

THE SOVEREIGN, EVER-PRESENT LORD
Revelation 2:1-7

Intro: The Apostle John wrote this, the last book of the Bible. He attached his name to it--something which he did not do to his Gospel, nor to any of his three epistles. He also gave it a title: "The revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1). And, although John was "one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26), I think that we are safe in assuming that John had never seen the Lord before as he described Him in Rev. 1. I feel sure that we can say that even though the apostle John was one who was with the Lord in the mount of transfiguration.

John was an old man when he wrote this, the only distinctively prophetic book in the New Testament. He was in exile on the isle of Patmos as he said in verse 9. He had been exiled there because of his preaching. It was a rugged, bare, and lonely island about twenty-four miles off of the coast of the Roman province of Asia (now Turkey). It was about 70 miles southwest of Ephesus. John had been banished there by the Roman Emperor Domitian. The details concerning the last years of John are not clear, but his exile was certainly, from a human standpoint, an ignominious way for the apostle John to spend some of his last years. Like most, if not all of the other apostles, he seems to have died a martyr for the faith.

These were dark days for the apostle, and yet they were glorious because of the marvelous revelation that was given to him on Patmos. John had ministered in "the circuit" of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, etc.

Ephesus was probably the largest of all of the cities mentioned in these two chapters, and also the most important. The Lord had done a wonderful work there. These letters obviously show that John's thoughts and prayers were turned often to these places where he had formerly ministered, but from whom he was not excluded because of his exile.

Unlike the epistles of Paul, Peter, and Jude, these letters were not sent as being from John (although the revelation of the letters must have been given to John in much the same way that Paul received his epistles; Peter, his; and Jude, his. These letters were written and sent as though they had come directly from the Lord Himself.

With this word of introduction, let us turn to the letter to the church at Ephesus. For the moment I want to skip over the first verse, and go to verse 2.

The first thing we have is:

I. THE LORD'S COMMENDATION (Rev. 2:2, 3).

From what the Lord said about the church at Ephesus we can see that, if you and I had been able to visit it, we would have felt that this must be the perfect church.

- A. It was a busy church: "thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience" (v. 2).
- B. It was a holy church: "thou canst not bear them which are evil" (v. 2).
- C. It was a doctrinally pure church: "and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles...." (v. 2).
- D. It was a persevering church (v. 3).

This statement not only suggests that the work was difficult, but also that there may have been opposition.

This is not what the Ephesian believers said about themselves. It is not what John said about them. BUT IT IS WHAT THE LORD SAID ABOUT THEM. And He said, "I know...." (v. 2).

What more could you possibly want in a church? There certainly not many churches today about whom you could say these commendatory things.

And I would imagine that, as John wrote these words, he could have been saying to himself, "Good! Things are like they were the last time I was with them." And he would have given thanks to God!

But just a moment! We come to a "nevertheless." And then he knew that things were not good, not like they had been before. And so we read of

II. THE LORD'S REPROOF (Rev. 2:4).

The Lord saw what no other eyes could readily see. The work continued as before. There was just as much going on. There was the same emphasis on holiness. No false doctrines had crept in. And they were just as faithful and persevering as John had known them to be.

But the thing that was missing, and for which none of the above things could be a substitute, was their personal

love for the Lord. Oh, they still loved the Lord. They could still praise Him for their salvation. And they still loved to learn about Him. But that "first love" which was such a delight to the Lord when the church was first started was no longer there.

Perhaps it was because of their busy-ness. Perhaps it was because everything had become more or less of a routine. Perhaps it was because the work had become more important to them than the Lord. Perhaps they were so busy with their work as a church that the leaders and the people had neglected their personal time with the Lord. Things might have same the same to the on-looker, but the Lord knew that things were not the same. And probably the people sensed a difference too (although they may not have realized what it was that was different).

Every Christian surely must have experienced a "first love"--that love which was yours and mine when first we knew the Lord. We may not have known very much. And there may not have been much that we could do to serve the Lord. But we loved Him! We loved to have people tell us about Him. We loved His Word. We loved to pray (although we did not know much about that either).

It is not that we hate Him now. No true believer could ever hate the Lord. But things are just different, whatever the reasons may be.

Nothing that the Lord could have said could have pointed any more to that which is of the greatest importance to Him.

If the Lord were writing to Trinity Bible Church, what would He say to us? Could He even say what He said to the Ephesian church in verses 2 and 3? What about our love for the Lord? Do you love Him as much as you used to love Him? Do I? No work, no desire for holiness, no orthodoxy, no perseverance--not even all of them combined--can satisfy the Lord if our love for Him is not what it used to be!

The Lord could not leave it there. In fact, we can see that the correction of this deficiency could very well have been one of the major reasons for the writing of this book. And so we have

III. THE LORD'S EXHORTATIONS (Rev. 2:5).

There are two of them: "Remember...and repent...."

A. "Remember."

What did He want them to remember? He wanted them to remember how they had fallen, could I say, fallen out of love with the Lord?

Can you remember a time in your life when you loved the Lord more than you do now? If you can, you have fallen.

And so what do you need to do?

B. "Repent."

What are we to link repentance with? Of what do we repent? We repent of S-I-N! So, if you do not love the Lord like you used to, you are guilty of sin because the first and greatest commandment in the Law was what? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God...." (Matt. 22:37; cf. Deut. 6:5).

What would happen in Ephesus if there were no repentance for this particular sin? The Lord would come quickly, and remove their candlestick.

Cf. Rev. 1:20b. The candlestick in Ephesus was the church at Ephesus with its witness of Christ. If conditions in the hearts of the people were not changed, the lamp would be removed. Services might continue, but the usefulness of the church would come to an end. And eventually there would be no church at all.

It is a sobering thought to realize that there is no city there today, and no church. Guides will show you where they think the church used to meet, but it does not meet there any more.

Let me go on to the rest of the letter.

It is almost like the Lord forgot to mention something that He meant to mention. We know that the Lord does not forget anything, so it must be that what the Lord said in this sixth verse was delayed until He got to this point in the letter.

IV. ANOTHER OF THE LORD'S COMMENDATIONS (Rev. 2:6).

What were "the deeds of the Nicolaitanes" which the Lord hated? It seems that this was a reference to a practice which found its way into some of the early churches where certain teachers sought to get the people of God to

compromise with the idolatrous practices of the heathen, especially eating their sacrifices. This eventually would lead to other ungodly practices, such as fornication.

The Ephesians were not compromisers. The Lord commended them for that. But still they lacked that which was the most important of all. We may not do what we should not do and still not do what we should be doing.

