

2A. “THE THINGS WHICH ARE” - The Churches In The World, (2-3)

If Revelation chapter 1 fulfills the command of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1.19 to “Write the things which thou hast seen,” and if Revelation chapters 4 through 22 executes the command of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1.19 to write also “the things which shall be hereafter,” then it is reasonable to expect Revelation chapters 2 and 3 to fulfill the command of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1.19 to write “the things which are.”

In considering these two chapters, I will depart from most commentators to some degree in the following way: Though each of the seven letters in Revelation 2 and 3 is addressed “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus,” “And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna,” “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos,” “And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira,” “And unto the angel of the church in Sardis,” “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia,” “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans,” the vast majority of conservative commentators assume that these seven letters, which are specifically addressed to the *angels* of the Churches, are not intended for the angels of the Churches, but are intended for the Churches themselves. I’m afraid I have to disagree. I agree with Adam Clarke’s comment on these two chapters, except as I shall point out at the end of his statement that I will now quote: “I must here advertise my readers, 1. That I do not perceive any metaphorical or allegorical meaning in the epistles to these Churches. 2. I consider the Churches as real; and that their spiritual state is here really and literally pointed out; and that they have no reference to the state of the Church of Christ in all ages of the world, as has been imagined; and that the notion of what has been termed the Ephesian state, the Smyrnanian state, the Pergamenian state, the Thyatirian state, &c., &c., is unfounded, absurd, and dangerous; and such expositions should not be entertained by any who wish to arrive at a sober and rational knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. 3. I consider the angel of the Church as signifying the messenger, the pastor, sent by Christ and his apostles to teach and edify that Church. 4. I consider what is spoken to this angel as spoken to the whole Church; and that it is not his particular state that is described, but the states of the *people* in general under his care.”¹

I can’t entirely agree with Adam Clarke’s fourth comment. I believe the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to the angels of each of the Churches, that his particular state is described, and that the conditions of the people, in general, are not in view. Why do I believe this? I think this because the New Testament has nine letters written directly to congregations elsewhere. If the Lord Jesus had wanted to communicate directly to the congregations these seven men pastored, He could speak more directly than He does. I am convinced that He says to the angels of the Churches because He speaks to the angels of the Churches, who have already figured prominently in Revelation 1.16 and 20. I also believe that the spiritual condition of the angels will eventually be reflected in their congregations so that if a pastor leaves his first love, his congregation will follow that same pathway. Thus, a robust application can be and should be made to congregations from the seven letters to the angels while recognizing the original intent of the letters. Jesus is dealing with the seven men He symbolically holds in His right hand.

¹ Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary, Vol VI*, (New York: Abingdon Press), page 975.

The Lord followed a well-defined and definite format in addressing each angel:

- (1) Some feature of the glorified Christ from the vision in chapter one is emphasized in addressing each angel.
- (2) The letters are addressed to the angel of each Church.
- (3) He begins by stating to each, “I know thy works.”
- (4) He first gives a commendation, then a condemnation. The exceptions should be noted: there is no word of condemnation to the angel in Smyrna or the angel in Philadelphia; there is no word of commendation to the angel in Laodicea.
- (5) Each letter concludes with the warning, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith....”

Here is a comment written by John Walvoord that I agree with, by and large:

Ecclesiology. A major section and contribution to ecclesiology is found in the opening chapters of Revelation with the incisive letters to the seven churches. Here the emphasis is on practical truth and holy living, in keeping with their relationship to the head of the church, Jesus Christ. Reference to the New Testament church as the *ekklesia* is found in chapters 4 through 18, but the church as the wife of the Lamb reappears in 19:7-8 and is included in the mention of the apostles in the description of the new Jerusalem, which the church shares with saints of other ages. As in other books of the New Testament, *ekklesia*, used in a religious sense referring to saints in the Body of Christ, is nowhere found in Revelation from 3:14 to 22:16; rather, the general word *hagios* (“saint”) is used to include the saved of all ages. This tends to support the concept that the church as the Body of Christ is raptured before events pictured in the book of Revelation beginning in chapter 4. The true church is in contrast to the harlot of chapter 17, and it is to be distinguished from the saints described as Jews or Gentiles. The peculiar hope of the church, in contrast to that of other saints, is alluded to only obliquely and is not the main substance of the revelations in chapters 4 through 19.²

