

COLDNESS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN

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Matthew 24 vs 12 "And because of abounding of lawlessness, the love of many shall become cold ... " (Youngs Literal Translation)

Quotable quotes:

This is the time to give all to the things of God.

It is time to sell every thing to purchase the precious pearl.

This is not the time to be found at ease.

This is the time to pray as never before

This is the time to fast as never before

This is the time to acquire and store oil

This is not a time to keep away from the gathering of God's people.

This is not the time to grumble or murmur at the circumstances that face you. It is time to overcome

This is not the time to draw back

FOR THIS IS THE TIME OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

(Sunday 27th April, 2008)

FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS ON THE COMING OF THE LORD

That great day of tribulation will be a normal day, just like any other day. Be fore warned that the essence is to prepare NOW!! This necessitates then, that our lifestyle must change sufficiently to express the overcoming life of Christ; if you are to survive the things that are coming upon the earth at this time. God forbid that "this day" will come upon us unawares. *Luke 21 vs 34 "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares".*

Resists the pressure the devil is putting on you to succumb to the temptations (fiery darts) that abound. Turn your attention to God and get completely under the covering of Christ.

Cry to the Lord for deliverance from all the wickedness and evil you find lurking in your heart; and strive to do what the Spirit of God demands of you so as to overcome the envies, the jealousies, the deceptive attitudes, the lusts, the manipulative tendencies (which is sorcery) to mention but a few. There is a foundation that is sure. *"The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal; let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2 vs 19).*

Matthew 24 vs 24: *"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and they shall give great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible also the chosen". (YLT)*

Let us examine "false Gods" in another perspective today. Men will be enticed to go and follow other gods (false gods) in order to alleviate the perceived suffering of the tribulation they find themselves in. e.g. you find yourself in a not so highly paid job, the area you live is full of problems e.g. no light, bad roads, traffic jams etc; the only advantage you have is the opportunity to remain in fellowship with the people of God. You get an enticing job offer which will take you to an environment were all your sufferings will really be over but there exists a lack of opportunity for fellowship. **What will your choice be? Will your decision take into consideration the spiritual benefits or will your choice be based on physical glory or attainments;** if the latter is the case then you have been lead astray by the "false god" of mammon. My counsel is, set your heart to start now to practice overcoming any troublesome situations you find yourself in without cursing God or looking for any easy way out; for we are in the tribulation and more circumstances will present themselves to resist you. If you buckle now, what will you do at the time of midnight. Jeremiah 12 vs 5 *"If thou has run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? 'And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"*

A WORD OF EXHORTATION.

We need to remember the coming of the Lord is not "a one off event" but a series of events. We need to understand this in order to appreciate the exhortations in Matthew 24.

The events outlines in Matthew 24 clearly indicate that we are already in the period of the "coming of the Lord".

Some of the land marks we find are:

1) **DECEPTION:**

Great deception abounds brethren. Men shall be greatly deceived and lured away from the path of God at this time.

Vs 4 "Take heed that no man lead you astray (deceive, seduce, lead you out of the way) for many shall come in my name saying I am the Christ".

Vs 11 "And many false prophets shall arise and shall lead many astray"

Vs 14 "For there shall arise false Christ and false prophets and shall give signs and wonders so as to lead astray if possible the chosen".

2) **LOVE OF MEN GROWING COLD:**

Vs 12 "Because of abounding of lawlessness (iniquity, transgression, unrighteousness, wickedness) the love of many shall become cold".

Vs 13 "But he that did endure (persevere, abide, patiently suffer) shall be saved.

This is the burden I wish to share with you this morning, that you might be reminded and prepare. My aim is to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. Compare our zeal when we became born again with the zeal we have now, we will agree that our love has grown cold. This is as a result of the lawlessness that abounds. There is a lot of wickedness and unrighteousness. Look around you, you can't miss the evil that the lurks in every corner. You see people walking around almost naked, these things assault the senses and dampens our love and zeal for righteousness.

Let us examine 3 churches in the book of Revelation that are seen to have lost their first love and zeal for the Lord and the consequences of this.

THE EPHESIANS CHURCH (Rev. 2 vs 1 – 29)

This church had the following plus points:

- ⇒ They laboured in the Lord
- ⇒ They exercised patience
- ⇒ They did not tolerate evil

Their weakness

- ⇒ They had lost their first love

When you look at the “plus points” of this church, it appears to be the perfect end time church, but later we realize that their love had grown cold. Go down memory lane; compare your zeal for the Lord then and now. Have you left your first love? It is wisdom to think about this and repent

vs 5 “Remember therefore from whence thou has fallen and repent and do the first works”.