The letter closes with:

V. THE FINAL APPEAL (Rev. 3:7).

This shows that the letter to each church was to be sent to all of the churches, and that those who would hear, even though it might not be all of the people, could profit from the promise attached to each letter.

In such matters we cannot afford to wait until everyone is ready. If the Lord has given us ears to hear, we need to act immediately to get things straightened out with the Lord.

Concl: Now, in conclusion, I want to go back to the first verse of the letter: 2:1.

At the beginning of each letter our Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself by referring back to some part of chapter 1 where the vision which was given to John is described. Be sure to notice that because these descriptions are the part of each letter which tell us about our Lord.

Here He is said to hold "the seven stars in his right hand." See 1:20.

And then we see that "the seven golden candlesticks," or lampstands, are "the seven churches."

"The seven stars" are described as "the angels of the seven churches." An angel is a messenger. This might mean that angels are assigned to every true church, but it seems to me to be more likely that the messengers referred to here are those who are God's messengers to the churches, the pastors.

The Lord is continually walking among the churches, and He holds their leaders in His hands. He is the Head of the Church, and also of the churches. And He is continually present among His people, watching what they are doing, working in their lives, bringing them to a place of greater blessing and greater usefulness--not less blessing and less

usefulness.

We have a sovereign, ever-present Lord Who is over us and with us. It is His will to use us. If not, He would have taken us to heaven. But sometimes the blessing is obstructed by things that are displeasing to the Lord. Things outwardly may look fine. But inwardly there may be some great needs.

Let us take this opportunity to look at our own hearts to see if we, too, need to repent because the Lord knows, and we know, if we will remember, that we do not love Him like we used to love Him. When our love is restored, the blessing will be, too--extending all the way to glory!

CHRIST, THE FIRST AND THE LAST
Revelation 2:8-11

Intro: This letter has two distinctions:

- 1) It is the shortest of all the letters to the churches.
- 2) It is one of two churches that are mentioned in this series of letters which have no rebuke from the Lord. The other is the church at Philadelphia. These are the only churches that are not told to repent.

One thing that is very clear about the church at Smyrna is that it was a church that had suffered a great deal. We see also that more suffering was ahead. And it is evident that the suffering which was yet to come was going to mean death for some. And yet, in spite of that, the Lord said, "Fear not" (Rev. 2:10), and encouraged them to "be...faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10). These are the only two exhortations that the Lord gave to them.

There are Christians in the world who, because of their sufferings for Christ, could appreciate this letter more than we can. None of us has experienced anything like the church at Smyrna had gone through. And, as Vance Havner said in his message on Smyrna, "It is not easy to preach on Smyrna nowadays" (Repent or Else, p. 33). And then he went on to say that we are more interested in prosperity and entertainment, success and popularity. In terms of suffering, being a Christian has not cost us very much. We may have had our troubles, but more of it has come from other Christians than from the world.

However, we do not know what is ahead. The message of churches true to the Word of God is getting farther and farther away from what the world wants to hear, so there may be trouble ahead. The Lord alone knows. Whatever the future holds, it is good for us to be fortified with that which the Lord told the believers in Smyrna almost 2,000 years ago.

First of all, notice:

I. THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE WRITER (Rev. 2:8).

When we write letters we give the name of the person to whom we are writing at the beginning of the letter, and our name at the end. They did not do it that way in NT times. Both were given at the beginning. This is to be seen in practically all of the NT epistles.

So, verse 8 tells us that this letter was specifically

for the church in Smyrna, and that it was from Him Who is "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." This is our Lord.

Last week I pointed out to you that in all of these letters the Lord took some expression, or expressions, from the way He appeared in chapter 1, to identify Himself. (See 1:17b, 18a).

Why did He not simply say that He was the Lord Jesus Christ?

The answer to that question is found in each letter. It is only in the Lord Jesus Christ that we can find true encouragement for ourselves regardless of what our circumstances are. So this title was given to a church that had suffered greatly, would suffer more, and which had been reduced to "poverty" by those sufferings.

The Lord's title here brings out two great truths, each with many different messages.

A. "The first and the last."

See "Alpha and Omega" in 1:8. See also 1:11. And then again look at 1:17. Notice also 21:6.

This means that the Lord was present in the beginning. He also will be there at the end of human history. And He has never been absent nor inactive all throughout human history. He is the sovereign Lord Who upholds "all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3).

As Vance Havner also said, our Lord is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, and all of the letters in between!

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord of history past, of present-day circumstances, and of all that is yet to come. It is all going His way, not man's!

This is a great encouragement. But there is more.

B. He is the One Who "was dead, and is alive" (Rev. 2:8).

This, of course, takes us to two places:

- 1) The Cross.
- 2) The empty tomb.

The Lord was not One Who had been isolated from suffering; He had suffered more than any man ever has suffered, or will suffer. He knew their agony of heart. He was touched with their infirmities. He could enter into their sufferings. He was their Great High Priest!

No only was He in control of their circumstances, but He was the One Who had conquered death and the grave. He is the Victorious One!

After that encouraging introduction we see next:

II. WHAT THE LORD KNEW (Rev. 2:9a).

- A. He knew their present circumstances: their "works, and tribulation, and poverty."

He knew that they were carrying on in spite of all of their troubles. He knew the pressures they were under for His sake. And He knew their poverty--that materially, and probably physically, they were in great need!

He knew all of that, but He wanted them to know that He knew it.

- B. He also knew the people who were troubling them.

These were apparently unbelieving Jews who were claiming that they were the true people of God, and that the believers in the church were not. They were guilty of blasphemy because they refused to acknowledge that the Lord Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. The Lord did not own them; they were of "the synagogue of Satan." They were the Devil's people, not the Lord's!

"The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19), and He also knows those who are not His! And it is what He knows that matters.

At this point we need to look at the encouragement that the Lord gave to them. I have already mentioned that He told them not to fear, but to be faithful even though it meant death. What encouragement could the Lord give in the face of such a condition as the church in Smyrna faced.

III. THE LORD'S ENCOURAGEMENTS.

- A. God had purposes to accomplish.

There are two that are mentioned here: one in verse 9; the other in verse 10. Both had been at least partially accomplished.

1. The Lord wanted them to be truly rich, spiritually rich (v. 9).

Notice that parenthesis: "(but thou art rich)."

Sometimes it takes material poverty before we seek the heavenly and eternal riches that we all have in Christ. The condition of the church at Smyrna had been greatly improved by all of the trouble.

2. It was to try them (v. 10).

This means that God was testing His people to show that they were really His people, and that they would stand with Him regardless of how severe the opposition might get.

This would mean a great deal to the believers themselves, but it was also as a witness to the world.

