

These Things Saith He (Complete Work)

Introduction

Christianity has been around for some time now, and over the years, many ideas have developed about what it means to be a Christian. There are many sects or denominations within the Christian faith, and there have been many influential figures throughout our history. Among these include Holy-Spirit filled reformers, who when in-line with the Spirit of God, have led many away from corruption within the faith and toward greater union with Christ.

However, it is also true that many within the faith are not motivated by the Spirit of God, but by their own desires. Unfortunately, many corruptions remain, and the result has led to various troubles for the Christian collective, regardless of denomination or creed. Particularly in the West, there seems to be a great concern for younger generations who are leaving the faith in droves, and many actively seek to upend and even ban Christianity all together.

As our culture moves away from Christianity and toward various ideologies that directly oppose us, there is once again a divisive issue that we Christians must face. How should we deal with a seemingly dying Christian culture? There are numerous approaches that we could take. However, it is the opinion of the author of this book that the best approach is for us to get our own house in order, so to speak, and this is accomplished by putting Christ back in Christianity.

The purpose of *These Things Saith He* is to provoke thought concerning our current Christian establishments—but most importantly, our Christian way of life—by focusing on He who is the foundation of our Christian faith: Jesus Christ.

Perhaps if we can seek Jesus for His judgements concerning all that has been built in His Name, we might better understand our failings that make us vulnerable to the ways of our enemy. We might return to Jesus more fully and find God-given strength that enables us to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus and all that His Name means, no matter the cost.

In so doing, who knows what impact this could have on our society? Although we know that there will be a great apostacy and the coming of a false christ, we also know that the dragon is gravely wounded. If revival is God's will, then let us have it fervently. If it is God's will that the time of our enemy comes, and along with this great Christian persecution, then let us march into that time bravely and in faith. Let us wound the dragon to the best of our ability because this is what courageous people of God do.

This might seem like an overly ambitious and futile endeavor. Perhaps even vain, foolish, and unnecessary. However, we are not left without cause for such a pursuit, nor are we left without instruction.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ provides cause in His letters to the Seven Churches of Revelation. Five of the seven are rebuked, and they face dire threats. The churches are described as

candlesticks, and in Chapter 11 of Revelation, we can see that only two candlesticks remain. What happened to the other five? Perhaps they repented and became as the two that were not rebuked. Or perhaps their areas of unfaithfulness unrepented of led them away into the deception of the false prophet, thus forming the Great Whore of Mystery Babylon.

The point of this book is not to condemn believers, but to bring into remembrance He who is the Lord of us all. In so doing, we are built up together in Christ. As for our instruction, we are going to consider the letters Jesus writes by His Spirit to the seven churches, and we will glean what lessons we might learn based on the foundation that was laid by Jesus and the apostles.

Each of these letters begin with the statement, “These things saith He.” This statement is followed by descriptive attributes of Jesus—attributes that point to key characteristics of His Holy Being. He does this for a reason. Jesus is Lord. When He comes first, all else follows suit.

If we truly put Jesus first and if we are willing to consider all that has been built in His name over the many generations within the faith, then we can kindle the fires of judgement, repentance, and renewal as those who are preparing themselves for His return—a return that burns brighter than the sun, burning all untrue and unholy things with the flames of Truth. According to our God-given ability, we can stand against all manner of false christs—including those within the faith and those without—boldly, unafraid, and willing to sacrifice all that is required of us for His Name’s sake.

His Kingdom will come, and this Kingdom is made up of the faithful church—not the church built with hands—but the church that is you and me. We are a body of believers, and Jesus is the temple of God. If the Spirit of God is in us, then we are joined together in Jesus Christ Who is the head of His perfect body and the chief corner stone of His house in which we reside forever. There is no meaningful division among us, and there is nothing that we cannot face together. If God is for us, then who can be against us?

Method of Interpretation

There are several ideas about how prophecy should be interpreted, and this is a subject that one can research on their own. The perspective taken within the contents of “These Things Saith He” is based on this idea:

God does not look at things from the same perspective as man does. Man often looks at the outer appearance of a matter. God looks at the heart and spirit of the matter. The laws of the Kingdom of God according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ provide great examples of this. For example, murder and adultery are not just physical acts. They begin in the heart. See Matthew Chapter 5.

When interpreting prophecy, it seems that the most beneficial method of interpretation deals with the heart, or spirit, of what is written. This method is most beneficial because it yields lessons that we can apply to our lives as Christians, and these lessons are timeless.

Rather than getting hung up on times, place names, and whether prophecy is for the past, present, or future, we can consider the undying messages that our Lord, Jesus is speaking to us by the Holy Spirit.

“Heaven and Earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.” – Jesus Christ

His words are everlasting and worthy of our attention, and His words are useful when applied to the spirit of the person hearing them. “If any man has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.”

Lord willing, we will do our utmost to “hear” what the Spirit is saying to the churches of Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 so that we can see our sin clearly and repent, find areas of that need to be made stronger, and seek Jesus so that we can stand with Him against all that would make war against His Kingdom.

This process starts with the corruptions of our own heart and the foul spirits that have invaded much of our Christian establishments. We do so in faith, trusting in the blood of the Lamb of God as we boldly approach Him for guidance and mercy.

The grace of God is with all who are chosen for His purposes in Jesus Christ, so we trust in Him. With trust and a desire to grow in faithfulness to our Redeemer and Lord, we look for a “city wherein righteousness dwells.” We begin by looking to ourselves, not to condemn one another, but to strengthen the called of God in this present time.

Therefore, the contents of “These Things Saith He” does not focus on churches of any specific name, time, or place. Rather, the aim considers over-arching ideas that are taught in the letters to the seven churches of Revelation. With these ideas in mind, we can evaluate all that we have built in the Name of Jesus including our individual lives and all manner of Christendom at large.

This being said, it is not the intent of the author to create an interpretation to end all interpretations. The interpretations within this book are largely based on life experiences of the author and the personal convictions that the Holy Spirit graciously provided. Therefore, there could be bias, as is often the case when man is mingled with the Spirit, and there is certainly much more that could be said than that which is covered in this book. However, this is written in good faith, and it is the belief of the author that the writing of this book coincides with a prayer that was answered with demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit received by the author in January of 2016.

Any who reads this book is encouraged to seek the Holy Spirit, ask for ears to hear, and discover what might be revealed to him or her personally.

Symbolism and Phrases Used in the Letters to the 7 Churches

Prophetic symbols and phrases convey ideas and meaning that goes beyond natural understanding. Some of these symbols are explained explicitly while others are not, leaving room for interpretation based on what is revealed in scripture and by the Spirit of God.

This chapter considers the interpretation of symbols and phrases seen throughout the letters to the seven churches of Revelation as found in Revelation Chapters 2-3. These include:

- Seven Stars and Seven Golden Candlesticks
- The Synagogue of Satan
- The Doctrine and Deeds of the Nicolaitans

The Seven Stars and the Seven Golden Candlesticks

The seven stars and seven golden candlesticks are introduced in Revelation Chapter 1. The meaning of this symbol is also given.

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches (Revelation 1:20).

The letters to the seven churches are written to the stars—or angels—of the seven churches.

The word, “angels” is translated from the Greek word, “aggelos.” This word means, *messenger*. This is generally used to describe a supernatural messenger.

The assertion made within “These Things Saith He” is that these messengers are not celestial beings exactly, but more like those we read about in Paul’s second epistle to the Corinthians:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Corinthians: 13-15).

As it is written, there are many false christs—many “Lucifers” also translated as “bright stars” and “sons of the dawn.” These attempt to usurp the roll of Jesus Christ who is the True Bright and Morning Star. Jesus Christ is the Angel of the Lord, and only He.

However, as you can read in Revelation Chapters 2-3, there are letters written to two of the angels that do not contain rebuke, and those who are led by them are not rebuked. These are ministers appointed by the Lord, Jesus Christ—and not of man or of the Adversary, also known as the Dragon, the Serpent, the Devil, and Satan:

“The son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2).

“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14).

But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days (Mark 13:15-20).

It is the belief of the Author of this book that these two faithful stars are not two individuals in any strict sense, because there have been many faithful leaders within Christianity and there are many among us today. Rather, these serve as a prophetic archetype that provides insight into what a faithful Christian minister should look like.

The Synagogue of Satan

“The synagogue of Satan” is mentioned in the letters to the angels of the seven churches. These are *“the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie.”*

A synagogue of Satan is a gathering together of the followers of Satan and his ministers. Why are these called Jews? There are a few ways one might look at this.

First, consider this scripture:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God (Romans 2:28-29).

The opposite could be true for a synagogue of Satan. These are those who are outwardly religious, yet inwardly corrupt. These walk after the ways of the world and judge as according to the flesh and not the Spirit. These also seek glory for themselves and not for the Lord.

Jesus also said this:

I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father.

Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:38-44).

Here are additional scriptures to consider:

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee (Romans 11:16-18).

As Christians, we are grafted into the natural olive tree, as Paul the apostle writes of in Romans 11. In that sense, we are Jews if we follow the Messiah of the Jews: Jesus Christ. If we claim to be Christians, but do not follow Jesus, then we are as those who claim to be Jews but are not.

We could also consider the idea that Christians are waiting for a Holy City: New Jerusalem. We might claim to be of that city falsely. This can occur in a spiritual sense as those who do not follow Jesus but instead follow Satan. This can also occur in a literal sense should the false christ establish his rule in the physical city of Jerusalem, which the scriptures seem to indicate, as seen above.

The Doctrine and Deeds of the Nicolaitans

In following suit with the ideas above, it is the opinion of the author of "These Things Saith He" that the "deeds" and "doctrine of the Nicolaitans" refers to the doings and teachings of carnal Christianity: the synagogue of Satan.

What do these teachings and deeds include? The letters to the angels of the seven churches reveal specific problems that we can consider, all of which leave one vulnerable to the devices of Satan, the beast system of Revelation, and the deception of the false prophet.

In Conclusion

There are many *“false apostles and deceitful workers”* that lead many astray from the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the synagogue of Satan, and in the end, part of the Great Whore of Mystery Babylon.

There are problems within the Christian world that make us prone to deception, and if we love these ways and not the truth of Jesus Christ, then we are prone to deception. However, there is time to repent, and we do so in faith, knowing that all who are truly called of God in Jesus Christ will overcome because He overcame already, and He is faithful to perform His work in us. Even if we are currently in line with false teachings and lifestyles that make up the Great Whore of Mystery Babylon, we can turn away from sin and towards the immaculate mercy of Jesus.

Although the false christ has not appeared in fullness, and neither has the Great Whore, *“the mystery of that wicked one does already work”* and we can *“come out of her my people that you partake not of her sins and receive not of her plagues.”*

Jesus is very merciful, slow to anger, and quick to kindness. He is faithful and He will not lose a single soul that belongs to Him. Read John 8. There was a woman caught in the very act of adultery, and Jesus forgave her. Many of us are or have been the same, in a spiritual sense, as it pertains to our betrothal to Christ. Therefore, *“let he that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her.”*

There is another idea to keep in mind as we move forward: *“Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.”*

It can be easy to look at the failings of the Christian world, but if it were not for our history, we would not be who we are. There seems to be a trend in our culture that eagerly tears down all establishments that came before us with a self-righteous and vindictive manner. It is easy for those who never built anything to tear down what others worked hard to build. This is not the aim of the author of this book. It is more profitable if we look to our own heart, pray for one another, and built one another up. It is the Great Whore who is “drunken with the blood of saints.”

If we pay attention to the timeless lessons of our Lord, Jesus as given in the letters to the seven churches and throughout the entirety of the gospels and the epistles of the true apostles of Jesus Christ, then we can repent and turn our hearts to Jesus more fully.

Though we are forgiven of sin by grace through faith in the blood of the Lamb of God, a heart that is not towards Him does not have faith in Him. We can be forgiven truly and completely. Yet, as Jesus said to the woman taken in adultery, *“go and sin no more.”*

These Things Saith He unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

³ And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

⁴ Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

⁶ But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

⁷ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Revelation 2:1-7).

These things saith He

that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

This is a statement that reveals important attributes of Christ. We see that Jesus has authority and control over the servants of God, and Jesus, who is one with God, walks among them.

Jesus Holds all Servants of God in His Hand.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My

Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." **[i]**

Jesus holds the servants of God in His right hand—the hand that is symbolic of strength and control. The idea of God holding all things in His hand—particularly His servants—is a theme that repeats throughout the scripture. Below are a few examples. These are beautiful scriptures that attest to the nature of God towards His servants, and we can gain more insight by considering these in context. Explore further for your personal edification:

Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness (Isaiah 41:9-10).

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me (Psalm 139:7-10).

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me (Isaiah 49:16).

The above scriptures are encouraging for those who serve Jesus and need reassurance of the fact that He holds them up and He will not forsake them. However, there is another side to the control that Jesus has over His servants.

Not all that Jesus has chosen to serve Him are ordained by God to become the sons of God. Some servants that Jesus holds are created to betray Christ and those who follow Him. Judas Iscariot is an example of this. *"Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve."* **[ii]**

We might wonder why God would choose some servants to serve Him faithfully and choose others to betray Him. Paul the Apostle acknowledges this in his epistle to the Romans. *"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"* **[iii]**

Here are additional scriptures that demonstrate this attribute of God as He who ordains some to be servants of honor and some servants of dishonor. Explore these scriptures in context yourself for a more well-rounded and informed understanding:

The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil (Proverbs 16:4).

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Peter 9).

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth (Romans 9:17-18).

Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants (Psalm 119:89-91).

“For all are thy servants.” This is an important statement that summarizes all the points made so far. Whether a minister of God (a star) is created for honor or dishonor, for faithful service or for betrayal, they are created by Him and for His purposes—and His purposes are always good because He is good, and all things are coming together for the good of the servants who truly love Him. *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” [iv]*

Whether a servant is created for honor or for dishonor, God is glorified and in full control. On one hand, this idea can be reassuring. We know that if we are chosen by God to become the sons of God, then nothing can stand in the way. We can also have peace that is not shattered by corruption within the faith, because we know that all things serve a good purpose. For example, *“there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” [v]*

On the other hand, the idea of God’s sovereignty over His servants can cause fear. We might fear that we are created to be vessels of wrath. However, if the love of Jesus is true and sincere in us—if we hear the words of Jesus and want to grow in our understanding and ability to live as He would have us to live—then that is a good indicator that He is for us. If the Spirit of Truth is in us, then we are the children of God in the making, and He will cause the Christ-like nature to grow in us throughout the course of our lives. *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” [vi]*

Therefore, it seems fitting that Christians should fear God and thank Him also, knowing that there are some created for destruction, and it is by grace alone that any would have a different fate. It is appropriate for us to fear Him, but we trust in Him also. We are His work. He upholds us, and no one can take us away from God—a God who not only has full control over His servants, but also walks among them.

Jesus Walks Among His People.

Jesus walked among us as an obedient Son to the Father. He walks with us as the Spirit of God lives within us. He is always fully present. He sees all things and He knows all things because the Son, the Father, and the Holy Ghost are God.

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” [vii]

Jesus is the word of God who became flesh and dwelled among us. [viii] This is important for a few reasons. Firstly, this important because of the gospel. Jesus, the Son of God, lived as one of us, died for us, and now lives. Through faith in Him, we are saved from death.

It is remarkable that God—the Creator of all things and He who upholds all things—would humble Himself to such a degree as to become human like us. Being made human like us, He has compassion for us, and He understands the weakness that we all have due to our sinful nature—though He was without sin because He is not merely flesh but God, and God cannot sin. [ix]

Not only did God humble Himself in becoming human, but He further humbled Himself to allow mere men to crucify Him, and He did this on behalf of those who would believe in Him. This is a God that loves His people, even to the point of sacrificing Himself for us.

However, having sacrificed Himself for us, He is even more justified in having full authority over His servants. [x] The knowledge that Jesus walks among the candlesticks is also important because this demonstrates that Jesus is God, specifically as we refer to Old Testament scriptures about God walking among His people. Consider the fuller context for a picture of the judgment, justice, and mercy of God:

Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee (Deuteronomy 23:12-14).

And I set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it (Leviticus 26:11-16).

We might refer to Old Testament scripture concerning God walking among us, like Leviticus 26, and see that those who despise the commandments of God and break His covenant are sorely punished. In Christ, we have a new and better covenant.

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them (Hebrews 10:16).”

For the Christian who follows the new covenant, the commandments that we follow are summarized as loving God with all your might and loving your neighbor as yourself. **[xi]**

The new covenant was paid for by the blood of Jesus and we continue with Him in faith, knowing that our sins are forgiven and that He will fulfill all promises that He made to us—promises that result in our adoption as sons of God and life from the dead.

This adoption hinges on God with us, specifically Jesus who is the Son of God who died for our sins, now resides in heaven, and whose teachings we strive to be faithful to. Jesus taught that if we strive to keep His commandments, then He would send the Holy Spirit to us. By the Holy Spirit, God is both with us and now, most importantly, He is *within* us. **[xii]** The same Spirit that conceived Jesus in Mary’s womb indwells us, and we too can become the sons of God.

With the Spirit of God within us, we have the *“earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”* **[xiii]** The Spirit of God reveals the things of Jesus to us, searches our hearts for sin, encourages repentance, and provides us with strength to do as our Father would have us to do—which is to keep the commandments of God and remain faithful to the teachings of His Son, Jesus.

The commandments of God and faith towards Jesus matter greatly. Although we are not under the old covenant, we are dealing with the same God—a God of mercy but also a God of judgement and justice who should be feared.

Jesus lived with us. He died for us. He lives and He has full control over all things, and He will reign forever in righteous judgement and justice.

Jesus is our God, and He has a lot to say by the words He spoke and by the Spirit that dwells with and within us. He is worthy to be heard, so let us explore what Jesus has to say to Ephesus.

“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

Jesus is in control of all, and He is aware of what His servants are up to. As for the Church of Ephesus, Jesus seems to praise them for their hard work and endurance as they stand against false apostles and general evil within in the church. However, they have “lost their first love.” What is their first love, and how did they lose it?

As followers of Jesus, we should take a stand for what is true. For example, Apostle Paul instructs the Corinthians to beware of “false apostles” and “deceitful workers.” [xiv] In His epistles to Timothy, he instructs that sound doctrine should be enforced, gives details about what it means to be a faithful minister of the gospel, and He calls some people out by name “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.” [xv] Paul’s epistle to Titus provides additional instruction pertaining to the conduct and requirements of Christian ministers.

Paul also instructs the Romans to take notice of and stay away from those who *cause “divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”* [xvi] When writing to the Romans, Paul also addresses “doubtful disputations” that cause unnecessary division, including things like eating meat verses herbs and observing the sabbath. [xvii]

With these ideas in mind, along with the attributes of Christ mentioned previously (His authority over His servants as He who walks among them all), we might be able to understand what the Ephesians’ “first love” is and how they lost it.

There is a time for standing up for what is true and good. Doing so requires a lot of work and patience, especially when done in the face of great opposition. However, when being factually right and tearing down those who disagree with us becomes most important, we can lose sight of what matters most: Jesus Himself and His commandments—commandments to love God and one another.

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it,

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37-40)."

It is loving to lead people away from sin and away from false teachings. It is loving to point out false teachers that cause the faith of others to falter. *"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him."* [xviii] However, this should be done out of love of Christ and the brethren. If that love is replaced with a love of bringing people down and raising yourself or others up as better, then the person delivering the rebuke needs a rebuke themselves.

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

As Christians, we should strive to continue in the love of Jesus Christ. When we fall away from that, all that we do is corrupted. Therefore, to Ephesus, the church above all others (in their estimation), "I will remove your candlestick out of his place." This might not be surprising when we consider another attribute of God: He *"resists the proud and gives grace to the humble."* [xix]

Therefore, we should humble ourselves before God—He who we all see "as through a glass darkly." None of us have all understanding, so we should retain patience with our brethren so long as the faith is not hindered, trusting in Jesus to return, and set all things right.

When Jesus returns, errors in Christian doctrine will be resolved and we have reason to believe that grace is extended to those who humbly misunderstood non-salvation issues while showing love towards God and others. Grace is also extended to those who patiently wait on the judgment of the Lord instead of becoming quick to take judgment into their own hands wrongly. Paul addressed this idea very well in one of his epistles to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 13

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

² *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

³ *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

⁴ *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

⁵ *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

⁶ Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

⁸ Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

¹⁰ But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

¹² For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

¹³ And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”

Although the Church of Ephesus is rebuked, Jesus acknowledges one thing that they have right, and this is that they hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which God also hates. As explained further in **The Symbolism**, it is the opinion of the author that the Nicolaitanes refers to the worldly church.

There is a time for hate. We should love righteousness and hate iniquity, just as God does. Ephesus has not confused good and evil, and they take a stand against evil and support that which is good. In a world that calls evil good and good evil, this is a righteous and necessary endeavor that requires a lot of labor and patience, and the ability to stand firm and not faint in the face of opposition.