May our affections and love for God be kindled again. May we love His word, fellowship and the people of God again. We pray that the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts will abound and increase. Let the things of God fully satisfy our hearts again.

Let us rise up and resist the spirit of the age; this spirit of lawlessness and wickedness which is all over us, causing our zeal for righteousness to wane. Because lawlessness is accommodated there is the temptation to join the crowd e.g. people in your office may go late to work and no one bats an eyelid you might be tempted to join. May we be far from lawlessness even if other men walk in it. Turn to the Lord brethren and find your first love. The lord is near to us, *Isaiah 56 vs 6, 7 “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near, let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon us and to our God for he will abundantly pardon”.* We can certainly get back our first love since we only left it (we have not lost it). The scriptures says we have left not lost our first love.

THE LAODICIAN CHURCH (Rev 3 vs 14 – 22)

Plus points

- ⇒ They were rich (may be physically and spiritually).

Their weakness

They were lukewarm.

They were neither hot or cold. If you are hot you can bring healing, if you are cold you would bring a refreshing; A lukewarm condition is a condition that is good for nothing. A lukewarm Christian neither brings healing or refreshing to others. He sits on the fence, he has no vision or purpose. He neither has desire for the things of God nor does he make any effort to kindle his desire. He specializes in shirking responsibility and just follows on in whatever suits him at the time. He is full of excuses and lacks commitment. Brethren let us examine ourselves and ensure we are in the faith. The lukewarm Christian resists the discipline of the Lord and discipline of natural men. God detests lukewarmness. You know what? A lukewarm Christian finds it difficult to receive healing, refreshing consolation or help from others. Beware of such individuals for they have the tendency to draw you down, causing your spiritual life to wear away. We are the salt of the earth, the light of world, what place is there then in our lives for lukewarmness. Let our lives be relevant to our environment. Let our light no matter how little shine, let it touch others positively. Even if you do not come out and stand to preach, you can bring a word of comfort, you may have a word of prophecy to give etc; do something for God. Be hot or cold but do not be lukewarm brethren. God detests lukewarmness.

Rev. 3 vs 16 “So then because thou art lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spew (vomit) thee out of my mouth”. May we have taste, may God not vomit us out but may we be found abiding in the vine. May we listen to this rebuke the Lord is giving this end time church, for the Lord rebukes and chastens those he loves. God desires you to overcome.

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS (Rev. 3 vs 1 – 22)

Plus points

⇒ They had a name that they were living (a character, a form that appeared to be the real thing).

Their weakness

They had a form of godliness but it was only a front they were putting up. May he that nameth the name of the Lord depart from evil. God is not mocked. Are you living to give an impression to others that you a sister or brother. Are you concerned about making an outward show, having a name or character. (oh this brother is so strong in the Lord); meanwhile in the secret you are wallowing in sin. May God deliver us from having a name, a manner of life, a character, a lifestyle that says I am walking or living right, but in actual fact you are dead in sins. Are you living a lifestyle that is different from what the brethren see. Repent! Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die. Brethren beware lest the little light or strength you have finally goes out. Is all your virtue gone? Is your prayer time dying? Is your love for reading the scriptures going down? How about your love for the people of God? Do you still receive the promptings of the Holy Spirit easily to show love to the people of God and to pray for them, or has their treatment of you one way or the other caused your love to grow cold? Any spiritual exercise or activity of the christian life we used to do before, that is about to die, let them be strengthened. Some of us are strong in one area and weak in another. We have the areas we have overcome but we may still be struggling with other areas. Some of us our emotions are weak and need to be healed by God, some of us our minds are wild, some it is our desires that are out of control. We are simply unable to handle it. We may be so strong willed that no one can bend us. God is saying work on that areas that are weak, that are ready to be completely taken over by the devil.

Vs 2 "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die, I have not found thy works perfect before God"

Vs 3 "Remember therefore how thou has received and heard and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I shall come upon thee"

But brethren, praise God for vs 4 "This verse describes those that did not defile their garments that were able to overcome (endure till the end) and mentions their reward.

Let this exhortation encourage us to press on, to examine ourselves for the time is short. Let us fight with all our strength. This is the least fight. Give it your all. Press on brethren. You may be cast down but you would not be destroyed. Hold on brother/sister the indignation will soon be over past and the day star will rise up in our hearts.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION.

Question 1: Matthew 24 vs 19 mentions a woe which will come upon those who give suck in the days of tribulation. Please clarify if it is referring to giving suck physically as a mother gives a child or is it referring to the spiritual realm?