We must always recognize that God has purposes for what He does, or what He allows--good purposes that are for His glory, and for the blessing of His people.

- B. God sets limits for the suffering of His people.

We see this in those words in verse 10: "And ye shall have tribulation ten days."

If you read the commentaries, you will find all kinds of speculation about these ten days. I have had my own struggles about them. I probably do not know all that that statement means, but I know one thing that it means. God sets limits. They would suffer "ten days," not eleven, or twelve, etc. This may not actually mean ten literal days, but a limited period of time. God is the One Who controls our troubles, whatever they may be, and they will not go one day longer than He intends for them to go.

That is encouraging.

- C. God gives us promises, the prospect of better days to come. There are two of them here.

1. One is given here at the end of verse 10: "I will give thee a crown of life."

What can this be but life at its best!

2. The second is in verse 11b.

Those true believers who are "tried" are the overcomers, and overcomers experience life, not the second death.

Concl: Our trials may not be as severe as the trials of the church at Smyrna, but God's message to them was His message to all of the seven churches, and to all true churches from that day until this.

Let us, in times of testing, follow the outline of this letter:

- 1) Let us get our eyes on the Lord, and remember Who He is.
- 2) Let us remember that He has purposes, good purposes in all that He does.
- 3) Let us remember that He has not left us at the mercy of our enemies, nor of our circumstances. He is in control!
- 4) Let us claim His promises, remembering that He wants us to be looking forward to heaven and all of the blessings we will have there.
- 5) Let us not be afraid, but continue to do all that we can, being faithful to Him, doing His will.

These are wonderful things to remember when we experience the trials and testings that come our way. These can turn our troubles into the greatest blessings we have ever had.

CHRIST, WITH A SWORD IN HIS MOUTH
Revelation 2:12-17

Intro: Our Lord is presented here to the church at Pergamos as He was described in Rev. 1:16. (Read.) We also have this same description in Rev. 19:15, 21 where it speaks of our Lord's coming in glory. In Eph. 6:17 Paul described "the word of God" as "the sword of the Spirit." And we all should be familiar with Heb. 4:12,

For the word of God is quick, and powerful,
and sharper than any twoedged sword,
piercing even to the dividing asunder
of soul and spirit,
and of the joints and marrow,
and is a discernor of the thoughts
and intents of the heart.

Even Isa. 11:4 tells of the Lord coming to "smite the earth with the rod of his mouth." Even in Isa. 49:2 we have the words of the Messiah, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword...."

All of these leave little doubt but that the sword in the mouth of the Lord portrays the Word of God. As the sword would suggest, this is a weapon of warfare. That is certainly the idea that we get from Eph. 6:17. Sometimes the Lord is prepared to use it, as our text would suggest. Sometimes, as Eph. 6:17 indicates, the Spirit uses it. And that passage also indicates that the Spirit uses it through us because we are to "take the sword of the Spirit...."

There is more power in the Word of God than any of us has yet seen! The power of the Word has been demonstrated over and over again in the convicting and regenerating works of the Holy Spirit, but some day the whole world, may I say, the whole universe, will feel the effect of the power of the Word of God.

The Lord clearly appears to the church at Pergamos in a militant attitude. We can sense that something is seriously wrong in the church at Pergamos. Let us see what it was.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF PERGAMOS (Rev. 2:13).

It is described as being "where Satan's seat [is]." The word translated "seat" is the Greek word for throne.

And then later in the verse we are told that Pergamos was "where Satan dwelleth." His residence was there.

This does not mean that Satan's throne and home were

there permanently. He seems to move around. Wherever he can establish a foothold, that will be his residence for the present. That is probably one reason that Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27).

It is evident that the church at Pergamos was in a very dangerous place.

But let us look at:

II. THE LORD'S COMMENDATIONS (Rev. 2:13).

The Lord recognized three good things:

- A. The church was busy serving the Lord: "I know thy works." This is especially significant in view of the fact that Satan was there.
- B. The church was faithful to the Lord and to what the Lord called, "my faith," by which He most likely meant the Gospel.

So the believers as a church were still orthodox.

- C. The church had remained faithful even in a time of great persecution. We do not know who Antipas was, but we do know that he was faithful in his witness.

(Swete expressed the belief that witness did not mean "martyr" at this time in the history of the church, but it came to mean that as a result of what happened to so many of those who witnesses for Christ. "Martyr" is a transliteration of the Greek word for witness.)

All of these statements show that the Lord was able to give them some very strong words of commendation--commendations that not many churches today would deserve.

But alone with the commendations we read in the following two verses:

III. THE LORD'S CONDEMNATION (Rev. 2:14, 15).

There seems to be a relationship between the ancient doctrine of Balaam and the then-present doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which the Lord hated.

We had "the deeds of the Nicolaitanes" in 2:6. The Lord hated both their doctrine and their deeds. What was it?

You will remember that Balaam tried to curse Israel repeatedly at the request of Balak, the king of Moab. Each time he was forbidden to do so. But the same purpose was accomplished when, at Balaam's suggestion, the Israelites compromised with the Moabites in worshiping their gods, and so brought upon themselves the judgment of God.

Therefore, it seems that while the church of Pergamos was faithful in many ways, even faithful unto death, they had entered into compromise with the world in Pergamos, and therefore they were faced with the intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

Many attempts have been made to identify the particular problem, or problems, that the church in Pergamos faced, but it seems that we cannot point out any one in particular. But we do not need to know the details in order to profit from this letter from our Lord. THIS IS WHERE WE SEE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FACT THAT THE LORD APPEARED TO THEM AS HAVING A SWORD IN HIS MOUTH!

There was much about the Word of God that the church was following. But there were other things that they had admitted. Their stand against paganism had weakened. They had compromised with much that the religious world was doing. What their reasons were, we do not know. But when you looked at the activities of the people of the church of Pergamos, perhaps even the way that they conducted their services, and possibly also the way their attendance at the Lord's Table had been affected, you could see a lot of additions which had no justification in the Word of God.

Maybe this explains why we have the warning that appears at the end of this book of prophecy. I refer to Rev. 22:18:

For I testify unto every man that heareth
the words of the prophecy of this book,
If any man shall add unto these things,
God shall add unto him the plagues
that are written in this book.

Even before the NT was completed the Lord's people had already felt free to add to what we have in the Word of God! And this is what the Lord hates!

The church from that day until this has repeatedly gotten into trouble with her additions. And look at where we are today. On the one hand there are churches with all kinds of extra-Biblical rituals and ceremonies; on the

other had we see the influence of the world upon the way the church carries on its business, in the showmanship of her leaders, the music that is used. And I could go on and on.

Let me remind you of what Peter wrote on this very subject. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:2-4.