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

From the beginning, man has killed man with their knowledge of good and evil that came from a forbidden tree. Because of this, man must die. In Jesus we have forgiveness and the promise of eternal life within a truly righteous kingdom.

We cannot build paradise using our own knowledge and strength. We cannot build paradise by joining with this world and the ways of this world that destroy all who stand in its way. We wait on our first love, Jesus Christ. He will come and He will make all things right.

However, the Wicked One comes first—and He “was and was not and yet is.” He tempts us using our pride, self-righteous indignation, resentment, fear, and impatience. When He comes in a full way, the spirit of Ephesus unrepented of leaves this church vulnerable to great deception. If we

follow the spirit of Ephesus, we are already fallen away from the grace of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ in some measure.

It is good to know that Jesus overcame the world already, and we will overcome also if we continue to put our faith in Him. However, because we trust in Him, we know that God is not someone to trifle with, so we fear Him also—and this is good—because God gives mercy to those that fear Him grace to the humble.

We must humble ourselves to know that we depend on He who holds us all in His hand, and He will complete His work in us and in our brothers and sisters in Christ. He will also judge us, and this is His right, because He alone lived a human life as one of us and died for the forgiveness of our sins. He showed us mercy, so we should instruct others with love, gentleness, and self-control with a desire to show mercy as much as possible. Then, when a sharp rebuke is needed, Christ Himself is in it by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, and the words spoken are just.

Before we can rebuke others, we must remember what Jesus said about removing the beam out of our own eye. We should honestly evaluate ourselves first and others last as one who loves the word of God, respects His righteous judgment, and as one whose first love is Jesus Christ Himself and by extension, our brethren in Christ.

That's a lot of words, but what does this look like practically?

Concern for Present-Day Ministers of Jesus

Remaining humble before God knowing that we all see in part and know in part is key. It is also critical to know which doctrines are truly matters of salvation, and not something that is merely a pillar in the temple of our favored form of institutionalized Christianity—all of which will all come to nothing once Jesus returns because these are not His true church. Are we loyal to them or to Him?

The true church is not a building or a set of certain doctrines that makes one loyal to a particular Christian sect—sects that often view themselves as being more Christian than another. The true church is in spirit, made of those who worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. What does it mean to worship in spirit and in truth? This means we submit ourselves to God out of a sincere heart that seeks Him in faith. If we sincerely desire Him and seek Him, then He will reveal the issues that matter most to us, and He will rebuke our petty divisions and our love of our Christian sects of all scopes and apologetic ministries that so often exalt themselves higher than He.

In relation to this, we will learn that Jesus expects His ministers to stand up for the truth, but the truth includes ideas like:

Rebuke in the spirit of meekness.

With what judgement you judge, you will be judged.

What do you have that you did not receive from God?

We all see God in part.

We do not want to be old wine skins.

God resists the proud and gives grace and mercy to the humble.

None is higher than He, and all things are created by Him for His honor and glory.

Concern For Christian Brethren Generally

It seems that we overcome by putting Jesus first so that we avoid being led by ministers who would cause the candlesticks that they are responsible for to be removed. Although stronger judgment is reserved for leaders, every Christian holds individual responsibility for their relationship with Jesus.

To that end, it is a good idea to remain humble before Jesus, knowing that all the brethren are doing what they can to seek Him, and they look for Him by looking to various leaders in the faith with who we might disagree at times.

As for ourselves, we can trust that God is in control, and He will lead us to faithful ministers if we put Him first. He must come before our loyalty to ministers and Christian denominations and sects of all varieties. We must also strive to get to a place in our Christian development in which Jesus is our teacher and master in all things.

Although we need to surround ourselves with believers because we need continual support in the things of God, we do not need to be continually led about by others. We need to mature, and to mature, we need to learn to rely on Jesus more and on man less.

As for rebuking our brethren, this is needful at times. It is also needful to stand up for things that are good and true in general. However, all things should be done in love and as gently as possible. If harsh words are needed, then these words should come from the Holy Spirit and not from us, or else we might experience some chastening from the Lord who does not tolerate those who are spiritually drunken with self-righteous indignation.

What if a person has trouble with over-reacting to the sins of others or otherwise jumping to harsh rebuke? There could be many reasons why this happens. Sometimes this is learned behavior and sometimes this is a trauma response that is hard to break. In all struggles with sin that we have, honesty and a sincere desire to do right is important. If we are honest about our sin and seek Jesus and the person we harm for forgiveness and attempt to make things right, then grace covers us. We all have room to grow in Christ, and the troubles that are addressed in the letter to the church of Ephesus are common to many.

In Conclusion

It is by grace that we all stand, and if the grace of God is for us, who can be against us? Why do we judge one another who stand by grace through faith in Jesus Christ?

Many judgments within the household of the faith concern secondary or tertiary issues of which many within the faith disagree. With these judgments, we begin to excuse and condemn one another. We begin to consider ourselves to be more righteous than another—forgetting that the righteousness we hold is not of our own works, but of the works of Jesus and the perfect life He sacrificed for us.

There is a time for taking a stand against corruption within the Christian faith and within this world in general. However, this must be done with diligence and great care to ensure that the judgments we make are just and needful lest we find ourselves falling under the weight of our own judgments.

If we want gracious judgment, we must give gracious judgment as much as this is possible.

This begins by learning to weigh what matters most for us as Christians.

What teachings are indeed necessary for salvation? It is not difficult to connect any teaching we like to the issue of salvation, but if we seek the Spirit to help, He will show us how to remove our biases so that we can judge rightly—not according to the corruptions of our spirit—but according to the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit.

When all else fails, we can fall back on Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the forgiveness of sins. Of course, much is built upon this, and as Paul the apostle instructs, we must “take heed what you build,” and what are we building if not Christ-like Christians? We might have some debate about what it means to be Christ-like, but to a large degree we should be of one mind and one spirit by the unity of the Holy Spirit.

However, when dealing with our brethren—and we must remember that they are brethren, and Jesus upholds and walks among them—taking the most humble and gracious position will not be frowned upon by our Lord. He would rather that we stand up for what we believe is true, with a willingness to agree to disagree on secondary and tertiary issues, than for us to fuel accusation, slander, division, and strife within His house.

We must have faith, knowing that if the grace of God is for us, then He will work all knowledge in us and our brethren according to His perfect timing and methods by the Spirit of God in us. We do not have to force the matter.

In humility, we can accept that none of us knows all truth as we should know it, and one day we will. We can accept that every Christian will give an account of themselves to Jesus, and He will set all things right. When He does, it is likely that we will be amazed at His judgments, fall on our faces before Him, and thank Him for how incredibly patient, gracious, and merciful He is with us all.

This idea applies to more than the household of the faith. However, judgement begins from within and thereby we can have the right heart as we go out into the world, doing the work of our Lord and not the works of this world.

To that end, we have things to overcome as well.

When dealing with contentious issues, we need to remember Who we serve first. From large-scale conflicts on the national and global sphere to daily disagreements with people in our lives, Jesus comes before our worldly disputes—and He would have us to deal with one another in a fashion that mirrors His dealings with us.

It is not wrong to test ideas, sift the good from the bad, and take a stand for what is right. However, if we are not doing so with the leading of God and His Spirit according to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, then we have “left our first love” in pursuit of another.

How should we deal with people during disagreements? We should be quick to listen and slow to speak, quick to mercy and slow to wrath, humble in our own righteousness and wisdom and gracious towards the goodness and intelligence of those with who we disagree.

Stand up for what is right. Rebuke evil. However, do so in love, self-control, and the goal of persuasion instead of the goal of condemning others as you exalt yourself because of how right you are. Repay no one evil for evil but do good to all and trust in God who is the Avenger. Hope in mercy.

This is a high calling, but with persistence we can learn to stand up for what is right and in the right way. We can seek the Lord to forgive us of our pride, anger, resentments, fear, envy, and all other evils of the heart and spirit. Jesus knows our frame and He forgives. He can see when we value what is right according to His Spirit as we wrestle with the sins of our flesh.

However, let us not deceive ourselves. Seek the Spirit to test our hearts, reveal things to us, and lead us to repentance by the patience of God that we all need. Seek strength to perform that which is not natural to man. What is natural to man is to kill, steal, and destroy for the sake of what man deems to be right, good, and true. This is not the Christian way, and this is not the way of the gospel: a gospel of peace and grace through faith in our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Thanks to God for His mercy and love that covers our sins. If we are honest about our shortcomings pertaining to the Church of Ephesus, then we can trust in the forgiveness paid for by the Son and the power of the Spirit to help us overcome.

Additional Scriptures when Considering the Letter to the Church of Ephesus

Below are additional scriptures that helped to inform the author’s understanding of the letter to the Church of Ephesus. The key scriptures are noted for simplicities sake, but the reader will gain more when reading these in their full context, looking at the whole chapter at the least.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you (John 1:9-12).

Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes (1 John 8-11).

Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (James 3:13-18).

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Romans 12:1-3).

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians: 26-31).

[i] John 10:27-30 [ii] John 6:70-71 [iii] Romans 9:19-21 [iv] Romans 8:28 [v] 1 Corinthians 11:19 [vi] Philippians 1:6

[vii] Matthew 1:23, Isaiah 7:14 [viii] John 1 [ix] Hebrews 4 [x] Philippians 2 [xi] Mark 12:30-31 [xii] John 14

[xiii] Ephesians 1:14 [xiv] 2 Corinthians 11 [xv] Timothy 1:18-19 [xvi] Romans 16:17-18 [xvii] Romans 14

[xviii] Leviticus 19:17 [xix] Proverbs 3, James 4, 1 Peter 5 [xx] Matthew 24:48-51

These Things Saith He unto the Angel of the Church in Smyrna

⁸ And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

⁹ I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

¹⁰ Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

¹¹ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death (Revelation 2:8-11).

These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

This statement identifies Jesus as the greatest of all and the least of all, and as He who overcame death. These are important attributes that equate Jesus with God and provides comfort for those who serve Him with humility and suffer for His sake.

Jesus is the Greatest and the Least.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [i]

There is no one who can be as great as Jesus and there is none who can be made as low as Jesus, because there is no other who is God made flesh, who died for sinful man—yet Himself had no sin. [ii] His death was humiliating, excruciating, and done out of love for the Father—He who is also greatest and least, because the Father is above all, and none sacrificed more than He who sacrificed His one and only Son.

There is none who is more obedient to the Father than the Son, and there is none who deserves obedience, yet does not get it as He should, than Jesus. There is no one that is more well-known and there is no one that is not known as well as He deserves to be known. There is none that is more truthful than He who is born of the Spirit of Truth, yet there is none who endures more slander. There is none who loves more, and there is none who is more hated.

Hatred of Jesus reveals hatred of God, because the Son could only do what His Father gave Him to do. Those who hate the servants of Jesus also hate Jesus, because they can do nothing except that Jesus gives it. Those who are of the Spirit of God are the sons of God, and as Jesus said, “*as much as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it also unto me.*” [iii] There is none who continues to suffer more than Jesus, because He takes the suffering of His servants personally and with patience until it is time for Him to return and raise those who the Father gave Him.

There is no other who died and now lives, and there is none who can grant life from the dead other than Jesus. He is the first. He is the last. It is He who brought mercy to the gentiles, and it is He who will return to establish the throne of David in judgment and justice forever. [iv]

Here are additional scriptures that demonstrate Jesus as the greatest and the least. Take time as you are able to explore all scripture in context for a more comprehensive view:

Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God (Isaiah 44:6).

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Revelation 22:13).

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:3-6).

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:9-12).

Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:8-11).

When Jesus returns, the high are made low and the low are raised—and more specifically—those who are made so low as to die for His sake. This is He who comforts His faithful servants—He who is the servant of all, the King of all, the creator of all, and He who has the keys of hell and death.

Jesus is He Who Overcame Death.

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” [v]

Jesus lived as a man because He is fully man and fully God. When Jesus died, He experienced real death. His spirit went to the Father who gave it, and when the spirit is divided from the soul, the soul and body die. [vi] It is said that Jesus “tasted” death because He did not stay dead for long. He rose from the dead; He is alive to this day, and He is seated on the right hand of God the Father.

Because of His obedience to the Father, all the way to His death on the cross, Jesus received the keys of hell and death. Those who put their faith in Him will also live, because it is in His power to give them life after death. There is no other who can raise us from the dead bodily. Jesus also raises us from the dead spiritually as He forgives our sin, leads us to true righteousness, and causes His nature to grow in us so that we can become more like He is.

Below are some scriptures that deal with Jesus's death and resurrection, as well as His power to grant life to those who trust in Him:

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:20-23).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:50-54).

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it (Isaiah 25:8).

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever (Deuteronomy 32:39-40).

No person can be lower than God who became man, was hated by man, then died to save man. No person can be more exalted than the perfectly obedient Son who the Father has given all authority over death. Jesus is alive, and His words are given to comfort those who trust in Him, so let us consider what He has to say by His Spirit to the Church of Smyrna.

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

The Church of Smyrna mirrors Christ in that they are least and greatest, though not the least of all and greatest of all. Only Jesus Christ can hold that position, and He has full compassion and support for those who endure suffering on His behalf. They might be least in term of worldly gain, yet they are rich in the Kingdom of God. They are least in their view of themselves, but because they are “poor in spirit,” Christ has made the rich in His Holy Spirit.

Jesus acknowledges their works—presumably, the works that they do to serve and honor Him. He is also aware of their troubles and poverty, but as Jesus said during His earthly ministry, *“many that are first shall be last; and the last first.”* [vii] Though the Church of Smyrna is poor by the standards of this world, Jesus counts them as rich because they are rich towards Him, and He will exalt them in the Kingdom to come just as the Father exalted Him.

Jesus offers this encouragement because the suffering endured by the Church of Smyrna is worsened by the “synagogue of Satan.” Refer to **The Symbolism** for an explanation of what the synagogue of Satan might represent. Jesus is aware of the synagogue of Satan, and He acknowledges their blasphemy.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

This sounds similar to something else Jesus said: *“Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”* [viii]

When writing to the Church of Smyrna, Jesus mentions a specific instance of trial and persecution that some within this church experience. What is this ten-day tribulation that Jesus mentions? Is there a literal ten days or is this symbolic? Could this be like what we read about in Daniel 1? *“Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.”* This was not a trial unto death, but this is an example of the servants of God being tested for a ten-day period. These are the same servants who refused to bow to the idol of king Nebuchadnezzar, which is an example of all who fail to bow to unjust rulers and instead choose to trust Jesus to abide with them during persecution. See the story of the three Hebrew children in Daniel 3.

In any case, we know that this time of trouble comes at the hands of the devil, which means “slanderer.” The Church of Smyrna is encouraged to remain faithful to Jesus, even to the point of death, and He will give them a crown of life.

He who was dead and is alive comforts those who suffer and die for His sake. He understands their trouble, and He reassures them that their suffering does not go unnoticed or unrewarded. They are promised salvation from death and everlasting life that only He can provide.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

The Church of Smyrna has not received rebuke from Jesus, so what do they have to overcome? Facing persecution in any measure for the faith is challenging, and even more when death is certain. How much more difficult might this be when the world whole-heartedly follows wickedness, false prophets, and false saviors who slander, accuse, and persecute God’s people? Jesus said, *“many will kill you thinking they do God’s service, and this they will do because they have not known the Father nor me.” [ix]*

If the Church of Smyrna are mindful of Jesus—He who is the least of all and greatest of all and He who died for us and now lives—then they will find strength to endure for His sake by the power of the Holy Spirit within them. They will look to the cross and He who suffered extreme injustice on their behalf, and they will consider it an honor to suffer for His sake, because He will give them strength and peace to endure it. He will not allow them to be tempted beyond what they can handle, though they might feel as if they cannot handle it.

There is none who felt more forsaken than Jesus on the cross who said, *“My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me?”* Yet, the Father did not forsake Him, and Jesus will not forsake those who suffer and die for His sake—even if they might feel forsaken, and the synagogue of Satan will do everything they can to make sure that they feel as forsaken as possible.

Concern for Present-Day Ministers of Jesus

Having a small ministry does not mean that you are insignificant. It is better to be small and sincere in service—which seems to be the case very often—than to have a big-time ministry that is inflated by corruption. Man usually judges according to outward appearances, and these outward appearances of success are contrary to what God deems successful. Of course, sincere ministers know this already. However, it never hurts to be reminded.

The ministers of Satan are often the richest and the most popular, and no wonder, because the world loves its own. In reality, those who are faithful to Jesus are often the least in this world, but to Him they are great.

This does not mean there are no sincere ministers with a large reach or financial prosperity. Both the small and great that fear God are accepted by God, and all that are accepted by God are humbled before Him. Ministers who are great in this world yet humble before God are also as Smyrna, because what really matters is a heart that is “poor in spirit.” Meaning, the person is humble before God and acutely aware of how they can do nothing without Him.

There is another lesson that ministers might consider when reading the letter to the Church of Smyrna.

Encouraging Christians to endure suffering for the sake of Jesus is an important task for ministers of the faith. The degree of suffering varies depending on the culture in which we live, ranging from minor social pressures and ostracizing to more severe legal and social persecution to complete hostility and murder.

Instructing the brethren in how to endure suffering patiently and in faith encourages a soberness of mind that focuses one's heart on Jesus Christ, trusting in His promises and strength to make enduring all things for His sake possible.

It is a severe failure in ministry to forego this lesson, instead teaching that Jesus would not allow His servants to suffer because He only wants them to be prosperous in this world and therewith find happiness and contentment. What happens when a Christian is taught that God blesses the obedient and they never suffer, then suffering comes? Their faith is weakened, and even more so when false brethren are accusing their faith because of their suffering. They might question whether God is really with them or begin to deny the faith entirely as one who is as a "seed sown on stony ground."

The best way to instruct patience during suffering is to be an example yourself. Those who are faithful to the difficult teachings of Jesus can expect persecution by the world in varying degrees. The truth is offensive to those who hate God and especially those who hate Jesus and all that He stands for. Enduring persecution for the true testimonies of Jesus, despite the consequences, emboldens and strengthens those who look up to you, and there is a reward in heaven for those who would take care of His people and lead by example.

Concern for Christian Brethren Generally

Jesus says, *"blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* [x] Jesus also promised to strengthen and comfort us through the Holy Spirit that provides us with peace that can withstand the troubles of this life, even dire persecution. *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* [xi]

Jesus did not promise that we would avoid trouble in this world. *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* [xii]

As the world continues to reject Him and turn on those who love Him, Christians can expect to be hated vigorously and eventually persecuted to the point of death. However, the death that we experience is not lasting. Jesus will return and He will raise us from the dead, and His wrath is poured out on those who harmed His servants. His wrath is more severe than the wrath of man, and His death is everlasting death while the death of man is only temporary.

Christians are promised the resurrection for a reason, and that is because the world hates us just as they hated Jesus. They will kill us just as they killed Him if we keep His ways—ways that were true, good, and obedient to the Father. If we obey the Son as He obeyed the Father, then we could face death as He did. If so, then we will also live as He lives, because He has promised it, and we can trust in His word.

In Conclusion

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” [xiii]

As the world is overrun by unbelievers, Christians can expect persecution. However, Jesus tells us not to fear, but rather we should take comfort in knowing that our suffering results from our being called out of this world and into His service. We can also take comfort in knowing that the world hated Jesus first and He is sympathetic to our suffering.

Remembering this can be important when faced with times of great Christian persecution, especially when the Christian is accused of having incurred the wrath of God because of their sin. Remember Job.

This is especially true when false saviors come, particularly the false christ. Many will believe that this is God, including many professing believers of Jesus. As they enjoy prosperity that comes with their allegiance to this false god, they mock those who do not worship this false god and instead accept poverty, persecution, and death.

The current Christian notion that Jesus only wants us to live a comfortable and prosperous life will be very useful for this false christ regime.

Therefore, let us remember what Jesus and the apostles said about Christian suffering. Especially as it pertains to the suffering that results from remaining faithful to our Lord, Jesus within an ungodly world that turns on Him, embraces falsehoods, and eventually welcomes and worships a false god.

“Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” [xiv]

Additional Scriptures when Considering the Letter to the Church of Smyrna

Below are scriptural excerpts that informed the author’s interpretation of the letter to the Church of Smyrna. Reading all scripture listed here and within the entirety of “These Things Saith He” is recommended for greater understanding and faith-building, as well as an exercise in testing the things taught by others:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:18-21).

And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me (Philippians 1:28-30).

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:41-42).

And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first (Mark 10:29-31).

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing (2 Corinthians 12:7-11).

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19-20).

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (Matthew 23:11-12).

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he

that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:7-11).

Psalm 22

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

² O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

³ But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

⁴ Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

⁵ They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

⁶ But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

⁷ All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

⁸ He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

⁹ But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

¹⁰ I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

¹¹ Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

¹² Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

¹³ They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

¹⁸ They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

¹⁹ But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

²² I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

²³ Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

²⁴ For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

²⁵ My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

²⁶ The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

²⁷ All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

²⁸ For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.