My disagreement with Walvoord’s comments is related to his view of the doctrine of the Church. It is one thing to learn prophecy from a Protestant, but Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church, is best understood from the perspective of a Baptist, with the comment of B. H. Carroll reflecting the mainstream Baptist position of his day, as well as my long-held position:

My third general observation is based upon Christ’s own uses of the word “church” as found in Matthew and Revelation. There are twenty-three instances of Christ’s using the Greek word *ecclesia*—church. In Matthew 24:18, he says, “I will build my church.” In Matthew 18:17, he says, “Tell it to the church.” The references in Revelation where he uses the term church or churches are the following: 1:4, 11, 20, and again 20; 2:1, 7-8, 11-12, 17-18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6-7, 13-14, 22; 22:16.

Now here are twenty-three examples of the use of the word *ecclesia*—church—as spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ himself; and it is evident from a study of these twenty-three instances of the use of the word, that Christ never said anything about an invisible or

² John Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966), pages 32-33.

universal church. His teaching is to the contrary; he does not say the church in Asia, but “the churches in Asia.” He does not use the word church in any provincial sense, or state sense, or national sense, or denominational sense. This is a very convincing exhibit of the uses of the word, as coming from the lips of our Lord, rebuking the contention of many people of the present day who talk about a universal church here on earth, whether visible or invisible. — the New Testament does not know anything about either one. It is true that in 12:1 under the symbol of a woman, also in 17:3, under the symbol of another woman, he presents first the church as an institution and then the apostate church as an institution, and it is equally true that in 19:7-8 he presents the church in glory, under the symbol of a bride, and in 21:9, under the symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem, a city. So that we may say that Christ used the word to describe the time church as an institution, and to name the concrete example of this institution particular churches, and to foreshadow the coming glory church—something which does not yet exist.³

1B. Letter To The Angel Of The Church In Ephesus (2.1-7)

- (2.1-7)
- 1 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 Nicolaitans, 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.

(2.1) 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;

1. Notice the first phrase of verse 1 again: “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write.”
 - a. It has already been shown that the angels of these seven Churches are human messengers. In all reasonable likelihood, such a man is the congregation’s senior pastor.
 - b. Notice something else. To whom was this letter addressed? To whom was John asked to write the message? We read this message and apply it to the congregation, according to Revelation 2.7, but this communication was addressed to the angel. Who is sending the letter through John? From what we learned in Revelation 1.12 and 20, the Lord Jesus Christ sent the message.

³ B. H. Carroll, *An Interpretation Of The English Bible, Volume 6*, (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2001), vol 17, pages 40-41.

c. Let us now learn some things about the city of Ephesus:

- 1) “It was an inland city three mi. from the sea, but the broad mouth of the Cayster River allowed access and provided the greatest harbor in Asia Minor. Four great trade routes went through Ephesus; therefore, it became known as the gateway to Asia. It was the center of the worship of Artemis (Greek), or Diana (Roman), whose temple was one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World.”⁴
- 2) Ephesus was the chief city of the province of Asia. Pliny called it “the Light of Asia.” That area’s religious and commercial center influenced both east and west—Europe and Asia. Diana’s temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, being the most prominent Greek temple ever constructed (418 feet, 1 inch by 239 feet, 4 inches). There were over 100 external columns about 56 feet in height, of which 36 were hand carved. It was built over a marsh on an artificial foundation of skins and charcoal, so earthquakes did not affect it. The doors were of cypress wood; columns and walls were of Parian marble; the staircase was carved out of one vine from Cyprus.