If God has given us these "all things," where are they?

You will find them in two places, and these two are so closely related that you cannot separate them. If we depart from the one, we depart from the other. They are:

- 1) The Word of God.
- 2) The Lord Jesus Christ.

It is so easy and so common to get away from the Word of God, and from dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that it is being done every day, and very few people in the Church even pay any attention to it any more!

All of this leads to:

IV. THE LORD'S CALL TO REPENTANCE (Rev. 2:16).

It is the church's responsibility to keep herself pure, to allow no compromises, to admit no additions to Christ or to the Word of God. Every person in the church bears this responsibility before God. Today, and even in those days, the church needs a house cleaning just like the Temple needed to be cleansed in the Lord's day.

The Lord was not going to stand idly by and see His Name and His Word desecrated by all that had found its way into the life of the church in Pergamos, and into the lives of the people who were a part of that church.

But the Lord did not stop there. He added:

V. THE LORD'S PROMISE (Rev. 2:17).

Remember that we do not have to wait for everybody to do the right thing. The Lord did here what He did in every letter: He addressed Himself to any individual who was listening to Him. The Spirit of God was speaking to the churches in those days. If we have ears to hear, we will realize that He is speaking in these days, too.

Sin and compromise in the lives of the people needed to be overcome. To those who did overcome, the Lord held out the promise of greater insights into the truth, and

greater fellowship with the Lord.

This is probably a reference to the way in which messages of special importance were given to certain, selected people. "Manna" certainly points to the Word. The "stone" seems to refer to Christ. The revelation would obviously have to be to the way in which Christ is revealed in His Word.

Concl: Why do people add to the Word, and even go beyond Christ? There can be only one reason: They have not found the Word and Christ sufficient for their souls.

Where is the fault? Is it in the Word? Absolutely not! Is it in Christ? It cannot be! The fault is in the people of God themselves who have allowed themselves to be turned aside to follow other gods while they still console themselves with the fact that they continue to trust in the Lord.

The Word of God is very, very precious to God. And Christ is also very, very precious to God. Try to add to the Word, and you will have trouble with God. Go beyond Christ, and, if you really know the Lord as your Savior, you will find that the Lord will do whatever He needs to do to bring you back!

May the Lord give us ears to hear the voice of our Savior in His Word in these days when so many are not satisfied with the Word of God, nor are they satisfied with Christ.

Conclude with #260 in Making Melody, "Now None But Christ."

CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD AND JUDGE
Revelation 2:18-29

Intro: In the first chapter of this book, and the first verse, the Apostle John said that the Revelation which was given to him was "sent and signified...by his angel (God's angel) unto his servant John." "Signified" indicates means to make use of signs, or symbols. It means that we are going to be concerned with symbols all through this book which is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Even our Lord appears in such a manner in the very first chapter of this book, and these are used in the descriptions that are used of Him in the letters to the churches found in chapters 2, 3.

So our Lord is described in the letter to the church in Thyatira as having "eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass."

In verse 20 Jezebel is mentioned.

And in other parts of the letter other symbols are used, e.g., the promise of "the morning star" in verse 28.

Many who have carefully sought to understand this book of the Revelation of Christ have discovered that it is necessary to bring with us some understanding of the other parts of the Bible if we are to comprehend the message that was given to John.

There is no question but that our Lord was presented here in His Deity. He wrote and/or spoke as "the Son of God." But He appeared here in a very different role from that which was characteristic of His ministry when He was here on earth. The "fire" and the "brass," or bronze, are symbols taken from the OT which have to do with judgment. We see that in the sacrifices. We see that in the Tabernacle where the articles outside of the Tabernacle were made of bronze. Even in Heb. 12:29 we read, "For our God is a consuming fire." Even in 2 Thess. 1: 8, 9 we are told that our Lord will come

In flaming fire taking vengeance
on them that know not God,
and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
who shall be punished with everlasting destruction
from the presence of the Lord,
and from the glory of his power.

It is for these reasons that I have called my message, CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD AND JUDGE. There are many people in our churches, and outside of our churches, who feel that somehow the God of the OT is different from our Lord in the NT. But that is because they have not read the NT carefully.

We have a God Who hates sin, and we have a Savior Who hates sin. That fact is very clearly presented for us in these letters to the churches of the first century.

Lydia, whom Paul met in Philippi, was from Thyatira. Cf. Acts 16:14. Whether or not she ever got back to Thyatira, we do not know. That is the only place outside of this book of The Revelation where Thyatira is mentioned. Cf. Rev. 1:11 and 2:18, 24. It was in the Roman Province of Asia.

I do not have the time tonight to take up every detail of this letter, but we will see enough so that it can be of help to us as a church as well as individually.

I. THE APPEARANCE OF THE LORD (Rev. 2:18).

The Lord appears in His Deity, and as the Judge Who has power to execute judgment. Nothing escapes His sight, and He is prepared to bring whatever judgment that seems to be right in His sight.

It seems that the church in Thyatira was a church where there was very little teaching about the fear of the Lord. That is certainly very lacking also in our teaching today. Even in our churches we see very little to indicate that we fear the Lord, and that, therefore, we need to be concerned about pleasing Him.

II. THE LORD'S COMMENDATION (Rev. 2:19).

This was a church that had more good things that could be said about it, than most churches. The Lord recognized it all, and commended them for it, noticing that, instead of serving the Lord less, they were serving the Lord more than they had in the beginning.

However, no amount of good things can compensate for things that are displeasing to the Lord. And so we have:

III. THE LORD'S CONDEMNATION (Rev. 2:20-23).

Let us recognize, because of the nature of this book, that the woman's name may not have been "Jezebel." We cannot say for sure. It is more likely that she was to the church in Thyatira what Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, was to Israel. She was the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, and she was the one who introduced through, her husband, the worship of Baal among the people of Israel. She hated Elijah, and she hated Elisha who followed Elijah.

This "Jezebel" had claimed to be a prophetess, and had introduced idolatry into the church at Thyatira. And it seems that her influence had been very great.

One very important thing that the Lord said about her is found in verse 21. He had been dealing with her. He had given her time. She and probably those who followed her felt safe because God did not deal with her in judgment immediately. But He had been dealing with her, just as He had dealt with the "Jezebel" of the OT. She had been exposed to two of the greatest ministries in the OT: those of Elijah and Elisha.

God wanted repentance, but she did not repent!

Verse 22 tells us that the Lord wanted her followers in the church to repent also.

Failure to repent of evil will bring the judgment of the Lord. To kill them with death (v. 23) suggests not only eternal death, but also physical death. And again we see that those who defile the work of the Lord by their transgressions will have to deal with the Lord for what they have done.