²⁹ All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

³⁰ A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

³¹ They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

[i] Philippians 2:5-11 [ii] 2 Corinthians 5 [iii] Matthew 25 [iv] Isaiah 9 [v] Revelation 1:18 [vi] Ecclesiastes 2:7, James 2:26 [vii] Mark 10:31 [viii] Mark 13:12-13 [ix] John 6:2 [x] Matthew 5:10-12 [xi] John 14:27 [xii] John 16:33 [xiii] John 15:18-27 [xiv] Matthew 16:25

These Things Saith He unto the Angel of the Church in Pergamos

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it (Revelation 2:12-17).

These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

This statement is important because it reminds us that Jesus's words are powerful, dangerous, and can only truly come from Him. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, and His word is described as a sharp, two-edged sword.

Jesus is the Word of God.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." [i]

In Genesis, we can read the story of creation. God spoke all things into existence. *"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."* [ii] Jesus, the Word of God, is the Light of Life. This is the light that gives life to every soul, many of which are being raised as sons of God through the adoption of Jesus Christ. [iii] Jesus who is the first begotten Son of God and the Word of God

made flesh lights the way for all who would follow Him. He shows us the way by bringing the Father to light through the life that He lived, the teachings He taught, and His obedience to the Father.

When the Word lived among us, He had a lot to say, and many of those words are recorded in the gospels. He also had apostles who served Him by bringing His words to people of all nations. As the ambassadors of Christ, the word of the apostles are His words, and we have some of the letters that they wrote on His behalf. We also have the Revelation of Jesus Christ—and this is just the New Testament. The Old Testament also contains the words of God as spoken by the prophets, the psalms, and many historical accounts that provide lessons about who God is and His will for mankind.

God has always given His word to man, and most notably through Jesus who is the Word of God. We also have the Holy Spirit who lives with man and within man, teaching man the good things of God in Jesus Christ and raising man up into a son of God as the Word is “*written on the fleshly tables of the heart.*” **[iv]** Here are some scriptures about Jesus as the Word of God:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me (John 14:10).

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (John 5:30).

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me (John 17:8).

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Jesus Kills and Makes Alive.

“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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” [v]

Being Light, the Word of God can see all things, dividing truth from lie, righteousness from unrighteousness, and life from death. When His Word comes—which is perfectly true, righteous, and life-giving— all that is contrary to that word is sifted and destroyed. [vi] The lies, unrighteousness, and all dead things are defeated by the most powerful weapon of God: The Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit. [vii]

When the Word of God became flesh and lived among us, He defeated many untrue things, including the idea that righteousness could come from following the law. Jesus taught what righteousness really means as He who is less concerned about outward observances of rules and regulations, and more concerned with the “thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

For example, Jesus teaches that hating your brother in your heart is akin to murder, and lusting after a woman in your heart is akin to adultery. The Word of God taught a lot of things, and the things that He taught and the life that He lived demonstrates the obedience that God truly desires, which is hinged on loving God with all you have and loving your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus also teaches that if we love His word and strive to keep it, then He will send the Holy Spirit to indwell us. The Holy Spirit makes the Word of God alive in our hearts, and in so doing tests our hearts and reveals our sin to us. The Holy Spirit also helps us die to sin and raises us in the things of righteousness and life. As our hearts are conformed to Jesus, the Word comes out of us through our actions and things that we speak when done in the Spirit of God. [viii]

The servants of God are responsible for properly handling the word of God, and this is only made possible when the Word of God lives within us and comes out into the world through a sincere and obedient heart, and this is His work in us. As Jesus said, *“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” [ix]*

When His servants properly care for His word, the world hates them just as they hated Him, and many are killed for the Word. Many die for Him, but those who have the everlasting Word in them will live as He breathes the breath of life back into them when He returns.

When the Word of God returns, He will judge all things. Jesus will divide the just from the unjust, the faithful servants from the unfaithful servants, and the living from the dead. [x] He will bring the Light of Life back to those who were killed for His sake, and His Word—which is Spirit, a fire, and a sword—will consume all lies and wickedness. Below are some scriptures that relate to the word of God being a sharp, two-edged sword:

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:16).

He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. (John 8:47).

But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (1 Corinthians 2:15).

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4).

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. (Proverbs 18:21).

Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? (Jeremiah 23:29)

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (Revelation 19:15).

One day, Jesus who is the Word of God will return, and the sword that comes out of His mouth will judge the earth. As those who have faith in Him, we are passed from judgment to life. Having received so great a salvation, we should take the time to consider all that He has to say to the best of our ability, by the grace of God. Let us consider what Jesus is teaching us by His Spirit to the Church of Pergamos:

“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

What is Satan’s seat, and what does it mean to dwell there? It seems that we can know what this means by considering Jesus as the Word of God then comparing that to what the scriptures say about Satan.

Jesus testifies to the truth, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. Jesus came to give us life. Jesus does not need the praise of man, but only sought to do the will of the Father and to

glorify Him. Jesus speaks the words of God because He IS the Word of God. Jesus pleads for the Father to forgive man, and Jesus sacrificed Himself so that many would be forgiven. Jesus raises the dead flesh to life, both as He works His will in us by the Spirit and when He returns to raise our dead bodies from the grave.

Satan is a liar. He only comes to kill and destroy. He wants praise from man and He slanders God. He inverts the words of God (“you shall not surely die” is an example). He accuses man to God. He can act as a “thorn in our flesh.” Satan is also the *“son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”* [xi]

That scripture sounds like “Satan’s seat.” Satan sits where only God should sit, and He inverts the ways of God for his own gain at the expense of others. Where God would bring the truth, Satan brings deception. Where the Son would honor the Father and the Holy Spirit the Son, Satan honors himself. Where God would bring freedom from sin, Satan brings captivity to sin. Where God would establish justice and righteousness and hold Himself to the same standard He puts on us—even to the point of becoming man and experiencing death—Satan considers himself to be above the law.

How does this apply? There are many who claim to be ministers of God, but God is not on the throne of their heart (which is also the temple of God if the Spirit dwells in you). Satan rules them, and they do his works.

How is it that the Church of Pergamos is said to have kept the name of Jesus and have not denied His faith? Jesus said that many would come in His name, saying that He is Christ. Yet, they would deceive many. [xii] This can be true here also. The Church of Pergamos says that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. They preach the gospel of Jesus’s death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Yet, they do not truly serve Him. They serve themselves because being a Christian minister is profitable for them.

Who is Antipas, the faithful martyr who was slain among them? Historically, this is said to be a disciple of John who was killed because he refused and denounced Christian participation in idolatry and sacrifices, which was punishable by death under the reign of Emperor Nero. How would one apply a **Method of Interpretation** that looks for the spirit of the letters to the churches—a spirit that applies to all of time and not just a single point in time? Does this have a present or future fulfillment?

It seems that the letters to the churches provide a snapshot of the spiritual state of the church prior to the coming of the false Christ for the purpose of edifying the true believers and judging the false—as the two-edged word of God is created to do. Therefore, it is possible that there will be a martyr who is killed for their resistance to the carnality of the synagogue of Satan. Most likely, this martyr is not merely an individual named Antipas, but an individual who we can look to in history that is representative of many who also die as faithful witnesses for Jesus Christ.

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.”

What is this doctrine of Balaam? We can reference Numbers 22-24 to gain insight, and there seems to be a lot happening within that story. Thankfully, the general failure of Balaam is neatly summarized in 2 Peter 2 and Jude 1:

Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:15).

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots (Jude 1:11-12).

These entire chapters are highly relevant, so it would benefit one greatly to read these full chapters, along with the account in Numbers to get a full view. More context surrounding the scriptures above is included at the end of this chapter.

The general idea is that these are prophets for hire who twist the grace of God into something that makes living a sinful life acceptable. They received the knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ and His gospel, yet they turned back to sin, and they use the grace of God to justify themselves and the sins of others. Most despicably, they use the word of God to do so.

They quote the bible out of context to preach soft sermons that make many comfortable with living a sinful life, and why not? Telling people what they want to hear is the best way to keep their church buildings, television ministry, radio station, or online ministry full of happy donors. They do not have the Spirit of God but walk in the spirit of Satan as they twist the words of God for gain in this world and social exaltation while openly or secretly pursuing their own desires.

Some might even preach righteousness, but they themselves do not obey what they teach or strive to grow in those regards as one who is honest about their sin, repentant, and faithfully seeking the Spirit of God to work the good things of God in them. Instead, they play pastor like a kid playing make-believe, then they go on to live a life of sin when they think no one is watching them. If they had true faith, they would know that the Spirit of Truth is always watching, and He will judge them for their faithlessness, hypocrisy, and their lying ministries that “turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.”

“So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.”

As discussed more fully in **The Symbolism**, it is the opinion of the author of “These Things Saith He” that the “doctrine or deeds of the Nicolaitanes” is a general stand-in for teachings that condone a worldly form of Christianity. As for the Church of Pergamos, this is shown through their mishandling of the grace and forgiveness of God, thus using His mercy as an excuse to sin and seek the pleasures of this world without consequence.

It is no wonder that they blaspheme heaven and those who dwell therein. Such as these characterize heaven as a place of never-ending pleasure and self-indulgence. According to this belief, Jesus is busy building them a mansion in heaven. The carpenter works away, preparing for them a place where they can fulfill every carnal desire, and why not? This is the heaven they live in now—which is not heaven—because the Spirit of God is not bringing the *real* kingdom of God that “comes not with observation” and is “within you.” No, their present-day heaven is sin and those who are truly of the Kingdom are spoken evil of.

In reality, both the kingdom that comes within us by the Holy Spirit and the kingdom to come is a land of righteousness in which we come to know Jesus more fully and serve Him—not ourselves—forever.

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

Those who misuse the word of God to condone a life of ungodliness—purchased by the blood of the Son of God—will have to face Him one day. He who is the Word of God will fight against them with His true word, and all their lies will be consumed, as well as those who peddled lies in the Name of Jesus for their own gain. It is fitting that those who abused the word would be judged by it.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” [xiii] Those who are faithful to the words of Jesus are given a truer understanding of His word—even He who is the Word of God. *“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” [xiv]*

Those who overcome are also given a new name—a name that Jesus Himself gives them. The false prophets and ministers for hire have a name in the earth. Meaning, people know who they are, and they are well-regarded and loved by many while those who are faithful to Jesus are often slandered and hated.

Those who overcome are given a better name, not one among men, but one given by Jesus Himself that is true to the individual who receives it. The Word divides and judges as He looks at

the core of the person, and what He will see and declare about His servants is good. This name is not to be flaunted to be seen as something great in the eyes of others, nor would the recipient desire that. Receiving this name from Jesus shows His approval and deep understanding of us who He has created in His image.

Concern for Present-Day Ministers of Jesus

It is difficult to imagine that a minister of the spirit of Pergamos would repent because they most likely do not believe in the first place. However, it is possible that there are some who sincerely want to serve Jesus but are raised in the faith by Pergamos-like ministers. But for the grace of God, this could corrupt the heart of those who would otherwise be faithful to the Word of God and those entrusted to their care.

If this is the case for any would read this, then the best thing would probably be to back down from ministry, seek Jesus for yourself, become filled with the Spirit of God in truth, and perhaps He would call you to become a faithful minister—not ordained by the corrupt institutions of man—but by the will and Spirit of God.

On another note, the scriptures are written in an interesting manner that allows for varying interpretations and disagreements among believers and nonbelievers alike. It seems likely that the written word of God tries the hearts of man just as Jesus who is the Word of God made flesh tried man, and just as the Holy Spirit tries the hearts of those who He inhabits. “Take heed how ye hear.” The word of God is dangerous, so take it—and Him— seriously.

Concern for Christian Brethren Generally

If the church that you attend or the ministry, music, or other Christian culture that you consume condones a life of sin paid for by the blood of Jesus, then get out and get away. This is not a true servant of Jesus Christ, but of Satan. It is true that the blood of the Son of God washes away our sins, and there is none that can accuse us before God because we have passed from judgement to life. However, this presumes good faith, and good faith means that we have a sincere heart towards Jesus.

We are not merely paying lip-service to God while we take His Son for granted, using Him as a pass to serve ourselves and not Him. That is not the gospel, and that is not salvation. The gospel is salvation from death and the promise of everlasting life for that those who believe in Jesus, the Son of God who died for our sins and now lives. Having received this salvation, we are bought by the blood of Jesus, and we become His servants. He has work for us to do, not to earn salvation, but to grow into sons of God that honor Jesus as He honors the Father. As sons of God in the making, we are being prepared to live in a kingdom of righteousness. Presently, this is a kingdom that comes by the Spirit of God as He heals us and helps us walk in His will.

Walking in His will is also salvation—salvation from a life of destruction and slavery to the forces of evil in this world that corrupt our minds and destroy us from the inside out—corruption that

leads to real and lasting death. This is real salvation. It is tangible, even now. It is freedom and it is service. Freedom from corruption and service to Christ, which are fruits of our salvation and indicators of grace-given faith that is sincere and true.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter 3:11-13).”

We will not live a life of hedonism while claiming Jesus, then “go to heaven” and pursue carnal pleasure forevermore. When our King returns, He will say, *“well done good and faithful servant.”* And also, *“Now rise and serve me.” [xv]*

Do not be surprised if questioning the ministers of Pergamos results in slander and accusations. They accuse people of denying the faith and replacing grace with works. Some state that those who oppose them are “accusers of the brethren,” which is ironic and hypocritical because they accuse those who point out their sinful and heretical misuse of the sacrifice of Jesus.

They are very much like the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’s day. They do not serve God. They serve their own self-interest, positions of power and authority, and they do not like anyone who would threaten their ministries that make them rich, powerful, and popular—in scales great and small.

If you cannot question a minister without being shunned and having your faith accused or belittled because you strive to serve Jesus faithfully, then that’s a good indicator that you are not dealing with a true person of God. In all things, test what you have been taught and go to the source who is Jesus Christ and ask Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Truth so that you will not be deceived by these sorts of ministers and those who follow them.

In Conclusion

Jesus is the Word of God. His word, which proceeds out of His mouth, is called a sharp, two-edged sword. The written word of God that is given to us through the scriptures is also a two-edged sword. Both the written word of God and things spoken in the name of Jesus, when misused, lead to a lot of harm. Perhaps most notable among these misuses is that which uses the word of God to justify a wicked lifestyle.

As a Christian, we are saved by faith in Jesus that comes to us by the grace of God. Our works do not save us. We are covered by the blood of the Lamb of God. Therefore, there is no curse that can come upon us from God. Remember Balac who could not cause God to curse His people. However, as Balac discovered through the counsel of Balaam, the people could cause the wrath of God to come upon themselves if they forsook God and turned to idolatry. Though our faith in

Jesus makes us blameless before God, wanton disregard for the blood that was shed to make our covenant with God can leave us as those who followed to ways of Balac and Balaam.

If we say that our sins do not matter because we are forgiven, and therefore go on to live as wickedly as we please without regard for the calling we have in Christ—a calling to lay aside sin by His power in us as we serve Him and not this world—then we are rejecting the covenant. Our faith is a sham, and it does not matter how we might use the word of God to justify ourselves because that very same word will testify against us.

Where is Satan's seat? Is it not the seat that seeks to usurp the throne of Jesus through lies, half-truths, and seducing people away from the right way? This church holds on to the name of Jesus and believes in His sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. This is good; however, it is possible to treat the sacrifice of Jesus with such disregard that our faith is not acceptable.

Our use of the word of God demonstrates our faith in Jesus. Or the lack thereof. Therefore, it is fitting that the word of God would be used to combat those who misuse the word of God in such a manner that leads many astray into faithlessness and wanton sin that disrespects the blood of the Lamb that was slain to provide atonement, and eventually, worship of Satan himself who is the false christ.

Jesus is the bread of life that comes down from God out of heaven, as He stated. Jesus is also the word of God—and as Jesus also stated— *“man cannot live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* [xvi] Those who overcome misuse of the word of God, in all the forms thereof, are given the true word of God. They are given true understanding of scripture; they are given true knowledge of the Lord, Jesus Christ; they are given the promise of His return and a greater oneness with our Creator, Savior, and King.

He also gives us a new name because He knows us deeply, even better than we know ourselves. At the time that we know Him, even as He knows us, we will also know ourselves, even as we are known by Him. We will see just how precious we are and that His blood was not shed for no reason—and by His grace—we are made faithful to Jesus, who is the living Word of God.

Therefore, let us stand in faith by the grace of God who teaches us how to deny this world and follow Jesus instead, not misuse His sacrifice or His word to justify the sins that He died to release us from.

That being stated, it is important to remember that the fight against the flesh and sin is an ongoing battle for us until we are raised in our resurrected bodies.

Do not give space to The Accuser. The blood of the Lamb does indeed cover us. If our heart is sincere towards Jesus and we want to serve Him faithfully, we will find freedom from sin as He works in us to free us according to the grace we receive and the calling He has purposed for us in our service to Him and our brethren. Those who are honest about their sin, genuinely want to do right, and believe in Jesus for forgiveness are not condemned. They are *“passed from judgement to life.”* [xvii]

Our heart toward Jesus is the difference—which comes by grace first because all things come from God and are for His purposes. If His grace is upon us, then we will fear His word and we will strive to live by it, and He who is the Word will live with us, bringing the Kingdom of heaven to us by the Spirit. Jesus will return also, and He will judge all things righteously and with mercy towards those who are of a repentant heart, who call out to Him, and who trust in all that the Word has spoken.

“To this man will I look; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, that trembles at my word.” [xviii]

Additional Scriptures when Considering the Letter to the Church of Pergamos

Below are some scriptures that helped inform the understanding given within this chapter of These Things Saith He. The full chapters have important information, so please read all scripture in context listed here and those mentioned elsewhere as you have the time and opportunity to do so:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:3-7).

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:4-7).

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 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. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:11-13).

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents (1 Corinthians 10: 1-9).

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Ephesians 6:16-20).

My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! (James 3:1-5)

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: (Matthew 24:11-16).

And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King Of Kings, And Lord Of Lords (Revelation 19:13-16).

[i] John 1:1-5 [ii] Genesis 1:3 [iii] Hebrews 2:10 [iv] 2 Corinthians 3:3, Jeremiah 31:33 [v] Hebrews 4:12
[vi] Matthew 25, Matthew 13 [vii] Ephesians 6 [viii] John 14-16 [ix] John 15:3-4 [x] Matthew 25, Matthew 13
[xi] 2 Thessalonians 2:4 [xii] Matthew 24:5 [xiii] John 6:33 [xiv] 1 Corinthians 13:12 [xv] Matthew 25:21, John 13:4
[xvi] Matthew 4:4 [xvii] John 5:24 [xviii] Isaiah 66:2

These Things Saith He unto the Angel of the Church in Thyatira

¹⁸ And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

¹⁹ I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

²⁰ Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

²¹ And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Revelation 3:18-29).

These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

This statement points to Jesus as the Son of God who sees and tests all things and whose authority cannot be moved. These attributes of Jesus are important when considering the temptation to undermine His authority and corrupt His judgments.

Jesus is the Son of God.

“And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.” [i]

One of the reasons why Jesus was hated by the religious leaders of His day was His claim to be the Son of God. Claiming to be the Son of God made Him equal with God. [ii] Being equal with God, Jesus has all authority—and His authority is second-to-none and higher than all others. As Jesus said, “Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” [iii]

All things that He does are better than man. They are wiser, more righteous, and greater in power and strength. He is higher than man, even the most powerful among them because He is the Son of God. As the Son of God who is one with God, none can undermine Him or steal His glory from Him. “I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” [iv]

Being equal to God and the one who the Father has given all things, Jesus is the One man should obey. Below are scriptures about Jesus as the Son of God and as He who has all authority:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18).

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him (Acts 5:29-32).

And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him (Mark 1:27).

But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men (Matthew 9:6-8).

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:17).

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man (John 5:26-27).

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son (1 John 5:9-10).

Jesus is He who Sees all and Stands Strong.

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”. [v]

“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.” [vi]

All things are visible to God, including the thoughts and heart of man. God is also unchanging, especially by the whims of man that are always movable depending on what seems popular or beneficial at the time. God also has a righteous standard—and Jesus, the Son of God, exemplifies those standards perfectly as one who was not moved by the world, but firmly stood in the righteous ways of the Father.

God is not going to bend His standards, though He does delight in showing mercy for those who want to do what is pleasing to Him and show a broken heart when they fall short. That is why the Father sent His Son to sacrifice Himself for us. Even so, man cannot change God’s standards neither can they hide their wickedness from Him. He can see all things, and He stands strong in His judgements of what is right and wrong. Below are some scriptures that demonstrate these ideas:

For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad (Luke 8:17).

For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops (Luke 12:2-3).

lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it (Psalm 139:1-6).

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein (Hebrews 13:8-9).

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it (Isaiah 46:9-11).

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh (Isaiah 66:22-24).

