

Jesus, I want my life to be about a dependent relationship upon you where nothing is more important than having that close, intimate friendship with you.

Do you believe God loves you today? Do you believe Jesus loves you? Think back over your life as a Christian so far, if you're a Christian.

Aren't you grateful for the way he's told you off, trained you up, and that he's never stopped knocking on the door of your life.

If you're not yet a believer in the Lord Jesus, well, these verses do have a message for you. Becoming a Christian starts with discovering that we all need this loving rebuke of the Lord Jesus, because we're all sinners.

[35 : 01] It's what those who have become Christians experience as they've started to listen to God's words. becoming a Christian involves hearing the call of Jesus to be earnest and to repent. To repent means to run from sin towards God. And as we repent and turn to Jesus, what do we discover? We discover that he says, receive me into your life.

Let me in. He says, trust the amazing love that I have for you because I died on the cross bearing the punishment sinners like you deserve.

Receive me in, the one who loves you more than anyone else in the universe. And he says, as you receive me, you'll then discover that the rest of your life is made up experiencing his love, which includes him telling us off, training us up, and him keep on knocking on the door of our lives. Smiley. Perhaps some husband and wives will start writing Smiley everywhere, or engage couples. But more important, see how much our saviour, the Lord Jesus, loves us.

[36 : 28] Let's pray. Lord Jesus Christ, you who are the faithful and true witness, the ruler of creation, we can't hide anything from you.

You know everything about us, every intimate detail. You know however we look in church this morning, you know what's going on in our hearts.

You know whether we've drifted off into some kind of self-complacency or self-sufficiency.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your amazing love for us. Thank you that it's proved ultimately at the cross where you died in our place.

But thank you for your ongoing love that tells us off, trains us up, and keeps knocking on the door of our lives. Lord Jesus, by your spirit, help us to be earnest and to repent.

[37 : 48] May we have breakfast with you each day. May we walk through the day enjoying your intimate friendship. Please don't give up on us in your love.

And we ask these things for your namesake. Amen.