These are solemn words which the church today needs to take to heart. Note in v. 23 that the Lord wanted "all the churches" to learn something from this about the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again we see that the truth of the Lord is very precious to the Lord Himself, more precious than any of us realize. Those who turn from it, or add to it, are going to have the Lord to deal with.

Finally, we have:

IV. THE LORD'S ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE CHURCH (Rev. 2:24-29).

We saw just this morning in 2 Timothy 3 how bad things are going to be as we draw near to the coming of the Lord, bad not only in the world, but also in the Church. The warfare against false doctrine, and false practices, is not going to get easier, but harder. And yet the Lord's work is never going to fail completely. It has seemed like it at times, but the Lord will not let His work die. He always has His faithful people who will stand for the truth even when it may mean death.

Jezebel has come with her claim to have greater "depths" of teaching than the church had yet heard. The Lord said that they are "the depths of Satan." The people who

chose to stay by the Word of God without any additions, were those whom the Lord was addressing here. The Lord was not asking them to do anything that He had not already told them, but encouraged them to "hold fast" that which they had until He would come. They were to keep what they had, and not let anyone take the truth from them.

Sometimes it seems that the Word of God is not enough. The Lord does not work as fast as we would like for him to work, and so people in our churches start looking for something that will bring "results," that will cause their churches to be places "where the action is!"

That is not the Lord's way. What we need are not new methods. What we need is people who will do the works of the Lord "unto the end." This, and this alone, is what will bring the final and greatest blessing of God as far as this work is concerned. See verses 26, 27.

What is "the morning star"?

Please turn over to Rev. 22:16. (Read.)

See also 2 Pet. 1:19.

Can we have any greater light than we have in the Word of God? Can we have any greater light than we have in our Lord Jesus Christ? He is "the Light of the world" (John 8:12). David said in Psa. 36:9,

For with thee is the fountain of life:
in thy light shall we see light.

The person who adds to the Word of God is saying, regardless of how they might deny it, that what God has given us is not enough, and that what we have in Christ is not enough. It is impossible to go beyond Scripture without going beyond Christ.

Concl: Let us be careful about our adherence to Scripture.

And let us be just as careful that our lives are being living according to what the Lord wants us to do and to be. The trend in our churches is always away from God, and away from His Word, and away from His Son. Even if we have to stand alone, let us stand on the truth of the Word.

As a child I learned that little chorus,

The B-I-B-L-E, yes, that's the Book for me.

I stand alone on the Word of God, the B-I-B-L-E.

Sometimes it is only as we get older that we learn what we were taught in our younger days. If we "stand alone on the

Word of God," both in its doctrine and in its practical teaching, that is all we will need to have the blessing of the Lord--now, and eternally!

We need to remember that our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is THE SON OF GOD. And we also need to remember that He is also OUR JUDGE, not just in that day when we stand before Him, but now! He has not closed His eyes to what is going on in the world, nor to what is going on in the churches. He was patient with "Jezebel" in the first century. He was patient with the first "Jezebel" ninth century B.C. But there is an end to His patience. That is why we need to learn what it means to fear the Lord.

CHRIST, THE INVINCIBLE ONE
Revelation 3:1-6

Intro: Sardis was located just south of Thyatira, and just north of Philadelphia, in the Roman province of Asia. Below Philadelphia was Laodicea. All of them were inland from Ephesus and Smyrna. Pergamos, or Pergamum, was farther north. The seven cities were in an elongated circle.

By reading this short letter we can see that paganism was not a particular threat to the church in Sardis. Neither were there false teachers with their false doctrines which had crippled the church. As the Lutheran commentator, Lenski, said, "It suffered from spiritual dry rot and deadness" (p. 126).

Our Lord gave no commendation to the church unless you could say that His mention of their works was a mild tribute.

The Lord knew their "works." This meant that the ministry of the church was continuing. There seems to have been a tendency to depend on "works for the sake of works." The people were not thinking in terms of what was being accomplished, or not accomplished, by their works; they satisfied their consciences with "works"--period!

Sardis also had "a name." This means that the church had a reputation for being what a church should be. But the people were inclined to rest on their past blessings. Their condition at the time Paul wrote did not measure up at all to the name which they carried. If you had visited that church you would have heard a lot about the Lord's blessing in the past, but they had nothing up-to-date to report.

Illus: The old sea captain who used to give his testimony every time he had the opportunity--but it was always about the past, nothing about the present! It was like God was not doing anything as the old man was speaking. This went on week after week--the same kind of a "dead" testimony.

The church in Sardis was like this. There was plenty going on in the present, but they could only tell you, for the most part, of what God had done in days gone by.

At this point let us look at the way the Lord identified Himself.

I. CHRIST, THE INVINCIBLE ONE (Rev. 3:1a).

He is pictured here as the One Who has (present tense) "the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars."

Cf. Rev. 1:4 for the first of these expressions; cf. 1:16, 20 for the second.

We can tell by the context of 1:4 that "the seven Spirits of God" is a reference to the Holy Spirit. Undoubtedly this term was used by the Apostle John because the Lord was dealing with seven churches. "Seven" also is the number of completeness, or fullness, in Scripture. So it would speak of both the necessity and the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit. The churches were absolutely dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Nothing permanent of a spiritual nature could take place without Him. And, at the same time, they did not need to go beyond the Holy Spirit. As I have said, He was necessary, and He was enough!

"The seven stars" we learn from 1:20 are the angels, or the messengers, to the seven churches. This had to do with the pastors of the churches. All seven of the churches are in view here because the same truth regarding the Holy Spirit, and regarding their leadership, applied to all of the churches.

But notice also that the Lord had these: the Holy Spirit, and the leadership. They were under our Lord's control. Our Lord made it very clear in the Upper Room Discourse that the Holy Spirit was coming to do the will of the Lord just as the Lord had come to do the will of the Father. In the same way, whether pastors recognize it or not, the leadership of the churches is under the hand of the Lord. This does not mean that churches will not fail (due to their own folly), but it does mean that they are not in control; the Lord is!

It is very important that we today recognize and act upon these truths!

This is all followed by:

II. OUR LORD'S EXHORTATIONS (Rev. 3:2a, 3).

There are five things that the Lord told them to do:

- 1) "Be watchful."
- 2) "Strengthen."
- 3) "Remember."
- 4) "Hold fast."
- 5) "Repent."

Let us look briefly at each one of these.

A. "Be watchful."

The basic idea in this word is that they needed to wake up, and stay awake. But why? The church needed to wake up, to stop living in the past. They people needed to be on the lookout for anything that would affect the work of the Lord adversely.