Jesus is the Son of God who has all authority over Heaven and Earth, and nothing is out of His sight—sight like fire that brings light to darkness, revealing the hearts of man and all things done in secret. He has righteous standards that are unmovable because He is unmovable, so let us consider what He has to say to the Church of Thyatira.

“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

He who can see all sees *all*. Jesus can see their good works, their love, their service, and their patience. Their works are mentioned twice, so it would seem that their good works are a big deal. Some might disagree, but it would also seem as if there were a hint of sarcasm here as if to say, “oh yes. I see how great you are. Look at all the good things that you do. You love people. You serve people. You are oh so tolerant of others. You do so many good things. Yet, you have a false prophet in your midst, and you also tolerate this. You tolerate that woman, Jezebel, who *calls herself* a prophetess. Of course, she calls herself a prophetess. This must be seen and praised by all.” Jesus sees and He does not condone her or those who follow her.

Firstly, what can we determine about that woman Jezebel? In keeping with a **Method of Interpretation** used when considering these letters to the churches, it is likely that this woman

is both a person who existed in the past and a person who points to a type of persons that exist in all time. We can consider this in the same way that we considered Antipas of the Church of Pergamos. We can look to the historical figure and create a sort of archetype. What is the type, or spirit, of the Jezebel figure that is found in the Church of Thyatira?

The story of Jezebel is found in 1 Kings 16. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, a king of Israel. She led the people of Israel into worship of Baal and Asherah. She then persecuted the prophets of God who tried to lead the people of Israel away from idolatry.

When we consider what Jesus has revealed about Himself in the letter to the Church of Thyatira—He who has eyes of fire and feet like fine brass—it could be said that Jezebel is a figure that wants to be seen for their good works, yet her good works are filled with corruptions that undermine the righteous standards that Jesus teaches. Although this figure might seem loving and full of kind deeds, He who sees all also sees the heart. These are as those *“make clean the outside of the cup while the inside is full of uncleanness.” [vii]*

One way that the Jezebel figure corrupts God’s judgments is by teaching His servants that it is acceptable to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. What is fornication? Fornication is any form of sexual activity that is not performed within the confines of a monogamous, marital relationship between a man and a woman. What about “eating things sacrificed unto idols”?

What does present-day idolatry look like? In most basic terms, anything that breaks the commandment to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul, and all the might” can become an idol. In other words, when we love the things of this world more than God, they become an idol to us.

Historical Jezebel also persecuted the true prophets of God. In like manner, the Jezebel type found within the Church of Thyatira persecutes those who stand up for the true things of God as given to us by Jesus Christ. This can include social persecution, legal persecution, and murder. Persecuting the saints of God is not directly implied in this letter. However, it is a characteristic of this type that is worth noting.

“And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

Sex that is outside of traditional marriage is fornication, and it is spiritual adultery for a Christian to love the things of this world and its sin without repentance. Jesus gives Jezebel and those who follow her time to turn to Him, confess their sins, and change their hearts towards the

righteous way (repent). However, they do not. They continue embracing fornication as well as a general love of this world.

What does it mean when Jesus says, “I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation?” It seems that Jesus is creating a scenario in which the ways of Jezebel are accessible and accepted, and He will sit back and see who loves to participate in her ways. When a culture shifts or a social movement begins that is of her, how many will follow? Will they repent? Of course, Jesus sees all, and He also knows all. He already knows exactly what they are going to do, and He is prepared to judge them accordingly.

Jesus states, “I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He that searches the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” The children of Jezebel are those who do what Jezebel does.

Though Jezebel promises her followers life, they will die. There is no peace and love and acceptance for them. Only judgement and condemnation await from He who can see all their wicked deeds, and He who will bring all dark things to light—just to reveal who loves darkness and who hates Him—then He will destroy them “with the brightness of His coming.”

“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.”

It seems that not all within the Church of Thyatira follow the deceitful and destructive ways of Jezebel—ways that “know the depths of Satan.” What does this mean?

As Christians, we are moving towards a better knowledge of God as we form a relationship with Jesus Christ, and as the Holy Spirit teaches us and conforms us to His ways. Those who follow Jezebel seem more concerned with developing a deep knowledge of the world and sin, and therefore it could be said that they are also coming to know Satan because they celebrate sin instead of leading people to repentance and a sincere pursuit of Jesus Christ.

Why is the knowledge of the depths of Satan considered burdensome?

There are many things that Jezebel and her followers consider to be of great importance, and you must *educate yourself* in these matters. Becoming *awakened* to their ways is of highest priority, because this is the only way that you can know what is good and true according to their ways—the ways of Satan—and repent of your lack of love, service, patience, and works—of which they have in abundance and proudly put on display.

Jesus does not put this burden onto anyone. Jesus says, “my burden is easy, and my yoke is light.” He does not require us to get to know sin and the ever-changing morality of the day so that we can become more tolerant, accepting, loving, and proud of sin and those who follow it.

Jesus instructs them to hold fast to what they have until He comes. What does this mean?

This is a gracious statement. He whose eyes are as a fire and His feet like brass is also a God of grace and mercy who understands our frame. Those who are within the Church of Thyatira, but do not go to the extreme of “knowing the depths of Satan” seem to find mercy. Perhaps there are many who follow the overly soft message of this church. However, they remain true to basic standards of morality and basic standards set out by God for mankind, and they do not push the agenda of this church onto others.

“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.”

What does it mean to keep the works of Jesus? To keep the works of Jesus is to know who He is and what His gospel means. We know that He came to deliver us from sin and death. He did not come so that we would further bind ourselves to these things. He will search our hearts by the Spirit that lives within us, reveal our sin to us, and cause His nature to grow in us so that we can do His works and not the works of Satan.

Although we are all of this world naturally, and though we have all served Satan and served sin, we repent and put this world behind us as we push forward in the calling we have in Jesus Christ. As Paul the apostle stated in his letter to the Philippians:

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”[viii]

We keep His works by keeping faith in Him as one who is serious about who He is and what He came to do, trusting that He will work in us the ability to live righteously—not by our ability or according to the “good deeds” of man that are outwardly righteous and done to be seen, but true righteousness that comes from a sincere heart that is for God and not for this world.

Those who overcome are given power over the nations when Jesus returns, as described in the parable of the talents. [ix] These do not take what Jesus died to give them and invest in into this earth of sin and death. They invest it into serving Him, and He will reward each person according to their ability and the grace of God extended to them. In the end, those who overcome will rule with Jesus in this earth.

The iron rule of Jesus is mentioned here for good reason. He has righteous standards. He will judge all things, and no one can undo what He says or cause Him to change. The Church of Thyatira corrupts the judgements of God; they soften His judgements or remove them completely by declaring sin to be acceptable and by stating that those who do such things without repentance are received by God.

What is the “morning star” that Jesus gives to those who overcome in His Name?

Satan calls himself the “morning star.” This is translated as “Lucifer” in the King James, which means “light bringer.” Satan says that he illuminates or brings things to life. He claims to bring the truth. He claims to awaken people to righteousness and to the deceit of this world—but his ways are an inverted corruption of the ways of Jesus Christ and all that He stands for, and Satan hates Jesus and those who follow Him. Those who are of this false light claim to speak for God, but the prophecy that they give comes from their own corrupted hearts and not the Truth that the Holy Spirit provides.

Jesus is the real Light and He who gives us the Holy Spirit so that the “day star rises in your heart” and leads you to all truth. As the Spirit of God dwells within us, our hearts are changed because the ways of God are written in our hearts. As we mature in the faith, the abundance of that work of Jesus in us will come out. As Jesus said, “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” This can be for righteousness or for wickedness. The heart that is of the false light brings forth falsehoods, but the heart that is of Christ brings goodness and truth.

“Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:15-21).”

Concern for Present-Day Ministers of Jesus

It is a controversial saying, but true none the less, to say that the corruptions of the churches as we read about in the letter the Church of Thyatira are largely due to female influence. This is not always the case, but it is generally true that women are prone to softening the judgements of God to be more pleasing socially, and this can lead to acceptance of sin in lesser and greater measures.

It is also true that women can become overruled by emotion in general. Sometimes this leads to becoming overly harsh just as it can lead to becoming overly soft. What is worse is when there is an over-softness towards sin and an over-harshness towards those who stand against sin.

In any case, attempts made by either gender to distort the righteous standards and judgement of God will not stand in the judgement of Jesus Christ, especially when the result is a new standard of morality that is of man and not God—and a standard that is “grievous to be borne” as well.

This world does not need weak leadership or those who usurp the will and judgement of the Son of God. Although all things should be tempered with love, as discussed in the letter to the church of Ephesus, a love of this world is not the love of God—and the love of God will not condone sin because sin is destructive to those who are bound by it.

Ministers of God—whether male or female—must be willing to take a stand against all sin, even those that are commonly accepted and praised. Ministers of God also need to seek the Holy Spirit so that the true things of God as given to us through Jesus Christ can grow in our hearts and purge us from the deceptions that we are naturally prone to.

Despite the hatred that comes from the ministers of Jezebel unrepented of, we cannot back down from basic morality and basic standards as set forth by God. Men are men. Women are women. Fornication is a sin. These are just some examples. We must also stand by Jesus as the one and only way of salvation. We cannot accept spiritual practices from other faiths or begin to dilute the teachings of Jesus to make them more palatable to a sin-loving generation.

It is not loving to condone sin. It is not loving to praise mental illness. It is not loving to turn people away from the true Light of Christ and instead cause them to embrace the Satanic “woke” culture.

Those who hear Jesus are awakened from death. As Jesus stated, *“The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”*^[x] Jesus awakens us to righteousness that brings life. The “woke” culture is not making people awake but causing them to fall into a deep sleep and leading them to everlasting death. This is a culture that is contrary to Jesus, and this is a Satanic culture that must be rejected strongly—no matter the cost.

Concern for Christian Brethren Generally

It is good to show kindness and compassion. It is good to be merciful, to try to be at peace with everyone as much as possible, and to love people in general. However, as the world begins to corrupt the true judgement of Jesus and as the world calls evil good and good evil, we cannot allow our desire to get along with others cause us to neglect the righteous ways of God.

His word is true, and it is good. When we go astray from His ways, our lives become empty and full of hatred of self, hatred of others, and our hearts can become blind to sin. We might even

begin to hate those who stand by the truth, because the darkness in us hates the light. The true Light of Christ is in complete opposition to today's woke culture, New Age thinking, and all similar ideas that are present now and that might arise in the future.

There are many ministers in this world that make a living off corrupting the things of God, and they love making a name for themselves. They love to get rich off people who want to hear soft messages that make them feel empowered or better than other people. They love to hear that their sin is acceptable or that there is no sin at all. Do not listen to these men and women.

Get to know Jesus first by praying to Him and reading the scriptures. The more you know Him, the more you can spot the false teachers and false prophets by default. This world is not your friend. It only wants you dead. Jesus died to give you life, so trust in Him and He will lead you to all truth—a truth that makes you free—not a false truth that keeps you trapped in a life of delusion and destruction.

In Conclusion

The problems within the church of Thyatira seem to be summarized as an over-softening of the judgment of God. This is made possible when corrupt leaders who claim to speak for God (as seen in Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess) do not lead people in the ways of Jesus Christ. Instead, they lead people in the ways of this world, thereby encouraging a kind of fornication with the world.

We cannot love the world and love God at the same time. One will win eventually, and if we keep the truth taught to us by Jesus Christ and the apostles, we will find that our love of this world dies as a love for what is true and good is made alive by the Spirit of God within us.

If we love Jesus sincerely and do not allow corrupt teachings and teachers lead us away from Him, then He will show us what He expects from us as Christians.

Jesus had a lot to say, and He is still speaking to us today by the Holy Spirit. Within the teachings of Jesus as found in the parables and other scriptures, we can see that Jesus expects those who follow Him to live a life that is set apart from this world.

We are to respect the calling that we have in Christ by taking the sacrifice that was made on our behalf seriously, knowing that we are paid for with a most precious price and this means we are to serve God and not the world.

Before Jesus, we were slaves to this world, and we had no choice but to obey the deceitfulness and destruction of sin. Now freed and forgiven by the blood of the Lamb of God, we are given the righteousness of Christ so that we can approach God for grace and mercy—unashamed and uninhibited.

However, if we draw near to God through Jesus, we will find that we are approaching the judgment of God—not the judgment of wrath—but the judgment of mercy that reveals the error of our ways and provides a truth that can set us free.

We are made free so that we can live and teach the good things of God that we receive through Jesus. We are made free so that we can love one another and build one another up in the things of God. We are not made free so that we can serve sin, serve ourselves, and make ourselves prosperous in the things of this world by joining in with the world.

The process of growing in Christ is an on-going, lifelong pursuit for the Christian. There is always going to be one more thing that we lack. There is going to be some sin that creeps in or that we did not see before. There is going to be some service to be done, some sacrifice to be made, and some strengthening of character as Jesus works in us by His Spirit.

This is the work of the Lord, Jesus in us that is made possible by the Holy Spirit that dwells in the believer. As we get to know God through the Word of God and continued relationship with Jesus, we will see how we are to live. We will repent of our sins. We will find forgiveness and we will rest in faith knowing that the Lord is working and making us into a son of God. We fight sin and we do not yield. We will keep His works because He makes us to do so.

We cannot perform enough righteous works to save ourselves. However, once we accept the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins, we should expect to see the fruits of our faith that make us into servants of Jesus and adopted sons of God in the making.

These works will never say that sin is acceptable.

These works will not love the world.

There is a kind of “love” that pervades many within Christianity, and this is the “love” of the world and of sin. It is tempting for many to assume that love requires us to accept all things, tolerate all things, and never speak about sin—especially the sins that the world wants to re-write as righteous.

We cannot be “reeds shaken with the wind.” We must stand firm in the things of God that were given to us by Jesus Christ. He calls us to love, but His love is not the love of this world because this world leads to sin, and sin leads to death.

It is not love to leave a sinner blind to their sin.

We cannot soften the judgments of God.

Jesus shed His blood to forgive us, and this is a beautiful thing. It is true that those who put their faith in Him have their sins forgiven. However, there is a temptation for many to use this forgiveness as a free pass to live sinfully. There is a temptation to look at the love of God and forget the wrath of God that is coming for the disobedient.

Judgement is given to the Son, but all who took His blood upon themselves will have to stand before the Son and give an account of what they did with the forgiveness He died to purchase for us. Jesus stated that many would be rejected because they were disrespectful, wicked and slothful, without mercy, and lovers of sin and of this world.

Jesus is merciful and patient with us and He is faithful to save every soul that the Father has given Him. However, it is also true that many do not have real faith. Real faith will cause us to believe in Jesus—not just the facts of who He is or that He died and now lives—but faith in what He stands for, what He expects from us, and faith to know that when He returns to judge the world, many will be cast out because they did not take the calling seriously.

Teachings that make light of the calling of a Christian are hated by God. We must overcome any teaching that leads a Christian towards a love of this world and not a love of Jesus and what He is truly about.

We must overcome the temptation to look at ourselves and others as good people who are worthy of acceptance based on their kind deeds or acceptance of sinners. We must overcome the temptation to call good evil and evil good in attempts to be pleasing to the whims of the time.

We must overcome by stating that what God says is sin is in-fact sin, no matter what the world says. We must overcome by seeking Jesus who will break us and remake us in His image so that we can keep His words and do them.

We cannot expect to rule with Him if we cannot first submit to His judgement. We must be tamed by Him first and ruled by Him first, and this requires us to “love not our lives unto the death.” When Jesus returns, we will rule with Him—and His rule calls sin out for what it is and leads the world in the righteous way.

We are not fit for that kingdom if we love wickedness and sin, if we corrupt the judgement of God, and if we make ourselves a friend and lover of the world and of Satan.

Jesus is The Morning Star. Satan calls himself that also and as Paul the apostle wrote, his ministers transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. However, their righteousness is not the righteousness of God, but that of the world. [xi]

The Church of Thyatira is a lover of Satan and a fornicator with him and doubtless they will welcome the false Christ with open arms.

We do not fully know what form the beast and false prophet will take, but those who are faithful to Jesus will know that this false god is not their God. It is fair to assume that a true understanding of what is right and what is wrong will have a role to play. Satan can only do what Satan does. He kills, steals, destroys. He is a liar and the father of it.

If we overcome in Jesus, we will receive Him. He will come to us by the Spirit of God in us and the “day star rises in our hearts.” He will come to us after the seventh trumpet also to

overthrow the beast, false prophet, and Great Whore. He will raise the dead in Christ and those who remain are transfigured into spiritual bodies. Those who are His will rule with He who is the True Morning Star—and this will be a rule of righteousness.

Knowing all of this, let us find renewed appreciation for the sacrifice of Jesus and renewed respect. We will face the Son one day. How will that meeting go?

Let us get to know His ways, seek Him in faith, and trust in His work in us that makes us fit for Him and His Kingdom. Let us not take it lightly. Let us not love the world. He died to save us from it so that we can live forever with Him.

Additional Scriptures When Considering the Letter to the Church of Thyatira

Below are more scriptures that informed the understanding given in this chapter. Please take the time to read all scripture given here and elsewhere in their full context as you are able to help foster a more complete understanding and relationship with Jesus.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things (1 John 2:16-20).

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:1-7).

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (2 Corinthians 11:2-4).

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God (Ezekiel 13: 1-8).

To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God. Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? Wherefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord (Ezekiel 13:16-21).

James (entire book)

1 Kings 16

[[ii](#)] Luke 9:35 [[iii](#)] John 5 [[iiii](#)] John 8:23 [[iv](#)] Isaiah 42:8 [[v](#)] Hebrews 4:13 [[vi](#)] Hebrews 1:10-12 [[vii](#)] Matthew 23:25

[[viii](#)] Philippians 3:10-14 [[ix](#)] Matthew 25 [[x](#)] John 5:25 [[xi](#)] 2 Corinthians 11

These Things Saith He unto the Angel of the Church in Sardis

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

³ Remember therefore how thou hast 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 will come upon thee.

⁴ Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

⁵ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

⁶ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Revelation 3:1-6).

These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;

Jesus holds within Himself the fullness of the Spirit of God, and He also holds the ministers of God. This is important because we are reminded that Jesus can give the things of the Spirit to whoever He chooses and in whatever capacity that He chooses.

Jesus Has the Fullness of the Spirit of God.

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” [i]

“And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” [ii]

In the scriptures, the number seven is used to indicate perfection and completeness. It could be that the seven Spirits of God are the fullness of the Spirit of God, and this would make sense because the scriptures tell us that God gave the full measure of the Spirit to Jesus. *“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto*

him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.” [iii] This is another indicator of Jesus’s authority and equality with God.

Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, and He is the One who the Holy Spirit identifies as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. [iv] His sacrifice on the cross pays for the debt of our sin, and His resurrection gives us the promise of life from the dead because He who overcame death can also raise us from the dead by the Spirit of God that is given to us. *“If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” [v]*

Here are some additional scriptures pertaining to Jesus and the Holy Spirit:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matthew 1:18-23).

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased (Luke 3:22).

And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God (John 1:32-33).

Jesus Gives the Holy Spirit to His Servants.

Before Jesus suffered the death of the cross, He told His disciples that it was a good thing for them that He should go away, because the Holy Spirit would not come to them so long as He

was with them bodily. *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” [vi]*

After Jesus’s death and resurrection, He instructed His disciples to “tarry in Jerusalem” until they receive power from God. [vii] He then ascended into heaven, and His disciples received the Holy Spirit as Jesus had stated on the day of Pentecost.

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” [viii]

Jesus states that receiving the Holy Spirit is the same as receiving Him and the Father. He said, *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” [ix]*

Throughout the scriptures, we are told that all things pertaining to the faith are given to us by God through the person of Jesus Christ. This includes the things of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God makes us “fruitful” in the knowledge of the Lord and His righteousness. Jesus says, *“abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” [x]*

The giving of the Holy Spirit is a critical part of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the “good news” of the kingdom of God. This kingdom first comes “not with observation and is within you (Luke 17:20).” This is made possible by the Holy Spirit who “writes the knowledge of God on the fleshly tables of the heart.” This is the new covenant that was spoken by the prophets stating, *“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” [xi]*

This is the covenant of the Christian. This is not a covenant of outward rules, regulations, and observances. It is a covenant of faith that transforms the heart, conforming the inner man to the things of God as the Spirit of God works within the believer. This is the work of Jesus within those who believe in Him, and He will complete His work.

“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” [xii] Here are some additional scriptures that discuss the giving of the Spirit to the servants of God:

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will

he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:10-13).

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:6-8).

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God (Ezekiel 36:25-28).

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Within Jesus contains the fullness of the Spirits of God, and He gives of Himself according to His will so that His nature can change the hearts and minds of those who belong to Him as promised by the New Covenant that was bought with His blood. He died to forgive sin, and so that He could send the Holy Spirit to those who the Father has given Him. With such a high price given so that we can receive "God with us," let us consider what Jesus is saying about this matter within His letter to the Church of Sardis.

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God."