The temple served as the bank of Asia and was the depository of vast sums of money. It was an art gallery displaying the masterpieces of Praxiteles, Phidias, Scopas, and Polycletus. Apelles’ famous painting of Alexander was there. Behind a purple curtain was the lewd and crude image of Diana, the fertility goddess. She was many-breasted and carried a club in one hand and a trident in the other.⁵

2. John was directed to write, “These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand.”
 - a. Notice the word “holdeth.” An interesting word, κρατῶν conveys the idea of someone holding on to something with great authority, holding fast, or having power over it.⁶ Our Lord Jesus Christ has such jurisdiction, does He not? What does He hold in His right hand as He walks amid the seven candlesticks? The seven stars.
 - b. Let us refresh our memories. What are the candlesticks? The candlesticks are the Churches. What, then, are the seven stars? The stars are the angels of the Churches. Both conclusions can be drawn from Revelation 1.20. What, did we

⁴ See footnote for Revelation 2.1, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), pages 1993-4.

⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Reveling Through Revelation, Part I*, (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Books, 1979), page 19.

⁶ Fritz Reinecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1980), page 815.

agree, were the angels, supernatural messengers, or human beings? Human beings. Pastors.

- c. Jesus here claims to wield great authority over the lives of those pastors. His great authority was pictured and symbolized through a picture in which the pastors were stars that Jesus held in His right hand. What, then, would you say about someone who claimed to be called of God to preach God's Word and lead God's people, but who did not appear to have his life held sway over by the Lord Jesus Christ, whose life did not seem to be as one who was held in the Savior's right hand? Question.
- d. We have severe problems in Christendom these days, people. In my estimation, one of two possible reasons is in the back of the issues. Either the stars have fallen out of Christ's omnipotent grasp and are no longer controlled by Him, or those guys were never stars in the Master's right hand in the first place. What do you think the problem is?

7. Concluding, "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."

- a. Owing to the highly symbolic nature of much of the book of Revelation, we must discern what is taught. Mark 16.19, and more than 20 other New Testament passages, indicate that Jesus, after His ascension, sat at the right hand of God the Father on high. Are we to take it from this verse that Jesus is no longer at the Father's right hand but is instead moving invisibly among the Churches? I do not think so.
- b. We can agree that the intent here is not an attempt to show the physical location of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to show Him symbolically as the Head over all things to these Churches, exercising control over their human leadership and strongly influencing their ministries. This is precisely what the Lord Jesus does.

(2.2) 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:

1. Notice what verifies my conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ's remarks are addressed to an individual. The three words "thy" in verse 2? All three English words translate the Greek word σοῦ, found three times in this verse, and the second person *singular* pronoun. This establishes that Jesus was directing His comments to an individual. Had He been speaking to the congregation, He would have used the word ὑμῶν instead of σοῦ. With this reinforced understanding that the Lord Jesus Christ's remarks were directed to the angel of the Church, the pastor of the Church, and not the congregation as a whole, we can more accurately grasp His meaning.
2. Notice what the Lord Jesus Christ told that preacher. He began with a single word, "I know." Two Greek words are most commonly translated into our English phrase "I know." The word γινώσκω most frequently refers to knowledge gained from

learning or observation.⁷ Another word, οἶδα, commonly overlaps in meaning with γινώσκω, but refers to knowing, understanding, and having information about something or someone.⁸ This is no surprise to us who are already convinced that Jesus is the All-knowing Lord, Who sees all. John 2.23-25 provides evidence of the Lord Jesus Christ's omniscience:

- ²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.
²⁴ But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*,
²⁵ And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

Pastors need to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, Whose flocks they tend, sees and knows the works of His men, His men's labors, and His men's patience.

3. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience"

- a. Notice what the Lord Jesus commends in this pastor's life. According to Paul, it should be in every Christian's life. It is the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope our Lord is referring to here that Paul first refers to in First Thessalonians 1.3-10:

- ³ Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;
⁴ Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.
⁵ For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.
⁶ And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:
⁷ So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.
⁸ For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.
⁹ For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;
¹⁰ And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

⁷ Bauer, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pages 199-200.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pages 693-694.