B. "Strengthen."

"Strengthen" what?

In churches where the Word is being taught you will not usually find that everything is bad. So the place to start is to look at what is being done, consider it in the light of what should be done, and then put strength into it!

This would call for an evaluation of the work of the church in the light of the Word of God. And then to strengthen it meant that the power and blessing of the Spirit of God should be sought. And it would also mean that the purpose of the work should be clear. Cf. Col. 3:17.

The work was not "perfect," i.e., it was not what it should have been in the light of Scripture.

C. "Remember."

We have seen that the people were living in the past as far as their reputation was concerned. Here the Lord tells them to "remember" the past, but not in the way that they were remembering it.

He told them to remember two things:

1. They were to remember how they had been the recipients from the Lord of that which they had.

You can always tell when a work is in trouble because the people are more inclined to talk about what they are doing, or have done, than what the Lord has done, what the Lord has given them.

2. They were to remember what they had heard.

This is a reminder for them to remember the things that formerly were taught at the church, things which were no longer heard. This would apply to doctrines, to principles by which the Lord's work was done, etc.

Again, when a work starts downhill, teaching becomes less important than it had been. Just to remember these things will help any church to get back on track.

D. "Hold fast."

If we remember, but do nothing about it, it will do us no good to remember. "Hold fast" means to take care of what is wrong, change it, and then make sure that it does not happen again.

This is not done in a moment. Nor is it something that a church can do, and then forget about it. This is an ongoing work within the church if the work of the Lord is to be what the Lord wants it to be.

It is not change that the church needs; it is holding fast to the way the Lord has ordained that His work be done.

Finally (as far as the Lord's exhortations are concerned),

E. "Repent."

After a church has gotten away from what it should be, it is not enough to change back. There needs to be deep, sincere repentance, the confession of sin--the sin of seeking to do the work of the Lord our way instead of God's way.

The need to repent in the church is a message that needs to be heard far and wide.

This brings us to:

III. THE LORD'S WARNING (Rev. 3:3b).

For the meaning of this warning, cf. Rev. 2:16.

Do you remember how, from time to time, we have looked at the prepositions in Scripture--such words as with and for?

The Lord will either be "with" us, or against us. The same is the meaning of "for."

When a church is pleasing the Lord, that church can expect to have the blessing of the Lord. When it is not, then things will take place to make matters even worse.

And what a sad state of affairs it is when in a church, not only has the blessing been removed, but things continue to get worse and worse. The Lord told the church at Sardis that they would not know when this would happen, but they would know after it started to happen.

We are so vulnerable. We are finite creatures; our God is infinite in His presence, in His wisdom, and in His power--and in many other ways. What we need to be concerned about is not what people are going to want and be happy with, but what the Lord wants. As one of the Puritans said, "If God is your Friend, it makes no difference who your enemies are." As Paul said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31b).

Then we come to a special part in this letter:

IV. THE LORD'S PROMISES (Rev. 3:4, 5).

When you look at these two verses, what would you say was upon the mind of the Lord, more than anything else?

The answer: Walking with Him in white.

What does it mean to walk with Him in white? It means to walk in fellowship with Him. And if we are to walk with Him, our garments must be white, our lives need to be clean.

Do you remember that verse we had those verses we had this morning in 1 John 1, especially verses 6, 7? "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk... But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light...."

The church is always to be a place where we have fellowship with the Lord. Then we go out into the world continuing to walk with Him. And when the time comes we walk right into heaven, still walking with Him. Cf. what Gen. 5:24 tells us about Enoch:

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not;
for God took him.

Concl: Cf. Rev. 3:6.

Are you listening? Do you really hear? Are we listening as a church? How can we tell if we are? That is easy. We will not only hear what the Lord says is wrong, and how to make it right, but we will, by the power of the Holy Spirit, make it right.

May God give us ears to hear, eyes to see, etc.

THE LORD AND THE OPEN DOOR
Revelation 3:7-13

Intro: Several of you have asked me since I started this present series if I believe that the letters to the seven churches picture for us prophetically, at the time the Apostle John wrote, seven periods of church history.

In answer to that I will say that I have never been particularly impressed with that viewpoint. It seems to me that we have to force church history into those letters in order to do that. Those who have done this are inclined to assume, too, that we are in the seventh period, and that there will be no more. So I have not been approaching the letters with church history in mind.

I do believe that the letters were written to emphasize two things:

- 1) The character and sovereignty of our Lord in connection with the churches.
- 2) The things about churches which please or displease the Lord. This includes problems which a church can face.

So, on the one hand, the letters encourage us to look at the Lord; on the other, at the churches. As we proceed from Ephesus to Laodicea we can see most of the needs that churches will face throughout this present age in which we are living. The letters teach us that it always helps us to get our eyes on the Lord first; then we will see the issues in the churches more as we should see them.

How is the Lord presented to this church in the city of brotherly love: Philadelphia?

I. THE LORD.

Two words describe His character: He is "holy," and He is "true." The other tells us what He has: "the key of David." And we also see what He does with the key: He "openeth, and no man shutteth: and shutteth, and no man openeth."

In order to understand this expression we need to go back to Isa. 22:22 where we read,

And the key of the house of David
will I lay upon his shoulder;
so he shall open, and none shall shut;
and he shall shut, and none shall open.

Briefly, the situation was like this. A man by the name of Shebna, who had been the treasurer over the Lord's

house, was being replaced by the Lord. Shebna's replacement was Eliakim. But Eliakim was a type of the coming Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ Who is a perfect sense would have "the key of the house of David," being the rightful Heir of David's throne, the One Who would reign as the Messiah.

Every church needs to have this understanding of our Lord. He is "holy," so He is without sin. He is "true," so He is to be trusted. (Shebna in the OT was neither "holy" nor "true." He was not looking out for the people, but for himself.) AND IT IS THE LORD WHO DETERMINES WHAT THE MINISTRY OF HIS PEOPLE WILL BE. He opens some doors, and He closes other doors. And sometimes He opens doors that He had previously closed.

Do you remember Paul's request for himself which he sent to the Colossian church? You will find it in Col. 4:3, 4 where we read:

Withal praying also for us,
that God would open unto us a door of utterance,
to speak the mystery of Christ,
for which I am also in bonds:

That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
Paul knew that only the Lord can open doors, and that, until He opens them, they remain closed. He also knew, as John knew, that when the Lord opens a door, men cannot close it, and when He closes a door, men cannot open it. He is the Lord of open and closed doors!

Now, with that, let us turn our attention to:

II. THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA (Rev. 3:8-12).

I would take it that there were two main problems in the church at Philadelphia. The first is mentioned in verse 8; the second, in verse 10. One had to do with themselves; the other had to do with the Lord.