By His Spirit, Jesus reminds us that He contains and has authority over the Spirits of God, and it is He who grants the things of the Spirit to His servants (represented as stars). He who does these things has somewhat to say. First, He mentions the works of Sardis. Next, He mentions that they have “a name that thou livest.” What does this mean?

To have a name means to have a reputation. This church has a reputation for being alive in Jesus Christ. However, as Jesus states, they are dead. Why would Jesus tell them that they are dead? When we consider what we know about Jesus who holds and distributes the things of the Spirit, we might conclude that this church is one that neglects the things of the Spirit of God.

The works of this church are mentioned twice within this section of the letter. Jesus says that He knows their works, and He has not found them perfect before God. As Christians, we are not justified by our works. However, the Spirit of God within us will do many works to us and through us. If a church or Christian neglects the things of the Spirit, then the work of the Spirit is lacking.

If this church neglects the things of the Spirit, yet they have a name that they live, what works are they performing?

This is a church that takes a legalistic approach towards righteousness through various rules and regulations. This can include many things, such as regulating the way Christians dress and worship. This can also include a variety of Christian practices that one must follow to be received by certain Christian sects.

How does this lead to death?

As Christians, following Jesus is hinged on grace-given faith that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is the fulfilment of the prophesy that states:

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 10:16-17, Jeremiah 31:33).”

“I will write my laws on the table of the heart.” This is the work of the Spirit that is performed at the heart level, not according to outward rules or regulations. The problems with regulation, or legalism, are manifold and they all lead to a type of spiritual death.

One problem with legalism is it does not consider the heart or spirit of the matter. A person can perform these outward observances, but without real conviction of sin. In many cases, the root sin remains and is made even stronger by the legalistic practice. It is made stronger because the Christian believes that they are righteous because they met a certain, outward standard. Yet, the heart issue remains.

For example, there might be a regulation about clothing. The Christian is instructed to wear cloths of a certain length or type, and in so doing, they are considered righteous. What about

vanity and pride? Rather, the Christians should be instructed about the *heart* issues, such as appreciation for modesty and humility, and leaders within the faith should trust the Spirit to work on the heart of the individual in His own time, so that any outward changes made come from a sincere and obedient heart.

Another problem with legalism is it encroaches on the liberties of the Christian. There are many things that are left to the conscience of the individual, and when these liberties are robbed by law, false accusations of sin are the result. Another result is unnecessary division among believers, of which there are many indeed.

All these lead to spiritual death. Spiritual death results from a lack of sincere change done in the heart by the Spirit and according to the righteous standards of Christ and not those imposed by man wrongfully. Spiritual death results from falsely accusing the brethren, ostracizing them, or hindering their faith in Jesus because of their failure to adhere to an outward standard. Even if the standard is righteous, it is the work of the Spirit to do according to His perfect timing and will. God's wisdom is perfect, and He knows how to perform His work in us. We should not replace His work with law.

Jesus fulfilled the law for a reason. He fulfilled it because man cannot keep law, and man corrupts law through loopholes and hypocrisy. Even good laws do little to change the person in any meaningful way. This is why Jesus said that the Scribes and Pharisees were as they who "made clean the outside of the cup while the inside was full of uncleanness." See Matthew 23. This is the trouble with Sardis. By obeying their set of standards, they consider themselves righteous. Though they claim to be alive, they are dead.

What does it mean, "be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God?"

A church that is void of the Spirit is a dead church. Jesus tells them to "be watchful" or to wake up. It seems like a paradoxical statement to say that this church should strengthen things that should die. As Christians, we are dying to sin and to self as we are raised in newness of life through Christ. This church might have some good ideas about what it means to live a Christian life. Yet, legalism robs them because they have not truly gotten to the root of the sin—a root that needs to be removed completely. Instead, they must tap into Jesus who is The Vine. By the Spirit, we abide in Him, and the fruits of the Spirit—the fruits of life—are the result.

"Remember therefore how thou hast 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 will come upon thee."

The church of Sardis knows the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they must let go of their legalism and return to Him and His promises. Law makes us dead, but we are alive through the grace of God and faith in Jesus Christ. All things pertaining to life and godliness are the work of Jesus in us. If

we do not trust in this work, then we are not forming a substantial relationship with Him. Instead, our relationship is with the law, and we might deceive ourselves into mistaking this relationship with Christ. If this is the case, then we are in danger of Jesus being as a stranger to us.

The statement, "I will come at thee as a thief" brings to remembrance something that Jesus taught during His earthly ministry. In Matthew 24, Jesus spoke about the last days and the events surrounding His return. That chapter should be read in entirety to help inform what Jesus is communicating to Sardis. Here is an excerpt:

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come know. But this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 24:42-51)."

This idea is reiterated in Revelation 16:

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon (Revelation 16:13-16)."

If we replace relationship with Jesus with law or other outward observances that are established within various Christian sects, then Jesus will not be pleased with us, and we might not recognize Him at all.

We can consider this in the spirit. When some truth that pertains to Jesus's righteous standards is presented to us, we might reject it because we consider our legalistic obedience to be sufficient. This makes us hypocrites and it is revealed that we hate the righteousness of God. Moreover, this causes a danger of being spiritually drunken. When we adhere to our standards,

and another doesn't, we might hate them in our heart while we consider ourselves to be morally superior.

These tendencies make Sardis vulnerable to the ways of Satan and the false prophet, ways that are sure to be focused on performing outward rules while condemning others who do not follow suit.

The Great Whore of Mystery Babylon—which includes the apostate church that does not repent—hunts down and kills those who do not worship the false christ and do the outer work of “receiving the mark of the beast or the number of his name.”

The false christ will claim to be God, but the Spirit of God is not with him. The Great Whore is also said to be “the hold of every foul spirit.” [xiv] These might have a “name that they live” but they are dead.

As Christians, we are supposed to become acquainted with Jesus, and our relationship with Him should grow. As our relationship grows, we will get to know Him by the Spirit that is within us. As we learn how to walk in the Spirit as a son of God (“as many as walk after the Spirit of God are the sons of God,”) [xiii] we will live in a manner that pleases Jesus. As we please Him and get to know Him, He will reveal Himself to us and He will also keep us from deception. The false christs of the world will not overtake us, and when Jesus returns, we will be ready and expecting Him.

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

How do we keep our garments? How is this true of some in Sardis? We keep our garments by properly respecting the calling that we have in Jesus Christ. This is demonstrated in Jesus's parable of the wedding feast. See Matthew 22. Those who enter the kingdom of God “without a wedding garment” are cast out. The wedding garment is given by grace through faith in Jesus, and faith that is not dead naturally results in the work of the Spirit. Without Spirit-produced works, there is no wedding garment because it is the Spirit that unites the believer with Jesus Christ.

Within the legalistic church of Sardis, there are a few who take the Christian faith to heart and are fruitful in it. Because they seek Jesus in faith and form a relationship with Him and trust in Him for their salvation, their white garments are kept, and they are written in the book of life.

Concern for Present-Day Ministers of Jesus

There are a few highly unfortunate teachings that come to mind when considering the letter to the Church of Sardis, because legalism abounds in many churches.

There are laws about which day a person should worship. Paul the apostle says, *“one man honors one day above the rest, another honors every day alike. Let each be persuaded in his own mind (Romans 14).”* There are laws restricting music in worship, even though the Psalms are played on musical instruments and there is no sin involved. There are laws telling the Christian that they must attend a church regularly, or they are not true believers, even though the Spirit unites the believer with Christ, and we become the temple of God in Him.

Some adhere to certain laws of the Old Covenant, like dietary and dress restrictions, even though Jesus fulfilled all of the law. Paul addresses the fallacy of Christians adhering to Jewish law in Galatians 5. *“If you are justified by the law, then you have fallen from grace.”* As the Spirit wrote to Sardis, *“Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.”*

There are laws about performing certain rituals, like confession and communion. Confession can be made directly to Jesus. We don’t need an intercessor because He is our Advocate. Communion is a spiritual practice as we remember Jesus’s sacrifice and the fact that His broken body is the bread of life for us.

There are even prayers that a person is given to recite, and they are told that in reciting this certain prayer, they are “saved.” In reality, the scripture used in Romans 10 to create the “sinner’s prayer,” has a deeper and spiritual meaning. Our confession of Jesus is an ongoing life lived in Jesus Christ. We must continue in the faith, not make a one-time declaration then feel false assurances of salvation without real dedication to Jesus. The same is true of baptism. Though baptism is something we should do as a sign of good will toward Jesus, this is not required in any legalistic sense. Rather, it should be the fruit of faith.

All things that a Christian does to be a Christian should be the natural fruits of faith and the work of the Spirit according to the grace of God, not something that man imposes. No matter how righteous it seems, these regulations usurp Jesus and the Holy Spirit and lead to false conversions, accusations, and division among the brethren, and robs people of relationship with Jesus.

These regulations were sometimes made with good intentions, but many times these were put in place by people who wanted to make a name for themselves as some great church leader or reformer. Many of the denominations came to be in this manner, and they are not of the Spirit of God.

The issues of Sardis are found in both charismatic and cessationist churches. Some believe that the things of the Spirit have “ceased” and are no longer active today, including the gift of prophecy, speaking in tongues, healing, and other miraculous gifts. Along with this, people are discouraged from seeking to receive the Holy Spirit in a demonstrative and powerful manner.

They are instead told that they should just believe that they have the Spirit, even if no fruit follows.

Charismatic churches have misconceptions as well. Many within the charismatic churches believe that a person will no longer be able to sin after receiving the Spirit. There are also charismatic churches that do many “signs and wonders” that are not of the Spirit of God, and there are many false prophets among them.

As a consequence of neglecting the Spirit, both the cessationist and charismatic churches have troubles with legalism—which neglects the things of the Spirit of God in favor of laying outward rules and regulations onto their congregants.

Rather than trusting in the Spirit of God to do the work of God within the heart of each individual Christian according to the timing and will of God, they attempt to usurp the Spirit through faithless acts of the law and of the flesh.

The gospel is simple. Jesus, the Son of God, died for the sins of mankind. His sacrifice on the cross pays the debt of our sin. We believe in the “good news of the kingdom of God.” This is a kingdom of righteousness, and since we have sinned, we need forgiveness so that we can live with God and receive everlasting life. Jesus also sent the Spirit of God to dwell in the heart of the believer, bringing to us that kingdom that comes “not with observation” and is “within you.” As we learn to walk after the Spirit of God, we reside in that kingdom even now. The laws of this kingdom are written in our hearts, and we are changed into the likeness of Christ overtime as the Spirit works in us. This is His work.

We cannot be as those who are “drunken” and “take the Kingdom by force.” This is a spiritual kingdom of the Spirit of God and not the structures of man. This is a real kingdom too, and Jesus will establish it when He comes to overthrow the false christ.

All teachings that neglect the covenant of Jesus Christ are of Sardis. These might have a name that they are Spirit-filled or that they are “saved,” but without due respect for Jesus and the Spirit that brings life, there is no life in them. Legalism will not get you there—in any of its forms—of which there are many indeed.

Strengthen your understanding so that you might find your own areas of legalism and faithlessness, repent, and die to those fruitless teachings and works of the flesh that take you and those who you lead towards bloody, defiled ends.

Concern for Present-Day Christian Brethren Generally

For Christians in the West, it seems that the ways of Sardis abound in great measure. Whether you are of the charismatic mindset or the cessationist mindset, legalism robs you of the liberty found in the Spirit of God. Seek the Spirit of God—who is still very much active today. Jesus said that He would send the Spirit to those who seek to obey Him. If you want to live according to

His righteous standards—standards that make one part of His everlasting kingdom—then He will send the Spirit to do that work within you.

This is Jesus in you, and you are in Him. You will learn to walk in the Spirit, which means that your heart will not be corrupted by the sins of this world as you grow in true righteousness overtime that results from an actual change of nature—not rules, regulations, or other manner of so-called Christian living or churchgoing. Laws and rules do not make a person righteous. This is why Jesus came to give us a new and better covenant than that of the Jews.

He came to die for us AND to raise us again! His Spirit is the beginning of that resurrection. His Spirit is the seal of God that lets us know for sure that we are His, and He will do His work in us. [xv] Our strength is never enough. Our works never save us. He will do all things! Trust in Him. Trust in His blood to cleanse your sins. Trust in His Spirit to renew your heart and mind. Trust in Him to breathe Life back into you when Jesus returns!

Being a Christian is not about going to church, tithing, taking communion, making confession, reciting special prayers, or doing any other outward thing that man says you must do. This is about getting to know Jesus, so when it is time for Him to return, you will be ready. He will not come as a thief, and your garments will be white as snow because His blood cleanses you and you remained faithful as one who walks by faith in the Spirit and not by sight according to the law.

Get to know Jesus, and as you do, you will see your sin. You will see that you do not in any way measure up to the standards of His Kingdom—standards of the heart and spirit and not standards of the flesh. When you see this, acknowledge that His sacrifice is sufficient to forgive your sins, and ask for the Holy Spirit in the Name of Jesus also.

You do not need to recite a special prayer or go to a certain church to receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus has the fullness of the Spirit of God, and He can give Himself to you and in whatever measure He deems. He might not give you the Spirit the first time you ask, and maybe not the hundredth time. Keep asking. He will come to you when it is time. Do not let anyone rob you of the Spirit of God that makes you free and leads you into a real relationship with Jesus.

In Conclusion

The troubles within the Church of Sardis seem to be summarized as stagnant, dead faith. There are two camps of Christian thought that we might attribute to this problem today.

One is the idea that a person can recite a certain prayer or make a one-time commitment to Jesus then claim that their salvation is assured, even if they do not go on to live a Christian life from that point on, but instead go about living their lives as they please without committing themselves to Jesus's service. They claim to be alive in Christ by the blood of Jesus, but there is no fruit of their faith.

Some hold this idea and do live a generally upright life. However, they reach a place of righteousness that they deem acceptable then stop there, failing to continue to grow because their lives are cleaned up outwardly enough to create an appearance of being a good Christian. Yet, their inner world is sinful, and they use the blood of Jesus to justify themselves without repentance or care for their state or for service that goes beyond legalism, going to church, and doing good to be seen by others.

Another is similar to the first. There is a notion among some who are of the holiness mindset that a person is not capable of sin if they follow Jesus sincerely. They consider themselves to be without sin, not merely by the blood of Jesus, but in their day-to-day lives.

How are these similar?

These are similar because they create the same outcomes: a failure to be honest about sin, a failure to repent from sin as it manifests in their life, and a failure to grow in the things of God given of the Spirit of God through Jesus Christ. Both claim to be sinless. Both claim to be alive in some capacity, yet the fruit is not life but stagnancy and death. What's worse is when we add rules upon rules, assume that we are righteous because of these rules, and then accuse others of sin wrongfully if they do not abide by our legalistic standards.

How do we overcome the troubles found within the Church of Sardis?

Let's consider the first camp of thought.

We need to recognize that being saved from sin and death through Jesus also means entering His service. We cannot expect to live as we did before, without regard for sin or for seeking Jesus so that we can be gifted in the Spirit and made useful for His purposes and for our brethren in Christ.

Although our salvation is freely given by the grace of God, grace does not leave a person bound to a life of servitude to sin but makes us free from sin in a tangible way according to the measure of grace we received, the service we are given, and the amount of time that we have available to live out our lives as Christians and grow in righteousness.

We were bought with the precious price of the Son of God. Though freely given to us, the cost is extremely high. God became a man and died for us in a brutal and humiliating manner. We owe Him everything, even our own lives on this earth. That is the least we can do. As Paul the apostle stated, giving up our lives for Jesus is our "reasonable service."

If we give our lives for Jesus, then He will work in us, change our sinful nature so that we are more like Him, and give us things to do that will honor His name and help people grow up in Him—and there is always more growth to seek. We might clean up our act to a large degree, but that should not keep us from continuing to seek the Lord so that He might search out the sin in our lives and help us overcome. We cannot be negligent and stagnant.

If we neglect our salvation and count the blood of the Son of God as some light thing that we can take advantage of, then our faith is dead, and we are not saved. If we have faith in Jesus, then we will want to get to know Him. We will learn about Him. We will see that He expects us to live uprightly. We will learn that He promised to send us the Holy Spirit and to work His righteousness in us in this present life. This is His work in us, not our works. He will do it because He is faithful, and we put our faith and trust in Him.

It is hard to have faith that Jesus can change us. We see how sinful we are, and we feel hopeless. Maybe we even love our sin, and we feel ashamed about that. If we are honest about our sin and approach Jesus, He will not despise us or reject us. That is the first step. We must be honest about who we are and know that Jesus is the only way.

We also need to forge a real relationship with Jesus through prayer, learning the scriptures as we are able, and continuing to seek Him despite the challenges we face with sin or with troubles in this life. We also remember that performing outward rituals or good works is not the same as a real relationship with Jesus.

As we get to know Him and spend real time with Him personally, we will see His work in us, and our faith is made stronger. We will not defile our garments because we trust in Jesus to cover our sin; we are no longer servants of this world and of sin, but of the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ.

Now, let's consider the second camp of thought.

As Christians, we want to live without sin. We do not want to bring shame to the name of Jesus. Because of this, it can be tempting to claim to live a sinless life, especially when we see a drastic change that is far removed from the life that we lived before.

However, if we believe that a Christian must be without any sin in this world to truly be saved or to have received the Holy Spirit, we might begin to justify our sinful actions to retain the illusion of being sinless.

We must remember that the righteousness of God is very deep and broad, even searching the intentions of the heart and the thoughts of the mind. The righteousness of God cannot be attained by doing outward things only, and those who want to be holy often hold themselves to high standards in their manner of dress, worship, church attendance, and the need for community outreach.

The outer works are great, but what about the hidden things that are easy to neglect? What about vanity? What about pride? What about greed and covetousness? What about addiction to luxurious living? What about misjudging people and falsely accusing them outwardly or in the heart?

There is always going to be more to gain in Jesus, no matter how righteous we think we have become. We must remember what Jesus said about the Pharisee and the tax collector. An honest sinner is more accepted by God than a person who calls themselves righteous.

There is another problem that both camps of thought have in common.

Both tend to accuse other Christians of being false, fake, or possessed by evil spirits.

Take the first camp of thought. Those who believe in a one-time declaration of faith, also called “faith plus nothing” often accuse those of the holiness mindset, who are often charismatic Christians, of supporting works-based salvation or of falsifying spiritual experiences. They look down on those who are of the holiness mindset, esteeming their faith to be superior. Many also get consumed by the sins of others because they fail to look at their own sin honestly.

Take the second camp of thought. Those who believe in holiness often accuse other Christians of being false, part of the Great Whore, or otherwise in league with Satan. They look down on those who are of the “faith plus nothing” mindset, esteeming themselves superior. Many also get consumed by the sins of others because they fail to look at their own sin honestly.

Claiming to be without sin is dangerous, especially if we start to condemn others while we hypocritically live in sin ourselves. Refer again to Matthew 24 and Luke 12.

We do not want to be found “drunken” with our false sense of sinlessness and superiority and our condemning of others who we see as lesser Christians, or worse yet, not Christians at all. We are all in differing stages of growth, and we do not know what the Lord might do with any of us.

It seems that we can defile our garments in a few ways, though they are connected. We can defile our garments by taking the blood of Jesus onto ourselves without proper respect, service, and regard for the things of God and true relationship with Jesus. We can also defile our garments with the blood of others who we self-righteously hate, accuse, and condemn. Most notably, we can defile our garments by leading others into spiritual death with teachings that replace Spirit with regulation.

Both require us to turn a blind eye to our own sin and to repent as we keep the first and great commandment: “Thou shalt love thy Lord with all thy heart, soul, and mind.”

If we keep this commandment, then we will naturally progress in the right things. We will not defile ourselves with love of sin and murderous intents towards fellow man.

In summation, when Jesus returns, we do not want to be found in a state of stagnancy, worldliness, false accusations, slanders, and hatred of our fellow servants. We also do not want Jesus to come as a thief and stranger, but as our friend. We must get to know Him and serve Him faithfully as we look to our own sin, grow in the Spirit, and serve one another as He would have us to do—which means we live for Him and not ourselves, our greed, our gain, our vanity,

our pride, or anything else that our modern Christian society deems acceptable. We belong to Him and Him alone.

When He returns, we will hear, “well done, good and faithful servant.” Our name will not be blotted out but written in heaven forever.

Additional Scriptures when Considering the Letter to the Church in Sardis

The entirety of the New Testament is relevant to the troubles of the Church of Sardis because this church is far removed from the message of the gospel through their negligence of the Spirit and through the laws by which they substitute Him. Below are some specific scriptures, but these are only excerpts. The entire chapter or book is highly useful, so please consider the full context as you are able—particularly pay attention to John 14-16 (not listed here because it’s too much to cover), Romans 8, and Galatians:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit (John 3:3-8)

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (Romans 8: 1-9).

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit

the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another (Galatians 5: 1-26).

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:4-19).