Answer: ⇒ When Jesus was speaking he was referring to both spiritual and physical realms. At that time Festus was about to attack Jerusalem so Jesus was telling them that if they had to flee the city on the Sabbath day, they would experience difficulties because a woman having a crying baby would certainly find it difficult to run far, as you will have to manage the baby. So at that time the reference was to the physical. The things that were physical then apply to us spiritually now. So now it is telling us about being pregnant with encumbrances, things you love that encumber your heart, things you do not want to give up (habits, besetting sins, things that are so dear to you but against the will of God etc).

You nurture and pour your life into them and yet they do not profit you spiritually. That affection you give those things is equivalent to giving suck. The Lord is telling us give them up!! For in that day those things will link unto you. There are not things you

can suddenly leave. (We all know how difficult it is to unlearn a bad habit). E.g. if your work and your profession become so dear to you that you can compromise on spiritual principles so that you can rise fast in the organization, they become the babies you have and are nursing. The Lord is emphatic about this. Stop giving suck. We can also give suck to spirits. As the time you want to flee, the spirits will lay hold and you will not be able to suddenly change your character or unlearn your evil habits.

Points to note.

In this matter of giving suck, we should be careful not to keep ourselves in the position of giving suck e.g. we keep ourselves in a position of being spiritual mothers and fathers. Such people do not allow the people of God to exercise themselves and grow. They feel that they are the only people that hear from God, they are the only ones who can minister and counsel and give help. Whatever you need you come to them and suck. Such people do not allow the people of God to grow up. To such people God is saying **"woe to them that give suck"**. Giving suck is not to our benefit. The correct thing is help the person once, twice, thrice then leave the person to begin to practice how to hear God for himself but continue to pray for him.

Question 2: We hear the word overcoming, can we define this overcoming practically e.g. if I have a situation in my life, when do I know, or when can I say that I have overcome in that situation. Or if I have overcome the situation, what things do I expect to see in my life and how?

Answer: ⇒ If you are a person that is prone to anger. That is you are easily offended and the offence lingers for days, you brood over the matter, it even affects your prayer life etc. you begin to pray about it, after a while, you find that even when people offend you, you no longer get so angry, you may even progress to the stage that you feel no anger at all. In that situation it can be said that you have overcome anger. i.e anger no longer overwhelms you.

⇒ Overcoming is not something you can really create conditions for to check the exact time of overcoming. It is God that justifies. As you continue to pray about the issue and do as the Holy Spirit leads, the Lord will come to your situation and bring you deliverance from that evil habit or situation.

Question 3: What if I have a legitimate physical need e.g. I do not have food. At what point can I say that I have overcome the situation of poverty, when I still lack food.

Answer: ⇒ You can say you have overcome in this situation, when you are able to drop your cares at the master's feet and that situation of lack no longer overwhelms you. Though you do not have food, you are full of joy and thanksgiving because your faith is in God. The situation of lack no longer hurts or affects you because God has given you grace. You have as the scripture says "learnt to abound and abase". It can then be said you have overcome poverty.

Also, you it be said you have overcome the situation of poverty when God blesses you with the ability to provide food for yourself. That is also a situation of overcoming, as the resistances have been overcome.

IT PAYS TO REMEMBER ...

NO MATTER WHAT, WORSHIP GOD

We are created to worship God. The reason we live is to worship Him. May nothing cause us to believe otherwise. You have today, for the sole purpose of worshipping God. Worshipping God involves our actions as well as the praise we give with our lips.

Ecclesiastics 12 vs 13b "Fear God and keep his commandments (your worship): for this is the whole duty of man".

Be encouraged brethren, let the circumstance you find yourself right now cause you to worship God. Let the lack that you are experiencing; that very reason the devil is giving you not to praise God; be the very thing that will prompt you to praise and shout hallelujah. Be it a failure, a besetting sin, may be a curse in the family, may be a handicap that you have; may be great blessings, let it be the very essence of your praise. Is it academic excellence you have? Let it prompt you to worship Him. We are created as instruments of worship, for His pleasure we are and were created.

If you believe that God is in control of your life, then whatever situation you find yourself be it positive or negative; **WORSHIP GOD.**

When you have a problem the best thing to do is to turn your heart to God. Wallowing in despair, discouragement, murmuring or grumbling and brooding will not help. Rise up go into the house of God and give the sacrifice of praise (a sacrifice in this instance because under normal circumstances nothing around you physically is encouraging you to praise).

As you do this, God will begin to distill His strength, grace, joy unspeakable and glory unto your circumstance.

Brethren in that situation, which you find is so terrible, remember God is still good. Hold on, He will see you through it all.

You can never be on the losing side if you hold on. God will give you a miracle. ... *Bro. Ogbens, Ibadan*