- b. The Christian life is much about relationships and effort. From Revelation 2.2 and First Thessalonians 1.3-10, it is easy to see that the Apostle Paul reflected in his desires for those Christians in Thessalonica the Lord Jesus Christ's desires for His servant in the Ephesian congregation. Three kinds of relationships drive the Christian's life and dominate the Gospel minister's life. *First*, there is one's relationship with the nameless and faceless lost, characterized by the work of faith to get them under the sound of the Gospel. *Next*, there is one's relationship with those whose faces you now recognize and whose names you now know because they have come under the sound of the Gospel, characterized by the labor of love. *Finally*, there is his waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ, characterized by patience, performing his duties, but waiting until He comes again.
4. "and how thou canst not bear them which are evil"
 - a. Notice something about this Ephesian pastor that can be lacking in the hearts and lives of many contemporary pastors. We live in a politically correct society where we are taught never to think or speak ill of anyone except those who disagree. Oh, we must never say anything that smacks of disapproval. That would be judging, and we must never make value judgments.
 - b. This sentiment seems especially prevalent among those who are "ministers." According to most, one must not ever criticize Franklin Graham, Kenneth Copeland, Paula White, or Benny Hinn. But the Lord Jesus Christ is not only commending this Ephesian pastor for the positive aspects of his ministry, his work, his labor, and his patience. He is also complimenting His man for what some would perceive to be the negative aspects of his ministry of oversight. His confrontation of and opposition to evil men, both those in and those not in the ministry, is commended by the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone nowadays seems to think it is always, and in every case, wrong to criticize a popular. It is never wrong to criticize wrongdoing.
 - c. The word "Ephesus" means desirable.⁹ It is no accident that the pastor of the "desirable" Church is a pastor who hates what Christ hates and who works, labors, and is patient, even when no one else is aware that he is. The reason mealy mouth sissy boys occupy positions of oversight in so many Churches is because so many Church members want no other kind of pastor. That is why I give thanks to God for you folks.
 4. "and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars"
 - a. The Lord Jesus Christ is likely referring to a problem this pastor faced, which He will clarify in verse 6. At this point, we must see the pastor's approach concerning those who said they were apostles.

⁹ L. Sale-Harrison, *The Remarkable Revelation*, (New York: Sale-Harrison Publications, 1930), page 41.

- b. Notice that he did not treat influencers according to what they said about themselves. He examined them, scrutinized them, evaluated them, and tested them. They said they were apostles. The Lord commended this pastor, saying, "... thou hast tried them which say they are apostles." What did the pastor do in response to their false claim?¹⁰
 - c. What did he discover? He learned that those so-called apostles were liars. What would happen in our day if pastors started "trying" those who say they are missionaries, who say they are preachers, who say they are God-called men? Do you think many open-range liars would be exposed? I do.
5. In light of what we have seen in this verse, recognize something significant. The Lord Jesus commended the Ephesian pastor for an action he took. Church members, and I say this with much love, stand with your pastors when they move against sin. Help them to be good pastors by standing with them as they, by the grace of God, seek to "not bear them which are evil."

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

1. Acts chapter 19 reports the tremendous upheaval in Ephesus as the Gospel was introduced throughout the city. Consider Revelation 2.3 in that historical context.
2. Persecution fell upon every Christian, but the focus of the attack undoubtedly fell upon those in positions of spiritual leadership. Therefore, Christ again commends this man of God for sticking with it, for His name's sake. When the pressure to quit came, this man, and others as well, no doubt, did not quit. Why? Because they were doing what they were doing for Christ's sake. In addition, unlike so many today who are quitters, who cut and run, they were real Christians. They were real men. They were real servants of God.
3. "And hast borne" refers, not to evil men, but to burdens, circumstances. This is the run-of-the-mill persecution that every Christian of that era and location had to endure.
4. "and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." The word "fainted" refers to what you can be tempted to do when you work. If that is true, then we have in this verse the same three components found in verse 2, only in reverse order. Thus, we see that the Lord Jesus, for the same efforts, is commending this pastor again.
5. By God's grace, that pastor must have been quite a fellow. Moreover, the Ephesian congregation's ministry and reputation reflected his ministry's quality.

(2.4) Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

¹⁰ Rienecker & Rogers, page 815.