All of Galatians

All of John 14-16

Revelation 16

[i] Revelation 5:6 [ii] Revelation 4:5 [iii] John 3:34-35 [iv] Luke 1, John 1 [v] Romans 8:11 [vi] John 16:7

[vii] Luke 24:49 [viii] Acts 2:1-4 [ix] John 14:18-20 [x] John 15:4-5 [xi] Jeremiah 31:33, Hebrews 10:16

[xii] Philippians 1:6 [xiii] Romans 8 [xiv] Revelation 18:2 [xv] Ephesians 1

These Things Saith He unto the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia

⁷ And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

⁸ I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

⁹ Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

¹⁰ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

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

¹² Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

¹³ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Revelation 3:1-13).

These things saith He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the Key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

Jesus is uniquely set apart from this world; He is completely genuine and sincere. Jesus is the Everlasting King on the Throne of David, and He decides who gets into His kingdom and who does not. The above statement is important because it reminds us that Jesus is perfectly worthy to rule, He will establish His kingdom, and He is true to what He said about everything His kingdom and His kingship entails.

Jesus is Holy.

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” [i]

What does it mean to be holy? Holy means sacred or set apart from this world for God’s purposes. Jesus is sacred and set apart in a manner that is unique to Himself because He is the

first begotten Son of God and Savior of mankind. Jesus is also the only person to walk in the flesh without sin because He is God incarnate, conceived by the Holy Spirit of God.

There is no other like Him, and there is no other method of salvation for mankind. None of us have lived a truly holy life because none have lived a life separate from sin, and as such, none of us are naturally suitable for everlasting life because we are creatures of this world and not of the Kingdom of God.

However, through faith and the grace of God, we are made holy by Jesus, and He instructs us to be holy because He is holy. We will not be holy as He is holy—not in the unique sense that only He can possess by sheer means of who He is—but by the perfect sacrifice that He made and sincere dedication to living a life that is set apart, or holy, for His purposes.

Here are some scriptures about the holiness of Jesus and how we as believers should strive in holiness also:

There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God (1 Samuel 2).

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isaiah 57:15).

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright (Hebrews 12:11-16).

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come (Revelation 4:8)

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he

which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:3-6).

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest (Revelation 15:3-4).

Jesus is True.

“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” [ii]

There are many kinds of truth, but there is only one truth that saves mankind, and this is He who is Truth: Jesus our Lord and Savior. Jesus speaks factual truths and moral truths that guide man in the right way, but more than that, *He is true* in every meaning of the word. Not only is Jesus the perfect embodiment of what it means to understand and speak truth; He demonstrates what it means *to be true*.

Jesus is completely true in His character. Meaning, Jesus is completely genuine and sincere. He is Who He is, through and through—without hypocrisy, fakery, flattery, or deception of any kind. He does not change His aim or His character, because all that He does is right. Jesus is always true in His doings. Meaning, He is completely righteous. He always hits the mark of perfection in all that He says and does, and there are no unrighteous motivations in Him. Jesus is also true in the sense of faithfulness. If He says that He will do something, then He will do it. If He says that something will be, then it will be.

Who is like Him? Who is true like He is true? If we were true like He is true, then we would not be sinners. Thanks be to God that Jesus provided a true and perfect sacrifice for those who would put their faith in Him. Through Him, we are forgiven and considered righteous in the eyes of God.

Through Him and the Spirit of Truth that He promised, we can experience a change of nature that changes us from creatures that are untrue in character to those who are more like He is. As Jesus said, *“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy*

truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" [iii]

Below are some scriptures that pertain to Jesus as He Who Is True:

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19).

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3).

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged (Romans 3:4).

That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes (Isaiah 65:16).

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Jesus Has and Is the Key of David.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." [iv]

The Son of God was given to mankind to take away their sins and to establish the Kingdom of God. This is the Good News of the Kingdom of God. This is a manifold kingdom that comes first by the Spirit of God and again when Jesus returns bodily. Both are paid for by the blood of the Son of God, because without His sacrifice none could enter this kingdom because it is a kingdom

of righteousness, and all have sinned. Jesus is the key. Without Jesus, there is only death and destruction.

He must come by His Spirit to free the hearts of man from their sinful nature, thereby bringing the kingdom that comes “not with observation” and is “within you.” [v] Just as Jesus was born in the flesh by the Holy Spirit to take away our sins, so is He born in His children. His Spirit grows in us, changing us overtime so that we grow in the ability to walk as He walked in this present world, pushing on until the day that we are raised from the dead and our birth fully accomplished. [vi] Although He reigns in us by the Spirit given to us, He also reigns in Heaven. All things are put under His feet, but we do not see that all things are under Him until He reigns in the earth. [vii]

Jesus must return. He will overthrow all the wicked rulers of this world—just as He overthrew the wicked rulers of our hearts—and those who He has reigned over in heart will rise from the dead or transfigure into renewed bodies and reign with Him in the earth. [viii]

Before that day, His church is strengthened as they renew their hearts through remembering, returning to, and thereby bringing forth He whose gospel was forgotten by many—yet always alive in a few. [ix] Satan is cast out of heaven in spirit and manifested in this present world. Tribulation comes to the earth such as was never experienced. [x]

The Throne of David is usurped for a time, but the true King will come, and His key is always in His hand and His alone. We can trust in His return—a return that will establish a righteous kingdom as He destroys all wickedness including that Wicked One “with the brightness of His coming.” [xi] We can “look to the sky for your redemption draws nigh” [xii] in faith because the Good News of the Kingdom of God is sure and must be fulfilled:

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:31-33).

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 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 (Isaiah 22:20-22).

Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall

sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness (Isaiah 16:4-5).

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this (Amos 9:11-12).

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Jesus Opens and Shuts the Way.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” [xiii]

As Christians, our hope is in the grace of God. We understand grace to mean the undeserved favor of God. It is the favor of God that gives us faith so that we can approach Jesus for mercy and forgiveness. Through the gift of faith, we are also healed and transformed by His Spirit that lives within us. As this transformation occurs, we can live righteously as the Father would have His children to do. This is the work of Jesus in us.

All things that a Christian receives are hinged on the grace of God, and it is by grace alone that we stand. God does not choose us to salvation and entrance into His kingdom because we are good people. Rather, we are made good because we are saved. Our salvation brings glory to God in that He shows mercy to sinners, and by His patience and the work of His Spirit we can turn away from a life of sin and destruction.

It is also true that not all receive the same grace from God. For some, they receive the grace of living this life only. For those who are being raised as sons of God, life eternal. God can do whatever He wants with what belongs to Him, and everything belongs to Him. Not all have faith because not all were given faith, and not all have the same measure of faith. God opens and shuts. He gives mercy at His discretion, and He withholds mercy at His discretion so that His purposes are fulfilled. Below are some scriptures about the sovereign grace of God:

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9:15-16).

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (Romans 9:18-21).

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last (Luke 13:23-30).

As those who overcome as seen in Revelation 15 say of Jesus, “Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.” [xiv] Only Jesus is holy as He is holy. He is the truth, and all that He does is true. He gives mercy at His discretion, and His judgment is just—and He will return and reign, and all will worship Him. With these attributes of Christ in mind, let us do our best to consider what the Spirit is saying to the Church of Philadelphia.

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I

have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”

These words of comfort are glad to be received by such a one as Philadelphia. Being sometimes weak in the faith, keeping the words of Jesus and all that He stands for can seem like an impossible feat. The calling to a life of holiness seems attainable at times, and at other times seems to fall flat amid painful struggling against sin, only to find greater depths of wretchedness that needs to be dealt with.

Moreover, the calling to truth can at times seem overshadowed by a world of lies and treachery, both within the faith and without. This is especially true when searching for He who Is True. Many claim to know Him, but He does not claim to know them. Where should the seeking Christian go for instruction, and how can one who is coming to know Jesus teach amid the treacherous territory of false doctrine and false teachers?

In all things, the grace of God is a welcome retreat from the failings of the flesh—a grace that Jesus gives at His discretion according to the sovereign will of the Father. God is in full control, and He has predestined some to serve Him faithfully and He has predestined those who would betray Christ and His followers.

He knows their works. Contrast this with *“depart from me, you who work iniquity. I never knew you.” [xv]* Philadelphia will not hear those words. Despite their weakness—and indeed because of it—they have learned by the grace of God to trust in Jesus Christ alone. They cannot trust in their own “holiness.” They embrace the wise proverb, *“lean not on your own understanding” [xvi]* as they realize that truth can be elusive, and the wisdom of fools is not far from their own heart at times. Who can know the mind of God? Who can know He who Is Truth? They cannot by any means be worthy enough for the Kingdom of God, yet they strive in faith, trusting in the work of the cross and the sanctification of the Spirit as promised.

As they strive in the faith, they do not hide their little strength from Jesus, but rather, they run to Him because of it as they confess their sin openly as one who “walks in the light” [xvii] with sorrow of heart, and with faith—sometimes great faith and sometimes little faith—hoping for the redemption of their soul and evidence of their salvation through a life that more resembles their Lord, Jesus.

Jesus has set before them an open door. The grace of God through Jesus Christ that makes one welcome residents of the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them, even if they do not presently see this as they would like. Just as all wait to see Jesus reign in this present world, so do they wait in faith patiently trusting in this promise. The door is already open. It must yet be fulfilled that they should walk through it. As Paul the apostle wrote, *“this mortal must put on immortality.” [xviii]* That which is sown in corruption will be raised in newness of life, and this promise of God will one day be fulfilled—and their little strength will not prevent it because this is the work of Jesus in them.

Few pains are like that of a Christian who fears their weakness or worries that they have disappointed Jesus in some way. Yet, despite moments of weakness or doubt, they keep the ways of Jesus. They have remained faithful ministers of the truth they were given. They have not denied His name. By seeking Jesus earnestly as one who has a “poor and contrite spirit,” they have kept the faith. Their works are that of a broken heart, praise, thanksgiving, trust, and a desire to see the Kingdom of God furthered in this present world, and none of that as perfectly as they would have it. One day they will hear, *“well done, thou good and faithful servant,”* [xix] to which they respond, *“I am an unprofitable servant. I did that which was my duty to do.”* [xx]

“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.”

There are many who claim to be Jews; there are many who claim that God is their Father, but they are not truly redeemed from the snares of their *real* father, the devil and Satan. [xxi] Although we are all naturally the spiritual children of Satan, in that we have served sin, some continue in his works without real repentance and contrition of heart. What’s worse is when they discourage the true believer from pursuing a life of holiness and truth in Christ Jesus alone. Some are holier-than-thou, casting the “sinner” far away in a hypocritical and unjust manner. Some embrace a life of sin and discourage the faithful from furthering their walk in Christ. Some scoff at true Christian doctrine, esteeming the characteristics of God to be hateful, outdated, or unjust. Many use all the above to accuse and condemn the children of God as false followers, apostates, and so forth.

Such treatment can be enough to make little-strength Philadelphia’s heart faint and might even cause them to call their faith, Christian service, and even their sanity into question. Yet, there is reassurance from Jesus. He knows of the Synagogue of Satan, and He will cause them to know that Jesus has loved them.

As it is written near the close of Isaiah, *“your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake said, ‘let the Lord be glorified!’ Yet He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.”* [xxii] Those who overcome will sit with Jesus in His throne, and as all confess that Jesus is Lord and bow before Him, so will they bow before those who are with Him as it is written in scripture: *“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* [xxiii]

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

There are numerous scriptures detailing the awe-inspiring patience of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. In keeping the ideas within these scriptures, the heart is kept from the hour of temptation—the hour in which man denies the patience of God and is fully given to the darkness of this world, even the Prince of Darkness himself.

Giving into this temptation can cause a person to be as one who says, “the Lord delays His coming” and is found “drunken and smiting their fellow servant.” [xxiv] It is said of the Great Whore in Revelation 17 that she is “drunken with the blood of saints of all that were slain upon the earth.” If we do not patiently wait on Jesus, but instead become full of vengeance, wrath, and self-righteous indignation, then we will invariably follow the false Christ and join in his persecutions.

Vengeance is God’s and He will have it. He will raise up servants with power to cast plagues and to slay man by the word of God that they speak. [xxv] However, this is done by the Spirit and the will of God—not by their own corruption of heart. They patiently wait for this calling also, as those who seek peace and pursue it, preach the gospel, and trust in the timing and provision of the Holy Spirit’s outpour into hearts of the remnant of God’s chosen people for the purpose of encouraging repentance and boldly standing against the Son of Destruction.

Scriptural ideas pertaining the patience of Jesus include the following (scripture is cited and a summary is provided. Reading the cited scripture is encouraged):

1 Peter 1-2: Our faith is tried as we endure many temptations, but if we patiently continue in well-doing, then we will receive the reward of our faith which is a crown of life. In our patience, we should remember the example of Jesus—He who patiently suffered the wrongs of evil men without being overcome by evil Himself but remained blameless in word and in deed.

2 Peter 3: We patiently wait on the Lord, even as others scoff at us and mock us stating that our Lord has delayed His coming. We know that the Lord will fulfill His promises, but He is patient as He gives time and space for all who belong to Him to repent. As we patiently endure ridicule, we can rejoice in knowing that the Lord is making time for our brethren to come to Him. We also know that Jesus will return and judge, and we want to be found faithful at His coming because the unrighteous cannot stand in His presence.

Romans 2: We should not despise the patience of God that leads many to repentance. We also remember that Jesus judges without respect of persons, meaning no one is too big and important to get away with sin not repented of. We may need some time to repent ourselves, so we should not be so quick to see the judgment of God, nor should we be overly eager to judge one another.

Romans 5: Difficult times make us stronger and increase our patience, experience, and hope in the Lord. We remember that Jesus died for the ungodly, and we are justified by His sacrifice. We are not going to face His wrath, and as we grow in the faith, we have more confidence in our salvation as we experience the mercy and patience of the Lord first-hand.

Romans 9: Jesus endures the wicked patiently until His work is completed, and He is in control of all things. He will save all who He intends to save. Jesus is glorified in the wicked, so when we feel disheartened because of the wicked who seem to prevail, we can know that they will bring honor to God in the end and all things are coming together for our good.

James 5: Suffer affliction with patience just as the prophets suffered and as Jesus also suffered. Even now He endures much until the time of His coming is accomplished. Take comfort in His mercy and compassion for those who suffer for His sake.

Hebrews 6: Having received correct instruction in the faith, let us go on to perfection in faith, knowing that we have assured victory in Jesus Christ who came before us. Be followers of those who with faith received the promises of God, as Abraham. If we continue in this faith, we will see the work of the Lord, Jesus in us.

We might notice recurring ideas.

Jesus died for the ungodly, and this includes us. We can have faith in His sacrifice, even as our faith is tested by a life among those who would do us harm or do harm to the Christian faith.

We endure suffering with patience, not repaying evil for evil, because we know that this is the calling we have as Christians. Having received mercy, how can we do anything but give it as much as is possible?

We endure knowing that Jesus is no respecter of important persons, so we should not be so high and mighty in our judgements of others, but rather we should look to our own sin and be glad that Jesus gives many—including us—time to repent.

Just because we are covered by His blood does not mean we have no need to repent of the sins that we live out in this present world. However, we repent in good faith, knowing that He will save all who He intends to save—and this means allowing the wicked to continue until His time has come to return and judge the earth.

He will come and He will fulfill His promises—this is both a fearful and wonderful thing, so we should live out our days in this world in godly fear of the Lord and in faith, seeking the grace of God and placing our trust in the sufficient sacrifice of the Son as we grow in our knowledge of Him and our ability to live in a manner that is pleasing to Him—a manner that means enduring the wicked with righteousness and with patience while boldly declaring the truth of the gospel.

His work will be done in us. It can be difficult to endure the trying of our faith, especially when sin clings to us. However, we have peace knowing that we are the work of Christ, and He will complete His work. We continue in patience, bearing the cross spiritually as we die to self and are made more like Him. This work will be done. We will go on to perfection, so let us never yield to sin.

As with all of Philadelphia's imperfections, keeping the patience of the Lord imperfectly is a difficult cross to bear. However, as the scriptures promise, when we call out to Jesus, He will

hear us and deliver us from all our troubles. Especially the troubles of sinful thoughts and actions, overwhelming emotions, and dreadful fears, even fears of denying the Lord Himself and of great failure in the faith. His grace is sufficient, even when the patience we have is weak. As the scriptures say, Christ is made strong in weakness, and as we continue, patience will have its perfect work one day. His Spirit will embolden, strengthen, and set an open door before His chosen so they can faithfully testify as witnesses of Jesus Christ.

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”

To be a firmly set fixture in the house of God is a glorious promise and comfort for one whose strength is little and one who seems to have no sound and sure place in this world. They long for a place, and not just any place, but one that is with Jesus Himself and those who love Him in sincerity. Though they bear a name of shame in the earth, meaning they have no reputation to boast of among man, they receive a name of victory in Christ as He claims them as His own.

It is also comforting because of their own sinful struggles. When we sin, there is some deficit of faith because we would know that God is always there, and He can see what we do. When conscientiously striving in sin, one might feel they cannot help but come in and out of the presence of God time and time again. Though if they could, they would never again leave or yield to sin.

Concern for Present-Day Ministers of Jesus

It is important for ministers of Christ to set a good example of the patience of Jesus Christ. This seems to have a few applications.

One, this means turning away from a life of wonton sin and love of this world. Yet, it also means being an example of patiently enduring the fight against sin with honesty, humility, and the right attitude toward sin. Sin is not acceptable in any measure, and we will overcome. In-fact, we have overcome already because we serve a God that “calls things that are not as though they are.” [xxvi] Even so, as John stated, *“be not deceived. He that does righteousness is righteous.”* [xxvii] We are not to be cavalier over sin, treating it as some light thing that we all do every day. We want our sins to be fewer and fewer, and when found within ourselves, something that we fervently abhor.

Being open about failings and sinful struggles—with reverence for the blood of Jesus and with wise discretion so as not to cause brethren to stumble into sin—will benefit many but it will not appeal to everyone.

This will not appeal to those who want to claim holiness prematurely. This occurs on two spectrums. There are those who are of the “holiness” mindset that claim premature perfection. They do not overtly corrupt the judgement of God or His standards, though they often fill their sins in with legalistic practices or other forms of justification that are not according to a Spiritual application of the scripture. On the other side, there are those who have so twisted holiness that good is made evil and evil is made good. For some, sin is holiness. Many deny honest striving against sin, because sin is not properly defined, but praised and something to be honored.

In both instances, the striving sinner is mocked by many. However, your honesty is comforting to those whose sin weakens their faith. Demonstrating the same, patient fight against sin can be a welcome rest from the hardness and holier-than-thou attitude exhibited by many on both extremes ranging from Sardis to Thyatira, respectively.

However, the longer the journey in the faith, the greater the progress. Expect progress, and be an example of this too in humility, not as an old wine skin, knowing that there is yet more to gain. Do not quench or grieve the Spirit of God. We are never so good, wise, or perfect as He who is from everlasting to everlasting. To claim perfection in this present life neglects the patience of a saint of God—the patience that we must wait for the redemption of our bodies to achieve the fullness of our birth in Christ. As we wait, we trust in the words of our Savior. He says that His work is done, and it is done and will be done. “He that began a good work in you is faithful to complete it.” [xxviii]

Secondly, this means enduring others with patience. Just as we want Jesus to continue dealing patiently with us, so do we strive to show patience with others. This means rebuking sin truthfully, but also with as much humility as possible so as not to encourage people to feel as if they are better than other people. It is by grace that we stand.

There is a time for all things, including a sharp rebuke—even one that removes unrepentant, harmful sinners and heresies from the church. However, we remember Jesus who said, “*you know not what spirit you are of.*” [xxix] If such a rebuke is not done exclusively by the Holy Spirit but is instead more like the spirits of devils and Satan as we falsely accuse, slander, and refuse patience where it is due, then we ourselves are in danger of judgment if we do not repent.

Not all are given this authority; not all are apostles or prophets. If we “covet the greater gifts,” [xxx] as the apostle Paul encourages, then we should patiently wait for the Lord. We are His servants, and what matters most is that we are, by the grace of God, willing to do whatever He calls us to do to the glory of our Father.

Thirdly, we patiently wait on the coming of Jesus and encourage others to do the same. This means encouraging the faith of those who are shaken by His seemingly delayed coming. “*One day with God is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*” [xxxi] He will return, and He will fulfill His promises. This also means encouraging others to wait on the judgment of God as given to the Son, Jesus. He will avenge. We wait on He who will come to avenge the

blood of all who are slain for His sake. *“He that leads into captivity must go into captivity. He that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” [xxxii]*

This also means enduring suffering and persecution with patience, not repaying evil for evil, but striving to overcome evil with good. Consider the letter to the church of Smyrna for more on the suffering of the faithful Christian—a suffering that no false “rapture” notion will prevent. There is no rapture, but there is the resurrection, and we can be kept from temptation by calling out to Jesus with faith and patience, trusting Him to deliver our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies from the ultimate evil: Death.