A. The two problems:

1. They were conscious that they had "a little strength." See verse 8.
2. The reference to "the word of thy patience" in verse 10 seems to be a reference to the fact that they could not understand why they had not seen the Lord doing something--probably to the opposition mentioned in verse 9.

These are very common problems among the Lord's

people. We see so much that needs to be done, but often the way is blocked. At the same time we seem to be facing problem after problem, but the Lord does not seem to be doing anything about them.

But look at the words in verse 8. It is very likely that no word from the Lord was more comforting to any of the churches than those words, "I know...."

Not only that, but the rest of verse 8 indicated that, as hard as the present circumstances were for the people to take, they were just what the Lord wanted them to be at that moment. We also see that He could change them whenever He sought to do so.

Verse 9 seems to indicate that they were being opposed by people professing to be the true people of God, but who were really of the Devil. They were liars. But evidently there were many in Philadelphia who believed them.

What had the church done?

The church had laid the matter before the Lord, and then waited. They had waited upon the Lord to fulfill His promises. Promises always call for patience. His Word is "the word of" His "patience." Sometimes it seems so foolish just to wait on the Lord. Those are times when we are inclined to start kicking doors in, and knocking walls down. But the Lord keeps us waiting. He has a work to do in us as well as a work to do for us, and through us. We are most concerned about the latter; the Lord is most concerned about the former--BUT NOT OBLIVIOUS TO THE LATTER!

This all led to:

B. The promises of the Lord (Rev. 3:10-12).

I can see six promises in these three verses.

1. Verse 10: "I will keep thee...."
2. Verse 11: "Behold, I come quickly...."
3. Verse 12: "Him that overcometh will I make...."
4. Verse 12: "I will write upon him
 - a. "The name of my God,

b. "And the name of the city of my God...

c. "And I will write upon him my new name."

Will you notice that all of these promises have to do with the end times, and then on into eternity? What does this tell us?

They tell us that the Lord is working with eternity in view. Most of the time we are only thinking of the here and the now; God is thinking about the glorious future that is ahead for those of us who know the Lord.

But there are a few other things that I want you to see in this letter.

C. The Lord's commendations.

Two are in the latter part of verse 8; a third is in the first part of verse 10.

1. They had kept His Word.
2. They had not denied His Name.
3. Like the first, only an enlargement upon it:
They had kept the Word of His patience.

There is no question but that obedience brings blessing. The OT teaches that, and so does the NT. We can never nullify the purpose of God by our unbelief or disobedience, but God blesses in special ways when we seek to do what He wants us to do, and do it in the way that He wants it to be done.

Finally, for the church at Philadelphia there was:

D. One exhortation (Rev. 3:11b).

The Lord did not say that the church needed to change. Instead, He encouraged them to keep on doing what they had been doing. The only change that might be needed was that they do it better and more heartily.

Last of all we come to:

III. THE GENERAL APPEAL (Rev. 3:13).

The Lord was not looking for opinions, nor a vote of

confidence, nor excuses. He wanted people who would listen to what He had to say, and then would let the matter rest there.

Did you ever stop to think about the fact that the Lord has given us two ears, but only one mouth. Therefore, He must expect us to do twice as much listening as we do talking--especially in our relationship with Him! This is the Spirit speaking. This is the Lord talking. How blessed we are if we have ears to hear what the Lord is saying to us even in letters that are addressed to others.

Concl: The mood in the twentieth century church is for action. We have more confidence in our methods than we do in the Word of God. Our plans have eliminated the need to wait on the Lord--so some people think! We give lip service to the Holy Spirit, but usually we are asking Him to do what we want to do instead of seeking our guidance from Him.

There are always going to be problems in the Lord's work--opposition, obstacles, troubles of various kinds. But we need to get our eyes on the Lord Who opens and closes doors, and get our ears attuned to His Word. Then, as we walk with Him, and wait for Him, we will see Him opening the way before us. And, if we keep "the word of his patience," we will see how the Lord uses His ways to prepare us for the greater things that await us in the glory that is to come.

THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS
Revelation 3:14-22

Intro: Almost everyone who has ever taught the Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia mentions that there is an interesting contrast between the letter to the church at Smyrna, and the letter to the church at Laodicea. Revelation 2:9 tells us that the church at Smyrna was a poor church that was rich; Revelation 3:17 tells us that the church at Laodicea was a rich church that was poor. The meaning is this:

- 1) The church at Smyrna was poor materially, but rich spiritually.
- 2) The church at Laodicea was rich materially, but poor spiritually.

And so we can say that:

- 1) Smyrna was a rich, poor church.
- 2) Laodicea was a poor, rich church.

It is only on a rare occasion, very rare, that you will ever find a rich, rich church. But there are a lot of poor, poor churches. There is something about material riches which militates against spiritual riches. Most of the time that you find a spiritually rich church, it will be where the financial needs are not easily met. But just because a church has money, it does not eliminate the possibility that it can also be rich spiritually.

Those of us who have been memorizing Colossians have learned much about Laodicea. The church met in the home of a man named Nymphas (Col. 4:15). It was a church which was prayed for regularly by the Apostle Paul (Col. 2:1, 2). Paul seemed to have been acquainted with the people in the church of Laodicea (Col. 4:15). Epaphras also had "a great zeal" for the Laodicean church which he also expressed in prayer (Col. 4:12, 13). The Colossian epistle was read to the Laodicean church, and probably also the Ephesian epistle (Col. 4:16).

The letters our Lord sent to the seven churches of Asia were written approximately 35 years after the Ephesian and Colossian epistles. By this time Paul was in heaven. And things seem to have undergone a great change in Laodicea. The change had to do with their financial condition as well as their spiritual condition. The finances were up; but spiritual life in Laodicea was down. And the Lord seemed to indicate that there was a relationship between the financial and the spiritual in what had happened.

It may have been, also, that the only one who was concerned about the situation was the Lord. That is suggested by the reference to the "eyesalve" in Rev. 3:18. The Apostle John would have been concerned, too, after receiving the

revelation containing this letter. Let us notice, first of all, how the Lord described Himself.

I. THE LORD'S SELF-DESCRIPTION (Rev. 3:14).

The Lord used three titles:

- 1) "The Amen."
 - 2) "The Faithful and True Witness."
 - 3) "The Beginning of the Creation of God."
- What do they mean?

A. "The Amen." Cf. Rev. 1:18.

This title may have been taken from the Lord's often-repeated, "Verily, verily, I say unto you...." These words spoke of the divine authority of our Lord, and the truthfulness of whatever He said.