1. Again, the Greek second person singular pronoun is used σοῦ, translated in this verse by the words “thee” and “thou.” No evidence supports the notion that the Lord Jesus is addressing the congregation. He can only be addressing the angel of the Church, the pastor.
2. With so many things going in this pastor’s favor, intolerance for sin, hatred of the lies of false apostles, endurance in the face of withering persecution, and continually serving Christ without fainting, there is still a heart problem that the Lord Jesus wants to address in his life. Should not the Lord have given this man a break after all the commendable things he had done for Jesus? No. The closer someone walks to the Lord, the greater will the Lord scrutinize his life. Thus has it always been. Thus will it always be.
3. Notice no man could have seen this problem. From the outside looking in, this man has all the evidence of spiritual greatness. However, the Lord Jesus Christ looks with eyes that see far deeper than men can see. The Lord looks into the heart. In addition, He sees that the pastor has left his first love.
4. Who do you suppose was this preacher’s first love? The Lord Jesus. The Savior. In addition, is it not interesting that although the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased, the man of God is working, laboring, persevering, and fighting evil, what He wants most of all is His man’s love? When He has your heart, He has the rest of you. However, there are times when it appears that He has all of you, but He only has everything but your heart. In addition, your heart is the main thing.
5. Thirty years earlier, the Apostle Paul had written to the entire congregation and told them that he was praying that they would be “rooted and grounded in love” Ephesians 3.17 and that they would come “to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God,” Ephesians 3.19. To love the Lord Jesus Christ was Paul’s strong desire for them all.
6. What the Lord Jesus said to Peter summed it up. “Lovest thou me more than these?” “Do you love me more than you love other people, Peter? Do you love me more than you love the things you are doing for me?” How sad it must have been for the seven Churches in Asia to realize, upon reading this letter, that the most prominent of the pastors had given up his first love, had forsaken Christ as his true love, for something less.
7. Another contribution from Paul is found in Second Corinthians 8.1-5:
 - 1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;
 - 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

- ³ For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves;
- ⁴ Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
- ⁵ And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

It just seems to bear out, does it not, that when the Lord Jesus has your heart, he also has everything else as well? So, concentrate on your heart's relationship with Jesus Christ, my friend. Concentrate on giving Him your heart.

8. What had this Ephesian pastor done? He left his first love. He did not fall from his first love. He did not lose his first love. He left his first love. The Greek word is ἀφῆκας. He left. He forsook his first love.¹¹ Each of us should be sobered by the realization that we can become so committed to the ministry that we lose sight of Who it is we are supposed to be serving.
9. By making bad choices, this Ephesian pastor was slipping from being like Mary to being like Martha, in Luke 10.38-42:

- ³⁸ Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.
- ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.
- ⁴⁰ But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.
- ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:
- ⁴² But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

(2.5) 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.

1. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works"
- a. There are two warnings to this man the Lord Jesus Christ issued. There are two things the Lord Jesus Christ demanded from His man, and you and me; that we "remember," and that we "repent, and do the first works."
- b. What he was to "remember" was where he had fallen. Anyone who has left his first love has initiated a spiritual decline. Do you remember the sweet joy and love for the Lord you used to have? Let that be your motivation for repenting.

¹¹ Ibid.

However, remember that repenting is not crying at the “altar,” though folks often do cry when they repent. “Repent,” translating the Greek word μετανοήσον, the aorist active imperative form of μετανοέω, a directive to change your mind, to change your thinking, to have an entirely different attitude toward sin.¹²

- c. You are responsible for your repentance. Notice what happens in believers’ lives when they repent, Second Corinthians 7.8-11:

- ⁸ For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season.
- ⁹ Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.
- ¹⁰ For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.
- ¹¹ For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Genuine repentance results in a changed attitude toward sins. As well, genuine repentance results in changed actions toward sins. The man who committed certain sins has not repented until he begins to exhibit the attitudes and actions toward those sins found in Second Corinthians 7.11. The Lord Jesus Christ expects this pastor to fix the problem, fix it immediately, and fix it decisively. Thus, repenting must necessarily result in loving the Lord Jesus as he had at first, as a Christian ought to.