All the above applies to patiently enduring the ridicule from those who claim to be of the faith but are not. All things are going according to the preordained will of God, and all things are working for His glory and for our benefit. Those who mock, slander, persecute, or murder the humble sinner who strives in the narrow way will be made to bow before Jesus and those who faithfully follow Him, and in the Kingdom to come, there is a great and everlasting reward.

Concern for Present-Day Christian Brethren Generally

Good instruction is very beneficial, but there is a lot of misguided and even dangerous instruction in the world. There are many who claim to be ministers of God, but they are either immature or they are imposters. The best way to find faithful ministers of the gospel is to seek Jesus. Ask Him to show you where to go or ask that He teach you Himself by the Holy Spirit. He can give a gift of understanding to anyone as He chooses. Search the scriptures as you are able, and above all, ask to receive the Holy Spirit that makes all things known to us according to God’s perfect timing and methods.

In all things, strive to keep the patience of Jesus Christ as described throughout this chapter. What applies to the ministers of God applies to all, because as we grow in the faith, each of us should reach a point in which we have some capacity to teach the things of God to others. Once we come to others in His name, we are ministering in some capacity. This is not exclusive to pastors, preachers, bible teachers, and the like.

We all should strive to become a minister of the things of Jesus Christ and to reach a point in our walk in which the Spirit guides us first. Then, we receive the teachings of others as a comfort and welcome fellowship, but not as one who is unable to stand on his or her own two feet by the grace of the Lord.

It is a great failing within the faith today to make people feel as if they must depend on leaders within “church.” We who are of the Spirit of God are the church, and we are being made into sons of God. Therefore, we need to mature. True leaders in the faith should encourage their fellow servants to become sufficient in the Lord by the Spirit within them. Not that fellowship becomes less needful. What becomes less needful is having a few exalted too highly while keeping their congregants in a perpetual state of infancy.

Yet, let us always consider our state as babes in Christ. We remain humble before Him, seek Him, trust in Him, and look to have more of the Christ-like nature manifest in the way that we live out our lives.

Never let anyone discourage you from seeking a life of holiness, and this includes remaining honest and sorry for sin as we patiently wait for Christ to be formed in us. Jesus is holy. Jesus is true. Jesus has the key of David. Turn to Him and place Him ahead of all else, and with patience attain all that He has in store for you.

On a final note, do not be discouraged when what Jesus has in store for you means suffering in this world. Jesus said that we should expect the world to hate us, and we should expect our enemy, Satan, to roam around and do whatever he can to devour the children of God. Resist him in faith and patiently continue despite your battle wounds, because you already have the victory in Christ. Do not let anyone accuse your faith because of your suffering or your troubles with sin for which you are sorrowful and honest before God. Many have suffered and died for the faith, and this was not a sign of God's wrath or of failure on the part of the believer. Rather, suffering makes us more like Christ, and the more we patiently suffer for righteousness' sake, the greater the reward in heaven.

In Conclusion

Let us begin our conclusion by returning our minds toward He who wrote this letter by His Spirit. Jesus, the Holy one of Israel who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, has overcome all things including death, so that we can overcome also. Our God is in full control of all things, and nothing can frustrate His plans. We can trust in all that He said He will do because His word is true. We can consider it done already even though we do not presently see all things fulfilled.

Though we are not perfectly holy, we take the calling of holiness seriously. Though we humbly know that we cannot know all truth, we strive to be faithful ministers of whatever measure of truth we are given as we first strive to know He who is the Truth, and most importantly, strive to be known by Him. We should live in the light as John states in 1 John 1. We do not try to hide our sin from God, pay lip service to Jesus, or take His sacrifice and promises for granted.

Jesus will perform His work in us, and His work is always perfect. We will be perfect because we must be made perfect. His kingdom is one of righteousness, and by His blood and the gift of grace through God-given faith, we attain. We have passed from judgment to life, and the Spirit equips us to serve our Lord, and by the Spirit, our mortal bodies are renewed now and in the resurrection to come.

The Church of Philadelphia is one of the two who received no rebuke from the Spirit of the Lord. The other is the **Church of Smyrna**. Despite having little strength, Philadelphia has not denied Jesus and all that His name represents. Perhaps they need this acknowledgement.

When we are surrounded by enemies of the faith, especially those who claim to be of the faith but are not fully committed or not committed at all, we might begin to question ourselves. When many claim that it is we who have denied the faith, we might at times wonder if this is true. Especially if we have little strength. Perhaps they are also hard on themselves, always feeling as if they are falling short and have become a disappointment to God.

Jesus provides affirmation. Because of their faithfulness despite weakness, through faith and the grace of God, He has set before them an open door. It was foretold that David would have an heir who would reign forever. This heir is Jesus, and His Kingdom is His to give as He wills.

Perhaps Jesus is blessing this church in the things of the Kingdom in gracious measure through gifts of the Spirit to the glory of God. Perhaps He is reminding them that He is the One who gets to decide who will reside with Him in His kingdom to come, not those who oppose this church or ostracize this church for not following suit with the ways of the Synagogue of Satan. Perhaps it is both.

Jesus acknowledges that He is aware of the Synagogue of Satan. He then declares that He will cause the Synagogue of Satan to worship before the feet of Philadelphia as they fulfill a scripture that states, “every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess the Lord, Jesus.”

Despite being an outsider among many, and despite being aware of the Synagogue of Satan, Philadelphia does not condemn their fellow servants. Instead, this church holds to the teachings of Jesus, such as the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. They understand that many might seem to be false Christians, but they are merely immature Christians. They understand that judgment will come at a time when the Lord deems, so they refrain from judging others before their time.

They might also recall what Jesus said about those who are found “drunken and smiting their fellow servants” at His return. He stated that these are counted among the unbelievers.

They might also consider the story of David and Saul. David remained faithful to Saul, even when Saul despised him and wanted him killed. David did not retaliate or take vengeance into his own hands, even when given opportunity to do so.

In addition to remaining patient with their fellow servants among Christianity, Philadelphia shows patience with the world at large. They do not fight as man fights or for the same goals. Man fights with weapons of this world to gain the kingdoms of this world. Philadelphia fights with the weapons of the Spirit to further the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus states that the hour of temptation will try all who dwell on the earth. It seems likely that this hour of temptation coincides with the coming of the false prophet and false god. When he comes, we will also see the Great Whore of Mystery Babylon at her full—who one can reasonably assume includes all the false churches. These churches will actively persecute the true saints of God and all who fail to “worship the beast and his image or receive the mark of his name.” [xxxiii]

There are a few ways this church might be kept, and both are probably true. The first way that they are kept is in spirit. They are kept from the deception of a false, blood-thirsty god and his drunken whore-bride. The second way that they are kept is in death with the promise of resurrection. The ultimate hour of temptation comes when those who are faithful to Jesus are overcome and killed by the beast and his armies. The world will think that they have won and that their god has overcome all descent, leading to great celebration and whole-hearted allegiance to the false god.

Philadelphia is encouraged to "let no man take thy crown." In other scripture, Jesus says that those who overcome will be given a "crown of life." Philadelphia has gained the crown of life, and they are encouraged to let no one take it from them. They should not let the Synagogue of Satan discourage them or falsely accuse their faith. They also should not let the warring of man cause them to deny the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus will come speedily, and He will avenge. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

Living as a Christian in a time of faithlessness and hedonism is sure to be a lonesome and difficult time in which to live. All who are faithful to Jesus experience times of feeling cast out, and Jesus said it would be so. We are not of the world, so the world does not love us. We might not find a real home or place in this earth, but we do have a place. We will be part of the Kingdom of Heaven forever.

New Jerusalem is described in Revelation 19 and 22. All who are faithful to Jesus are part of this Holy City, and they inherit with Jesus. They also receive the new name of Jesus, signifying that they are one with Him and claimed by Him. Philadelphia might have had a name of shame before, meaning they were of no reputation and honor among man, but in Christ they have honor in Him because they glorify Him and not this world.

Additional Scriptures when Considering the Letter to the Church of Philadelphia

For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls (2 Peter 2:20-25).

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God (Romans 2:3-11).

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water (2 Peter 3:20).

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved (Romans 9:21-25).

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:14-21).

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (James 5:7-11).

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise (Hebrews 6:11-15).

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled (Revelation 6:9-11).

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints (Revelation 13:7-10).

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them (Revelation 14:11-13).

[i] Luke 1:35 [ii] John 18:37 [iii] John 17:16-19 [iv] Isaiah 9:6-7 [v] Luke 17:20 [vi] Galatians 4:19 [vii] Hebrews 2:8
[viii] 1 Thessalonians 4 [ix] Malachi 3 [x] Revelation 12, Daniel 12, Mathew 24 [xi] 2 Thessalonians 2:8
[xii] Luke 21:28 [xiii] Ephesians 2:8-10 [xiv] Revelation 15:4 [xv] Matthew 7:23 [xvi] Proverb 3
[xvii] 1 John 1:7, Ephesians 5 [xviii] 1 Corinthians 15:53-58 [xix] Matthew 25 [xx] Luke 17:10
[xxi] John 8 [xxii] Isaiah 66 [xxiii] Philippians 2:10-11 [xxiv] Matthew 24:48-50 [xxv] Revelation 11
[xxvi] Romans 4 [xxvii] 1 John 3 [xxviii] Philippians 1:6 [xxix] Luke 9 [xxx] 1 Corinthians 12:31
[xxxi] 2 Peter 3 [xxxii] Revelation 13 [xxxiii] Revelation 14

These Things Saith He unto the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans

¹⁴ And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

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

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

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

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

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

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

²¹ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

²² He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

This statement is important because it informs us that Jesus is the driving force behind all that is spoken with truth and authority. Moreover, He judges all things rightly, and He represents all things truthfully. Jesus is also the origin of all creation, both in the earth and within of the sons of God.

Jesus is the Amen.

Verily, Verily, I say unto thee...

How many times did Jesus begin a statement by saying, “verily?” This is the same word as “Amen,” and it means “truly.” This is used to accentuate the truthfulness of the statement and the significance of the statement being made. In this letter to the Laodiceans, Jesus isn’t simply stating another one of His many “verily, verily” sayings; *He is The Verily*. Jesus is The Amen. How remarkable.

Of all those statements that Jesus made, He is the truth and driving force behind them. They are true because He said them, and He cannot lie. Jesus does not say, yes and no. His yes means yes. If He says something will be, then it will be. If we were to compile a list of all Jesus’s “verily” statements, and consider them with the gravity that they deserve as sayings put into the world by He who Is the Verily—He who Is the Word of God—how might this impact us? Below are many of them:

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. **Verily** I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing (Matthew 5:25-26).

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. **Verily** I say unto you, They have their reward (Matthew 6:2).

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. **Verily** I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city (Matthew 10:14-15).

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, **verily** I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (Matthew 10:42).

For **verily** I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them (Matthew 13:17).

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for **verily** I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you (Matthew 17:19-20).

And said, **Verily** I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3).

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, **verily** I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the

ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish (Matthew 18:12-14).

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 18:18).

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, **Verily** I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23).

And Jesus said unto them, **Verily** I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, **Verily** I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh (Matthew 25:11-13).

And the King shall answer and say unto them, **Verily** I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Matthew 25:40).

And as they did eat, he said, **Verily** I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me (Matthew 26:21).

Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation (Mark 3:27-29).

And Jesus answered and said, **Verily** I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life (Mark 10:29-30).

And he said, **Verily** I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country (Luke 4:24).

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and **verily** I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (Luke 13:34-35).

Jesus answered and said unto him, **Verily, verily**, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, **Verily, verily**, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he

cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:3-6).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

Jesus answered them, **Verily, verily**, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin (John 8:34).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death (John 8:51).

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal (John 12:23-25).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (John 14:12).

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. **Verily, verily**, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you (John 16:23).

Jesus is the Faithful and True Witness.

“He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” [i]

Jesus teaches that we should not “judge according to the appearance but judge righteous judgment.” We can read about this in John 7. Some accused Jesus of having a devil because He said that they sought to kill Him. They were angry because He healed a man on the sabbath. Jesus reasoned that if circumcision could be done on the sabbath, then why not heal a man on the sabbath?

In addition to the above statement, Jesus said that He did not seek His own glory, but the glory of the One who sent Him. Therefore, He is true and there is no unrighteousness in Him. [ii]

This is one example of Jesus as the “faithful and true witness.” He judges righteously in that He does not judge according to what *seems* to be good in the eyes of man, but according to what is *actually* good. Moreover, He is faithful to the One who sent Him. Jesus consistently strove to seek the glory of His Father and not Himself. He stated that He could only do and say what the Father gave Him to do and speak.

Mankind is prone to doing the opposite. We are prone to judging according to what we see and hear, and we judge prejudicially and with hypocrisy, and very often this is because we seek our own honor over that of another. For example, the religious leaders of His day were outwardly righteous in the eyes of man, and they hypocritically judged other and considered themselves to be superior.

Most importantly, these religions authorities could not receive Jesus because they were too full of themselves, and anyone that challenged their authority was hated. They could not receive correction or instruction, and even a good deed was rendered evil in their sight because of their vehement hatred and envy. All they could see was the poor, carpenter's son and the unlearned Galilean. Jesus was judged a blasphemer and as having a devil. They could not see who Jesus *really was*. They could not see the inner man, because they had superficial sight, and with superficiality they justified themselves while condemning others.

Jesus is the opposite. He does not care how great a person appears to be in the sight of others or in their own sight. He sees who a person *really is*. He can see beyond the flesh and into the spirit because He is born of the Spirit of God. He could judge rightly if He so chose. Yet, Jesus did not come to judge man:

The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me (John 8:13-16).

It is truly remarkable that He who could righteously judge man chose to refrain from judgment. He did not come into the world to condemn man, but to save them because they were condemned already. Rather, He was a faithful witness of the Father as He who spoke the truth, not for His glory, but for the Father's. Yet, one day Jesus will judge the earth because the Father has given all judgement to Him. As the righteous judge that He is, He will "reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." He judges in favor of the humble who do not seem to be anything in the eyes of man, and He will slay the wicked with the truth of who they are.

We all deserve to be killed because of who we are. We are all sinners, yet He chooses to save some of us. When we put our faith in Him, it is His righteousness that we put our trust in. Not ours. It requires humility to know that our righteousness is not enough and never will be. We need Jesus, and we always need Him no matter how far we think we have come. After-all, all good things we have come from Him in the first place, and only He has the fullness of the Spirit of God.

There is always more for us to seek and gain. When He looks at His faithful followers, He does not see an enemy that needs to be destroyed, but a child that needs to be raised in His will. This might mean discipline and consequences for wrong doings because He also faithfully testifies to

our sin by the Spirit within us. These wrongs include trusting in the appearance of things, especially the appearance of our own righteousness or worldly gain.

There is another idea to consider. Jesus is also our Faithful and True Advocate to the Father. He claims us as His own, and what He testifies on our behalf is good because we put our faith in Him. We do not hide our sin from Him, and we trust that His work in us will be completed. Therefore, we are considered righteous before God.

Through faith, we know that despite how the world hates those who are of the Spirit of God, and though they might accuse, slander, harm, or kill us, Jesus is on our side. He will defend us if we need to be defended, He will raise us from the dead, and He will avenge us. With this faith, we can work towards walking blamelessly in this corrupt world, not repaying evil for evil, but speaking the truth in the right spirit.

This high calling is impossible with man, but with God, all things are possible. We do not want to bring shame to Jesus, and this often means enduring much shame without avenging ourselves according to worldly devices. Our weapons are of the Spirit, specifically the truth that we are given to speak on behalf of Jesus. We do not need to worry about how we appear to the ungodly, because the record that matters is the Book of Life wherein we are named by He who is Life. It is He who we defend, and He will defend us as needed as we get to know Him and make Jesus known to others.

Below are some additional scriptures to consider that pertain to Jesus as the faithful and true witness:

No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:18).

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3).

It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also (John 8:17-19).

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him (John 14:6-7).

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2).

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 10:32-33).

Jesus is the Beginning of the Creation of God.

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. [iii]

What does it mean, “the beginning of the creation of God?” There is a dual meaning.

First, Jesus is the Creator, so it is by Him and from Him that all life originates. As written in John, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” [iv]*

Secondly, Jesus is the “firstborn among many brethren” and the “first begotten of the dead.” He is the first Son of God and the first to overcome death. In Christ, we are promised resurrection from the dead and adoption as joint heirs and sons of the Kingdom of God.

These ideas fit together, and this is a remarkable, beautiful truth. The Creator, who is Jesus Christ, became man, died for man, rose again, and through faith in Him man is given eternal life. He will return to establish His Kingdom, and He will raise those who belong to Him at His coming.

All things pertaining to life come from Jesus—He who experienced death on our behalf, so that we who were dead in sin can live. It is He who orchestrates all things that pertain to our salvation. Faith is given to us by God as an act of grace and mercy. Through faith, the sacrifice of Jesus cleanses us of all sin.

We also receive faith in the truthfulness of what Jesus teaches and the importance of aiming our lives accordingly. We receive faith in the promise to send the Holy Spirit who makes the truth known to us, gifts us in the things of the Spirit, and writes the new nature of Christ into our hearts. We receive faith that despite our failings, we are not seen as sinners, but as saints.

Therefore, we can be honest about our sins, approach God for mercy, and seek the Spirit in faith to help us overcome sin in the flesh as we learn to walk better in the Spirit.

All of this is accomplished by Jesus—the Creator who creates in us a new nature that can live with Him forever—a new nature that we do not fully see. Yet, we know that “it does not yet appear what we will be, but when He appears we will be as He is.” [v] There is always more change of nature to seek, and it is good that we should, because as we see that nature formed, we also see Jesus. Who is more worth knowing? In knowing Jesus in the truest sense as we become as He is, we are made free from a corruptible nature and made into the divine nature—into sons of God.

Below are additional scriptures pertaining to Jesus as both the Creator and the firstborn among the brethren in Christ:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood (Revelation 1:5).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1-3).

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:9-13).

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Hebrews 1

Hebrews 12

Jesus is the Amen, the faithful witness of the Father to man, and the faithful witness of man to the Father. By Him, all things are made, and through faith in Him, we are created again new as sons of God. What is His faithful testimony of the Laodiceans, and what can we consider that might help us grow in the faith? Let us do our best to consider.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

Jesus knows their works, and He deems them completely unacceptable. What are their works, and why are they unpalatable to Him? Whether we are considering an actual church, Christian individuals—or preferably ourselves—we can consider works to be anything done in the Name of Jesus. Though His sacrifice pays for our sins and there is no sacrifice that we can add to remove our debt to Him, we are supposed to offer ourselves to the Lord because this is our reasonable service and the response of true faith.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1).” Although our service can include Christian sermons, Christian music, and other forms of media, what is most important is the way a Christian conduct their life. They are to offer themselves to God, for whatever purpose please Him.

Jesus describes their works as “neither cold nor hot,” but instead they are “lukewarm.” As such, they are not sacrifices that He deems acceptable. How does this apply? They do not openly oppose the gospel or reject the faith of Jesus Christ, nor do they completely embrace it with fervent dedication. In many ways, they are simply going through the motions. They occupy a somewhat safe middle ground that does not create any controversy. Nice and tepid. The comfortable church or Christian is not overly zealous, so they cannot be overly offensive to the cold or the hot. They do not overly trouble the unbelievers, nor do they oppose Christ to such an extent as to deny the faith.

Jesus would rather that they were cold or hot.

If they were cold, or completely opposed to Christ, then it would be clear that they did not serve Jesus. An avid atheist is not mistaken for a believer, so they are easier to spot and less dangerous in many ways than one who retains an heir of Christianity but without real dedication. Such lukewarmness can be dangerous to those who are new to the faith or weak in the faith because they pull many into the same, half-hearted comfort zone.

Such as these are also likely to bring disgrace to Jesus and His servants. “If this is what being a Christian is about, then I don’t want it” is a common reaction caused by lukewarm believers

whose pretense and lack of real dedication leads to hypocrisy, sloppy doctrine, and lack of any serious conviction towards a life that brings the good things of God to others.

If they were hot, or fervently affected by the things of Jesus and His gospel, then it would be clear that they serve Him. They could not be mistaken for an unbeliever, because they strive to do their upmost for God as one who grows in their ability, by the grace of God, to “do all things as unto the Lord” [vi] and to “love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind.”

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

There are few Christians or churches as prosperous as those who “serve God and mammon.” By occupying the safe and soothing middle ground of lukewarm dedication to the truth of Jesus Christ, they are greatly enriched. This can include actual material wealth, but not exclusively. This can also include a wealthy reputation. People have a favorable opinion of them, and they have a glowing opinion of themselves. They might even believe that God has blessed them, thinking themselves to be exemplars of the faith that others should revere and look up to.