It probably also is explained by Paul's words in 2 Cor. 1:20,

For all the promises of God in him are yea,
and in him Amen,
unto the glory of God by us.

It also may have a connection with Isa. 65:16 where God is called, "the God of truth" (Amen).

B. "The Faithful and True Witness." Cf. Rev. 1:5.

This indicates that the counsel and rebuke (vv. 18, 19) given by the Lord "however surprising and unwelcome, are therefore to be laid to heart as authoritative" (Moffatt, James, EGT, V, 370). The Lord never gives false guidance, nor does He ever state more than is absolutely necessary.

C. "The Beginning of the Creation of God."

This is similar to Paul's expression in Col. 1:15, "the firstborn of every creature." Both expressions identify the Lord as the Creator, that He existed prior to creation, and that, as creation itself would show, He is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful. He Who created all things had His church in mind when He did it, and His purposes will not and cannot fail.

As in the case of all of the other letters, the proper identification of the Lord in each case prepares the churches to receive what the Lord had to say.

II. THE LORD'S STATE-OF-THE-CHURCH MESSAGE (Rev. 3:15-17).

The President gives a state-of-the-union message; our governor gives a state-of-the-state message; the Lord was describing the state-of-the-Laodicean-church message.

- A. It was a busy church: "I know thy works" (v. 15).
- B. It was a lukewarm church (vv. 15, 16). Zeal was gone; indifference was the prevailing mood. They weren't hot; they weren't cold. Either of these would have been better than what they were. What they were sickened the Lord.
- C. It was a carnal, self-satisfied church (v. 17). Their talk was greater than their walk. If they felt that they did not need anything, you can be sure that their prayer meeting was not well-attended (if indeed they had a prayer meeting), and there probably was very little praying going on in their private lives, in their homes!
- D. It was a church where ignorance of their true state prevailed (v. 17).

In spite of all that they were doing, and in spite of all that they had, this was a church greatly in need of a revival. Things had been better in the past, but there had been a great slide!

III. THE LORD'S COUNSEL (Rev. 3:18-20).

Now we can begin to see why the Lord identified Himself in verse 14 as He did. Think of what the twentieth century church would have done to get things going again. The Lord is usually the last One we confer with, if we seek His counsel at all.

The Lord's counsel is right because He is "The Amen." He would not overload the church with counsel, nor would He misguide them in any way. He is "the Faithful and True Witness." And since He is "the Beginning of the Creation of God," there is no one who could surpass our Lord in wisdom and power.

Let us look at His counsel.

- A. They were to look to Him, the Lord, not to themselves, nor to some self-proclaimed expert.
- B. They needed true riches: "gold tried in the fire." Cf. 1 Pet. 1:6, 7. They needed to pay attention to the strengthening of their faith. The way faith is

strengthened is not by seminars, but by trials and testings. We are not to seek for troubles, but we are to expect them if our faith is to be strengthened.

- C. They need to give attention to their need for holiness (v.18). It is a shame when the people of God are not clothed in white. Sins needed to be forsaken, and they needed to "put on" the things which are becoming to a child of God.
- D. Their spiritual vision needed to be corrected (v. 18). The Holy Spirit is the One Who enables us to "see" the Word, to understand the truth of Scripture.
- E. They need to repent with zeal (v. 19). In their present state they would have repented lukewarmly. The Lord wanted to see true grief for these things to which they were not paying any attention. The people in the church at Laodicea needed to show real sorrow for their departure from the Lord.

Finally, and that which was the object of all that the Lord had said up to this point:

- F. There needed to be a restoration of personal fellowship with the Lord (v. 20).

We would probably be surprised at how few there are among professing Christians who regularly meet alone with the Lord. I hope we would not be shocked to find out that there are many at Trinity Bible Church who have no daily time with the Lord. The invitation is to all, but the Lord's words were obviously designed to appeal to every individual believer. (Note the singular pronouns throughout v. 20.)

IV. THE LORD'S PROMISE AND FINAL APPEAL (Rev. 3:21, 22).

Remember Who the Lord is. He cannot lie. He will not cause us to hope for more than He will eventually give us. Go back and review His names in v. 14. And then come and drink in the wonderful truth of this 21st verse.

Does this verse make you think of the request that the mother of James and John made for them, a request which they also made for themselves? Cf. Matt. 20:20-28. It had to do with the kingdom, but things in the kingdom will carry over into the eternal state.

For whom was that place prepared? For those who listen

to the message that the Lord gave to the Laodicean church, and who make their fellowship with the Lord the most important thing in their lives.

I doubt if the Lord was indicating to James and John and their mother that there will only be two seats reserved for two people, one on the right and the other on the left. We cannot imagine how big and great and glorious things will be in eternity. There will be room at the Lord's right hand and His left hand for all who overcome! The main question for us now, as it was for the Laodicean church in that day, is this: Are my ears really hearing what the Lord was saying? If so, then I am going to make the necessary changes in order to give the Lord Jesus Christ the place He deserves in my life.

Concl: Let me point out three things as I close, and I hope that all of us will take them to heart. Two of them go together; the third is related to them, but stands by itself.

The Lord said in this letter that we need to pay special attention to:

- 1) Our spiritual eyesight (v. 18b).
- 2) Our spiritual hearing (v. 22).

Seeing implies understanding; hearing implies doing. Have you eyes been opened today to some truth in the Word, or to some part of a truth, which you have not understood before as well as you do now? Have you heard, loudly and clearly, some truth in the Word which you have known, but have been neglecting. Every day we should be seeing; every day we should be hearing. This is to say that every day we should be growing in our understanding of the Word, and every day we should be increasing our obedience to the Lord.

May the Lord use this letter to the church of Laodicea to awaken us to our needs.

The last thing that I want to mention is this. Do you see that the Laodicean church, with all of their prosperity, and with all of their service, had been leaving the Lord out of their lives. That is why they were lukewarm. That is why they were not holy. That is why they were not seeing the truth. He loved them, but they did not really love Him. That is why they needed to repent.

One thing that is true of the epistles of Paul to the Ephesians and to the Colossians is that they are both full of Christ! In days gone by both of these epistles had been read, perhaps over and over again, in the church at Laodicea.

But they had forgotten how central the Lord is in our fellowship, in our understanding, in our obedience, and in our worship.

Let me ask you tonight: What place does the Lord have in your life? Have you been thinking about Him today? Have you had fellowship with Him? Do you really love Him, and can He see that you do by the obedience of your life?

Any church is in a spiritual slump regardless of how much that church might have, and regardless of how much that church might be doing, if Christ is on the outside on our hearts, looking in, knocking for admittance.

May God give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts that are responsive to the changeless message of this letter to the Laodicean church.