- d. What would be involved in doing “the first works” after repenting? I think “the first works” refers to the “work of faith,” as we find in First Thessalonians chapter 1. Of course, works could refer to the miracles of Jesus Christ, works of righteousness that the lost do to try and merit salvation, or good works in general that a Christian performs. However, my opinion tends toward thinking that this refers to those works that are related to evangelism that a new believer engages in when he is first converted when his love for Jesus Christ is new and burns hot. He tries to get people to Church so they can experience what he has experienced. I think the Savior is telling His man that He wants a change in this man’s priorities, with evangelism once more being the focus of his ministry.
2. “or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”

¹² Ibid.

- a. This warning about coming quickly does not refer to the Second Coming of Christ, in power and great glory, but a coming in judgment should the pastor fail to repent.¹³ The tense of the verb “repent” shows that Jesus expected this pastor to make a decisive break with his current conduct to return to his former conduct and affections.¹⁴
- b. If God’s man would not repent because of remembering his former conduct and affections, the Lord warns him to repent. Perhaps he would only repent because of a warning. And the warning? The removal of the candlestick. What is the candlestick? The candlestick is the congregation, Revelation 1.20. The Lord Jesus Christ warned that pastor that if he did not repent, the Lord would remove the Church, which is the candlestick, from the spiritual scene. A number of us have seen this very thing happen.
- c. Most so-called churches are not now and may have never been true New Testament churches. Why? Because they have never been candlesticks from which the genuine Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached. However, of those so-called churches that used to be candlesticks, there is not a single Gospel preaching Church nearby that I am acquainted with. Likely as not, the blessing of God, if any congregation nearby ever did enjoy it, was removed because of a pastor’s sins.
- d. Pastors are average men. However, their position in the Church and other Christians’ lives is critical. The late Dr. Lee Roberson said for many years, “It rises and falls on leadership.”¹⁵ He was right. Pastors must be right with God for God to bless the congregations they serve. Further, they must also be men called by God. Most pastors, tragically, are neither but are entertainers and organizers. They are better suited to be cruise ship captains or carnival barkers since they are not right with God and are not called by God. Pray for those who are called by God.

(2.6) But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

1. Notice the sandwich psychology of the Lord Jesus. There is a praise of this pastor, then rebuke, then praise. Not everything is wrong with this man’s life. He, at least, hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans. However, what is wrong in his life brings him down unless dealt with.
2. So, with commendation, rebuke, and then commendation, the Lord made sure this man of God was not discouraged, thinking the Lord did not appreciate his ministry.

¹³ Walvoord, page 57.

¹⁴ Rienecker & Rogers, pages 815-816.

¹⁵ Dr. Lee Roberson (1909-2007) Lavern “Lee” Edward Roberson, longtime pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church, was an American pastor and evangelist. He was the founder of Tennessee Temple University and Temple Baptist Seminary in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Camp Joy, in Harrison, Tennessee.

However, at the same time, he now knows there is a critical problem that must be quickly addressed.

3. What were the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which the Lord and God's man so hate? Scholars have no consensus, but the word is compounded from two Greek words. One word, the word λαός, means "people."¹⁶ The other word, νικάω, means "prevail, overcome, conquer."¹⁷ If we are to guess what Nicolaitanism was from the construction of the word one must be wary of doing this). It was either the people ruling the congregation or the people of the assembly being ruled in an autocratic manner. Both practices are condemned in God's Word. God's flock is lorded over in some assemblies, in violation of First Peter 5.3, while in other congregations, the people run everything, in violation of First Timothy 5.17 and Hebrews 13.7 and 17. God wants His leaders to lead, not lord, and not be afraid to lead.
4. The Roman Catholic Church is probably the most obvious example of lording it over people, though it cannot be said that all Roman Catholics are the Lord's people. Roman Catholics have no real say and no real Scriptural recourse against the wickedness of the priests. At the other end of the spectrum would be Southern Baptist and GARBC Churches, with their wicked and perverse system of deacon rule. Self-important deacons hamstringing more good men of God than anyone realizes. So long as the Southern Baptist Convention sticks to an unscriptural form of Church government that allows men not called by God to effectively occupy positions of spiritual leadership in bad Churches they don't have a chance of surviving their slide toward apostasy.
5. What if the meaning of Nicolaitans cannot be properly derived from an analysis of the two words that combine to give us the term? Remember, "... there is no inherent meaning in a word. As Ullman has noted, dictionaries give us the impression that words carry abstract content by their very nature (1964:39). Yet in reality words are arbitrary symbols that have meaning only in a context."¹⁸
6. With this in mind, it might be more fruitful for us to take note that whatever the Nicolaitans were, their deeds were acts that the pastor of the Ephesian assembly hated. More important to discovering what kinds of deeds they were guilty of may be the Lord's words concluding this verse: "which I also hate."
7. Referring to the Hebrew Scriptures, what do we find that God hated?