Through the blindness of their pride, they consider themselves to have all that they need, both materially and spiritually. However, Jesus, who is the “faithful and true witness” can see what they *really* are: wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

They are not so saintly as they seem, nor are they as blessed and full of joy as they pretend to be. Within their hidden lives, out of the view of others, they are hateful and miserable. They might have material security and wealth but are not rich in the things that truly matter: the riches of the Kingdom of Heaven, and they cannot seem to see their lack.

Though they dress fancifully, which we can consider in the literal and in the spirit as one who is cloaked with the pretense of holiness that is outward but not sincere, Jesus says that they are naked. They are not clothed with His righteousness, but with their own, which do not even compare to “filthy rags,” [vii] but are far worse. At least filthy rags offer some clothing, but instead they are totally exposed: exposed to Him who can see what is really going on, and who will judge it for what it is.

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

Gold tried in the fire. What is this gold? This is the life of Jesus Christ. These are His works, which when put to the test, are as pure as gold. Consider all that Jesus endured, and without

sin. Compare this to ourselves, who with the least provocation can become spiteful, covetous, proud, or liars, to name a few.

His life was tried more than any man could be tried. He was the Son of God, yet He was humble. He was hated vehemently, yet He loved. He was opposed by religious authorities, yet He spoke the truth. He was killed, yet He remained faithful to the Father. Truly, His life and His sacrifice are pure as gold, and He offers this to those who serve Him.

Instead of being ambitious in this world and through wealth and popularity “buy” the goodwill of man, we should “buy” of Christ so that we can obtain the goodwill of God. The truth is, we cannot buy it. However, if it could be bought, then we should count what Jesus offers as that *“pearl of great price that once found, a person would sell all that they have to buy that pearl.”* [viii] Such is the Kingdom of God, and we only obtain this precious treasure from Him. Through faith in Him, we experience the true riches of His kingdom as the “beginning of the creation of God” works within our hearts, giving us a new nature that is free from the slavery of this world. Through faith in Him, we will be “born again” at His coming, renewed fully and adopted as the sons of God.

White raiment. These are the robes of righteousness that are given to the saints of God—the righteousness of Christ that we wear to cover our sins. We are never good enough to stand before God on our own. Without the righteousness of Christ, we are naked, and all our sins are fully exposed. We cannot fashion clothing for ourselves. We cannot perform enough good deeds to make up for our sin. We all need Him, because without His sacrifice our sins remain and we have nothing coming to us but the just punishment, which is death.

Moreover, the white robes worn are not defiled by disrespect for the sacrifice of Jesus. Sin is not embraced but hated. Fellow servants are not smitten but encouraged and built up in Christ. Many defile their garments through a life that lacks sincere respect and devotion to Jesus, like the Parable of the Wedding Feast details in Matthew 22. Many show up “not having on a wedding garment,” but those who properly revere Christ remain covered.

Anointing eye salve. Salve is a healing ointment, and with this ointment, the blind can see. Nothing blinds quite like pride, and through pride, we can easily see ourselves and others in an unrighteous manner. We can see ourselves as righteous, and all the while we embrace sinfulness and decadence. We can see ourselves as holy, and all the while we despise our fellow servants and mankind in general.

Sinners cannot see God, and there are no sinners more hopelessly blind than those who think that they are righteous while they despise the things of God and despise others. If our gold is of Him and our righteousness of Him, then we can see Jesus more clearly. We can get to know who He really is, and we can see our great need for Him. We can learn to see others with a kinder eye as well, not as those who flatter and ignore sin to gain the gold and favor of this world, but as those who understand their own depravity were it not for the mercy of God found in Jesus Christ.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

If the Laodiceans do not become serious about the things of Jesus Christ and His gospel, then He will rebuke and chasten them. This is a good sign because it means that Jesus still considers them to be His sons. As the author of Hebrews wrote, God chastens every son that He loves. If no chastening is given, then we are not sons.

How will He chasten them? This can take many forms. This can mean rebuke in spirit that brings the heart of the believer down so that they might seek the Lord. This can mean loss of the things that they trust in more than God. This can mean humiliation as they are exposed for having fallen into a state of lukewarmness, leading to false appearances of righteousness. Whatever form this might take, the result will not fail for those who truly belong to Jesus. He will complete His work in the children of God, even if that work means painful experiences for the believer.

Rather than suffer chastisement, it would be better if the believer would listen to what Jesus has to say. He “stands at the door.” He wants to talk to us, but we need to listen.

We cannot hear Him if our ears are dulled by the undeserved praise of this world. We cannot hear Him if we are listening for opportunities to tear others down so that we can feel superior. We cannot hear Him if we are listening to the wisdom of this world that is foolish to God, telling us that we must do as the world does and prosper thereby. We cannot hear Him when the enemy of our soul is clouding our mind with intrusive thoughts of blasphemy, accusations, vanities, envies, murders, covetousness, and all manner of unrighteousness.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

If we hear Jesus and strive to commune with Him, then He will lead us and there is no further need for chastisement. Rather, we have assured victory in Christ. What should sitting in the throne with Jesus represent for us? Should this represent power and control over others? Perhaps in His Kingdom. We will reign with Him. What does it mean to reign? Does not Satan also have this desire, and more?

Satan does not want to share Jesus’s throne. He wants it all for himself and by his own strength. We who overcome Satan, by the power of Jesus only, will indeed have authority. However, this should first be a desire to be in authority over ourselves. Or rather, that Christ would reign in us and over us.

Through faith in Jesus, and by His strength, we can grow in our ability to control our sinful desires and bring ourselves into greater submission to Christ. The greater we submit to Him, the

better we can serve Him. As Jesus said, *“the greatest among you will be your servant.”* [ix] Unlike Satan whose rule is one of tyranny that seeks his own pleasure and glorification, our throne is service to God and man through submission to Christ for His glory and good pleasure. Our desire is for Him: to know who He is, to be where He is, and to serve Him faithfully all the days of our life—which if we are in Christ—are days innumerable.

Concern For Present-Day Ministers of Jesus

There are many forms of Christian ministry. Some are pastors or preachers. Some make music, books, or other forms of media and Christian entertainment. Some care for the poor, provide counseling for fellow believers, and others look for opportunities to offer a helping hand in times of need or emotional turmoil. There are many servants in Christ who are serious about giving their all, even if their all seems small, like the poor widow woman. However, there are also many who do much, but what they do is lack-luster at best. There is no shortage of examples, but there are some we might consider, and we can trust the Spirit to stir the heart of any who need to be refreshed.

For one, it is concerning to hear Christian sermons that sound overly rehearsed and without heart. If the preacher is not excited to share the things of God, how can those who hear him become excited? It must be a difficult job to be a minister, and it might be understandable to go through times when you feel very excited and times when motivation to serve wears thin. However, we must remember to do “all things as unto the Lord,” and if we lack the zeal, then we can always turn to Him with honesty and ask that He renew our eagerness. There are many things that can cause the fire in our hearts to die down, and Jesus knows this. Remember, we serve He of whom it is written, “a smoking flax shall he not quench.” He will renew our strength of heart and mind if we sincerely love Him.

It is also concerning to hear Christian sermons that are watered down to avoid any offense. Sometimes the truth is going to be offensive, and even more as our world embraces wickedness, lies, and displays a vehement hatred of the truth and of Christian values. It would be better to have our church or other ministry shut down for speaking the truth with honesty and conviction than it would to soften the message or dance around important issues just to keep our ministries afloat.

We need to trust in Jesus and remember that we serve Him. If He needs us to do something, then we will. No one can stop those who are truly in His service until that service is done. We do not cower, but instead we stand brave with Christ. Remember Caleb and Joshua. Barack and Deborah. David. Daniel. Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego, and all the prophets and apostles.

Those who are the called of God in Jesus Christ will not fail. He will renew our strength and our desire for giving Him our all. Let us always seek, find, and grow because this world is full of challenges and so long as we are alive, we must be ready to meet them—with Jesus on our side—because if He is with us, then who can be against us?

However, it is true that many within the faith are not truly of the faith. Rather, they use Christianity to enrich themselves. Those who preach the prosperity gospel, in all its forms, should beg Jesus for forgiveness. Instead of teaching this accursed false gospel, they should return to the true gospel—a gospel that makes us rich in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Many use the faith to prosper without directly preaching a prosperity gospel, especially within the Christian entertainment industry. Modern Christian music can be nauseating for the sincere Christian. Upbeat tunes with a superficial trope of Christianity laced with popular Christian scriptures and buzz words—but without any significant meaning, praise, reverence of God, or calling to repentance—are not acceptable to God.

Modern Christian television and movies have their place, but many of them are so void of any edifying substance that they do more harm to the faith than good. Just as with the music, the one consuming this tepid content might deceive themselves into thinking themselves religious when in reality they are merely entertained, emotionally charged but not according to the Spirit, and filled with a superficial sort of faith that cannot endure any hardship for the sake of Christ.

Whatever we do—whether we speak, write, make music, create, give, counsel, help, heal—we should consider those who are affected by what we do. Are we building strong and faithful Christians, or are we merely entertaining them, filling them with false religion, or making a show in faith and prospering thereby? Are we serving God or mammon? Many serve mammon, and they will be chastised at best—and at worst God totally rejects them because they were not of the faith in the first place.

Concern For Christian Brethren Generally

How does one simply decide to be zealous about the things of God that pertain to Jesus and His gospel? Truly, the grace of God works all things in us—including chastening when it is necessary. When we belong to Jesus, but our heart is going after this world, He might allow this world to hurt us so that we will realize how much better He is.

The things that Jesus has to offer are far more precious and meaningful than all the riches of this world. However, it would be better if we could avoid chastening and instead turn to Jesus who is already there standing at the door. If we come to Him and repent of our love of this world, then there is no need for us to be chastened.

The real trouble is when a worldly Christianity is the norm—a Christianity that claims that a person can love the world and love Jesus too. Jesus teaches us that “you cannot serve God and mammon (worldly riches).” When serving God and mammon are not only commonplace, but praised, how can one come out of the mindset of the Laodiceans? As Jesus stated, they do not see their true state. They think that they have all that they need. Something would have to open their eyes to how “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” they are.

Maybe some would find this out without chastening. However, it seems to be unlikely depending on how deep their love of this world goes. It is good to know that God chastens every son that He loves. I believe that the real challenge for the Laodiceans is learning how to bear that chastening in faith. We have to trust in God and not this world. We have to turn to Jesus more fully, become zealous about Him, and form a real relationship with Him. If we continue in the faith despite the challenges that come as the things that we have loved and trusted in are removed from us, then we will overcome.

As we overcome, we are given something more precious than all the vain things of this world: a close relationship with Jesus. Sitting with Him in His throne is not just about power or authority, though He can give both as He deems. What really matters is the closeness to Christ Himself. He is the real inheritance of the children of God—and we too become sons of God through Him.

We must overcome this world and a love of it, and this is hard when we have many things in this world to distract us and seduce us away from Jesus. However, it does not matter how well off we are financially, socially, or otherwise; if we do not have Jesus truly, then we truly do not have anything, and there is always more of Him that we need.

We might have a relationship with Jesus, but we should never become lukewarm about Him. We always need more. There is more of Him to learn, more of Him to be formed in us, and more that He would have us to do as His servants in this world. We cannot consider ourselves rich in Him overmuch either, or we might find ourselves growing stagnant.

If we have riches in the Spirit as we learn of Jesus and are gifted by Him, then we should remain humble before Him, always knowing that anything we have comes from Him, and we always need more. We all fall short of His perfection. Only His blood perfects us, but having received His sacrifice, we should be serious about Him and find out what He would have us to do with all that He died to provide for us.

Jesus must come first in all things, and it seems that the more He comes first—especially in a Laodicean world—the less we might have in this world. However, nothing that we lose here compares to what we stand to gain in Him! We cannot be like Lot's wife. Do not look back at this dying world. Look to Jesus. Even when this world seems to be closing in; if we call out to Jesus in humility, honesty, and faith, He will give us strength and guidance to overcome the deceitfulness of riches, the seduction of sin, and the false securities of this world.

In Conclusion

Jesus is not someone to be half-hearted towards. He is the truth. He is the faithful and true witness of the Father to man, and He is the beginning of all creation. His word formed all things, and it is by His sacrifice and resurrection that we are formed into sons of God who will live forever. Yet, despite who He is, many do not pursue Him as they should. They consider

themselves to have everything that they need already. There are two ways that I consider the richness of the Laodiceans.

First, there is literal richness. They are financially prosperous and therefore satisfied with their lives. They do not think that they need anything because they only view need in terms of this world. If they have money, houses, cars, and other possessions, then there is nothing else to be concerned about.

Next, there is spiritual richness. Jesus teaches, “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” A person who is rich in spirit is a person who is full of themselves. They are satisfied with who they are. They like who they are, and they see no reason to change a thing.

Whether a person is rich in possessions or rich in self, there is hazard that Jesus is addressing. They do not see how much they lack. Jesus once said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yet, with God, all things are possible. With God, chastening is also possible—and necessary—if our hearts have become Laodicean-like in nature.

As Christians, we do not want to be overly satisfied with this world or with ourselves—especially not to the extent that we stop feeling our desperate need for Jesus.

Riches in this world are temporary and they do not make us rich towards God. We need to keep seeking Jesus because He is worthy to be sought after. He is worthy of our loyalty, devotion, and service. If we seek Him and want to live as He would have us, then He will bless us in the things of the Kingdom which are far greater than all the wealth in the world.

Similarly, being content with ourselves does not make us a good person. We need to keep seeking Jesus and looking to Him as the example that we are to follow. In so doing, we will see how much we lack. There is always room to grow in understanding of the things of God, in righteousness that performs the good things of God, and in growing our fellow servants in Christ.

We are never good enough to stop improving, not so long as we are in this flesh. If we keep seeking, we will keep growing—and it’s amazing to know that there is always more. There is no reason to become stale or stagnant in our faith or in our pursuit of being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

The gold that we want is not gold in this world, but the gold of real faith that is made pure by a life of trials and difficulties. A life of ease and prosperity rarely leads to strong faith. If necessary, the Father will remove our prosperity and love of self. He will put us through the fire to purify our faith and make it stronger.

Or we can buy this gold from Him—gold that Christ Himself forged through the fires of His own affliction. He will give us faith in Him as He had in the Father. We just need to seek Him and keep

asking for it. We can also buy from Him the white robes of salvation that makes us truly clean in the eyes of God. Only He can provide this for us.

We are never going to be good enough so we should never be satisfied with ourselves apart from the work of Jesus on the cross and His power in us to renew our minds and hearts. We need to see what really matters and covet Him and His kingdom instead of the things of this world. Jesus compared His kingdom to a pearl of great price, that once found, a person would sell all that he had just to get that pearl. We need to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

We should be zealous for the things of God as given by the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ and less zealous for this world and for our desire to be satisfied with ourselves.

Jesus is always there, and His word is always going out. The scriptures are always speaking, and the Spirit is always at work. Jesus is near, and if we look for Him and pursue Him then He will come into us in spirit. He will feed us with His good and everlasting word—the word that satisfies more than all the wealth of the worlds and the only word that can make sinful man right before God and created again new as sons of God.

The things that Jesus has to offer are far better than anything we can imagine. We are inheriting eternal life as sons of God and Jesus grants authority to those who overcome in Him. Jesus said, *“in the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.” We can overcome because He overcame first, and “He that is in you is stronger than he that is in the world.”*

What does it mean to sit with Jesus in His throne? For one, this is a close relationship with Jesus. That is the real treasure. He is not far off. He is right with us, and we are right with Him. We are working together with Him as servants and sons. We are of the same mind and same purpose, and therefore we are granted authority to bring His kingdom about in this world and in the age to come. In the age to come, we also have authority as “kings and priests to God and to the Lamb.”

What might that kingdom be like? Based on this letter alone, we might question what Jesus values in His kingdom. Does He want a kingdom of worldly pleasure and gain? Will we simply sit around and enjoy a rich life and revel in the glory of our resurrected bodies?

Or will we keep seeking Jesus? Will we keep serving Him? Will He have things for us to do that build His kingdom, serve His people, and further grow us into better sons? There is more for us after the resurrection, and it does not involve a life of worldly pleasure and self-gratification. However, what it does involve is far better—even better than we can imagine.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)”

Additional Scriptures when Considering the Letter to the Church of the Laodiceans

Below are some scriptures that helped to inform the understanding written in this chapter. Feel free to read in greater context and test the ideas as you are able.

Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live. For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed (Hebrews 12: 4-13).

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6: 19-24).

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go

through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:20-24).

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:25-33).

All of Proverbs 3

[i] Isaiah 11:3-4 [ii] John 1:1 [iii] Isaiah 64:6 [iv] Colossians 3:2 [v] Colossians 1:15-18

[vi] John 1:1-4 [vii] 1 John 3:2 [viii] Isaiah 11:3-5 [ix] John 7

These Things Saith He – Concluding Thoughts from The Author

These things saith...

- *He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*
- *The first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.*
- *He which hath the sharp sword with two edges.*
- *The Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.*
- *He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.*

- ***He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.***
- ***The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.***

Knowing Jesus and forming a real-to-life relationship with Him should be the focus of our lives as Christians. The Revelation of Jesus Christ begins with seven letters, and within these letters, Jesus opens with statements that reveal important truths about who He is. With help from the Holy Spirit, we can better understand these core attributes of Christ, and from there we can better understand the timeless lessons that He provided for His church within those letters. It all begins with Him.

He is the Alpha, or The Beginning. Jesus is also The Omega, or The Ending. The end of this age occurs at His return. He will judge all things, and His word is final. Though His judgment is tempered with much mercy for those who trust in Him, He does not bend His will or righteous standards for anyone.

As Christians, we might feel eager for Jesus to judge the Earth. However, judgment begins at the house of God. What is the House of God? Who are the churches that Jesus speaks to?

It is reasonable to assume that all things done in the name of Jesus are judged, and this includes physical churches of all varieties and the many tangible forms of Christian ministry and media that they produce. However, it is the Spirit that does the speaking, and the Spirit speaks to the hearts and minds of those who are of the Spirit. We Christians are the temple of God if the Spirit of God is within us, and we make up the church.

We are not bound to the spirit of Ephesus who left their “first love” in favor of their denominations or false sense of religious superiority. We are not bound to the spirit of Pergamos and their pastors and prophets-for-hire who misuse the word of God to the detriment of themselves and others. We are not bound to the spirit of Thyatira who commits fornication with the spirits of devils and perverts the judgement of God. We are not bound to the spirit of Sardis and their legalism that quenches the Spirit, leading many into spiritual drunkenness and death. We are not bound to the spirit of the Laodiceans, a church that counts blessings in terms of worldly gain as they twist and misuse the things of God for their own wealth and social status.

However, many of us have been of these churches in some measure and Jesus was merciful to us. In His grace and mercy, He gave us faith that produced a desire to know Him and put Him first. If we put Jesus first, then we will learn about our errors because His very nature opposes them. Yet, as we put Jesus first and learn about our errors, we might find that many of the things that seem to be of the Christian faith are in opposition to the faith, and we might doubt.

If the grace of God in Jesus Christ is for us, then we will persist, and He will make us stronger in Him. All things that “seem to have” Jesus will “lose what they seemed to have.” They will fall away into great apostasy, and those who remain in Jesus Christ will stand with Him. We will stand because we cultivated a relationship with Him, and thereby we become as the “wise virgins” with lamps full and ready.

Through a life lived in Christ, we can do all things that our Lord will ask of us. We will not deny Him and His gospel no matter what threats come our way. Though we might be poor in this world while the wicked prosper and mock us, we are rich in Him. Though we might suffer many things, we draw strength from Him

who made Himself so low as to die for us, and He who now lives and will raise us from the dead at His coming. We can trust in Him, and the reward of hearing “well done thou good and faithful servant” is just the beginning of what He has in store for us.

Let us continue to seek Jesus in faith, and He will come into focus more clearly as we aim our lives in His direction. On an individual level, we can approach God for mercy through faith in Jesus Christ if we have lived as a Christian should not live, and we all have room to grow. We can seek more from the Spirit, and we can find renewed strength to do what is impossible with man and possible with God.

In so doing, we can better resist the evils of our time as faithful and profitable servants who occupy until Jesus returns. We will not be deceived by false gospels, false prophets, and false christs. We will not bow to wicked rulers, and we will not deny our God and the gospel of Jesus Christ no matter the cost.

We will trust in Jesus. He will provide for us until our service is done, and our service will be profitable because we repented of our sins within the church—and most importantly within ourselves individually— and we are seeking the Lord to work all things in us that are pleasing to Him.

I thank God for the patience of Jesus Christ that leads us to repentance. I thank God for His mercy that never waivers for those who put their trust in Him. We fall many times, but He knows precisely how to refocus our efforts and strengthen us. All things pertaining to our salvation are by Him and for Him, and the life that we live in His name is only made possible by His sacrifice and the Holy Spirit given to us. All glory to God in Jesus Christ.

- ***To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.***
- ***To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.***
- ***he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.***
- ***He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.***
- ***Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.***

- ***To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.***

“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Revelation 21:6-8).”