Isaiah 61.8: "For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them."

¹⁶ Bauer, pages 586-587.

¹⁷ Ibid., page 673.

¹⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991), page 75.

Jeremiah 44.4: “Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.”

Amos 5.21: “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.”

Zechariah 8.17: “And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these *are things* that I hate, saith the LORD.”

8. It is likely that what the Lord Jesus Christ hates, if the Hebrew Scriptures are to be any guide to us, are deeds of abomination and impurity. After all, He is holy, is He not? Moreover, He shed His blood to wash away sins, did He not?

Psalms 139.21-22: “Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.”

9. After due consideration of this verse, though I am vehemently opposed to deacons running a congregation and am convinced that God is not pleased with such a congregational organization, that is not what is referred to in Revelation 2.6. Neither do I favor pastoral leadership by lordship. Either extreme is unscriptural. However, I believe the issue in this verse does not directly bear on church polity.
10. I think this issue of Nicolaitanism had to do with a group that followed a man named Nicolas, which is how they got their name. “Clement of Alexander says, ‘They abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence.’ Their teaching perverted grace and replaced liberty with license.”¹⁹ Thus, the Ephesian pastor hated and the Lord Jesus Christ despised moral laxity and self-indulgence.
11. Before considering the next verse, I have reproduced the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia entry for Nicolaitanism for your consideration:

NICOLAITANS, nik-o-la'i-tanz (**Νικολαιταί**, *Nikolaitai*):

1. The Sect

A sect or party of evil influence in early Christianity, esp. in the 7 churches of Asia. Their doctrine was similar to that of Balaam, “who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev 2 14.15). Their practices were strongly condemned by St. John, who praised the church in Ephesus for “hating their works” (Rev 2 6), and blamed the church in Pergamum for accepting in some measure their teaching

¹⁹ See footnote for Revelation 2.6, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 1994.

(Rev 2 15). Except that reference is probably made to their influence in the church at Thyatira also, where their leader was “the woman Jezebel; who calleth herself a prophetess” (Rev 2 20; ct ver 14), no further direct information regarding them is given in Scripture.

2. References

Reference to them is frequent in post-apostolic literature. According to Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.*, i. 26.3; iii.10.7), followed by Hippolytus (*Philos.*, vii.36), they were founded by Nicolaitis, the proselyte of Antioch, who was one of the seven chosen to serve at the tables (Acts 6 5). Irenaeus, as also Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, ii.20), Tertullian and others, unite in condemning their practices in terms similar to those of St. John; and reference is also made to their gnostic tendencies. In explanation of the apparent incongruity of such an immoral sect being founded by one of “good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (cf Acts 6 3), Simcox argues that their lapse may have been due to reaction from original principles of a too rigid asceticism. A theory, started in comparatively modern times and based in part on the similarity of meaning of the Gr “Nikolaus,” and the Heb “Balaam,” puts forward the view that the two sects referred to under these names were in reality identical. Yet if this were so, it would not have been necessary for St. John to designate them separately.

3. Nicolaitan Controversy

The problem underlying the Nicolaitan controversy, though so little direct mention is made of it, in Scripture, was in reality most important, and concerned the whole relation of Christianity to paganism and its usages. The Nicolaitans disobeyed the command issued to the gentile churches by the apostolic council held at Jerus in 49-50 AD, that they should refrain from the eating of “things sacrificed to idols” (Acts 15 29). Such a restriction, though seemingly hard, in that it prevented the Christian communities from joining in public festivals, and so brought upon them suspicion and dislike, was yet necessary to prevent a return to a pagan laxity of morals. To this danger the Nicolaitans were themselves a glaring witness, and therefore St. John was justified in condemning them. In writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul gives warning against the same evil practices, basing his arguments on consideration for the weaker brethren (cf 1 Cor 8).²⁰

(2.7) 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.

1. This verse points out the reality of unsaved members in the assembly. Written to an individual, this letter pleads for the entire membership of the congregation to respond. If you overcome, the reward will be yours. However, how do you know if you are an overcomer? In Christ, you are already an overcomer.²¹

²⁰ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Vol IV*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), page 2142.

²¹ John 16.33

2. First John 5.4-5:

- 4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.
- 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Are you born of God? Having received Christ, you have also received the victory He won when He conquered sin, death, Hell, and the grave, not to mention Satan. Then, according to God's Word, you are an overcomer.

3. If you are not an overcomer, you are lost. Sadly, there are so many congregations whose entire memberships are folks who are not overcomers that an ultimately defeated person fits right in. However, God's plan is not for defeated people to fit in. He wants defeated people to stick out like sore thumbs. Not to stick out as someone despised but as a precious soul needing genuine salvation in Jesus Christ.
4. Pray that God moves in your midst and demonstrates His great power in our lives so that the Holy Spirit will deal with lost people, using our testimonies and soul-winning efforts, and come to know Christ.
5. In closing this letter to the angel of the Church of Ephesus, consider the last statement again: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."
 - a. There are times when passages in John's Revelation are symbolic. What may seem symbolic is not symbolic at all at other times. Such is the case here.
 - b. There is nothing symbolic about "the tree of life." Neither is there anything symbolic about "the paradise of God." Both are absolutely and positively real.
 - c. "The tree of life" is referred to three times in Genesis chapters two and three as a real tree in the Garden of Eden. "The tree of life" is also mentioned three times in Revelation, chapters two and twenty-two. In addition, in none of those six places is there any indication that "the tree of life" is not a real tree that bears real fruit.
 - d. Similarly, "paradise" is referred to three times in the New Testament, Luke, Second Corinthians, and Revelation. In none of those places is "paradise" purported to be anything other than a literal place, where the redeemed of God go after they die.
 - e. What are we to make of these non-symbolical references? We must understand that when genuine believers overcome when they persevere to the end, they

really will be allowed to “eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” That will be real eating of real fruit in the real heaven.

2B. Letter To The Angel Of The Church In Smyrna (2.8-11)

- (2.8-11) 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.

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

1. Again, we see that the Lord Jesus Christ’s comments are explicitly addressed to the angel of the Church in Smyrna, though we realize that all in that Church were to read, take heed, and respond to what the Lord Jesus said.
2. The Church in Smyrna, history records, was one of the most persecuted congregations of its day, and its name gives a clue regarding that persecution. “Smyrna” is derived from the word “myrrh,” which was the name of a commercial product of that city. “Myrrh” is a fragrant resin from a small, spiny tree.²² In ancient times, it was used to make perfume and aromatic oils.²³ What is interesting to me is that myrrh’s fragrant odor came out only due to the tree it comes from being crushed. In addition, the taste of myrrh is said to be extremely bitter. Do you see the spiritual parallels?
3. To the persecuted pastor of a persecuted Church, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself in a particular way, as the first and the last, dead and alive. He is the Meeter of all needs. To those persecuted, He is that One Who voluntarily became a man and suffered unmatched brutality at the hands of His enemies. Therefore, He understands what the pastor and the people in Smyrna are going through.
4. How sweet a smell it is to the Lord Jesus when one of His Own faithfully endures the fiery trials of persecution for Him and His cause. Though the taste of tribulation is bitter to the Christian who suffers it, it smells delightful to the Savior, Who endured such for us.

(2.9) 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.

²² *Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996), page 1272.

²³ See footnote for Revelation 2.8, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 1994.

1. Once again, He claims to know things in His man's life. The words' construction clearly shows that these words are being addressed to one man. Remember, the Lord Jesus made the same claim to the Ephesian pastor. He knew the pastor's tribulation and his poverty. This word "poverty" does not imply that he had to do without a few things for the cause of Christ. This word indicates that someone is utterly destitute.²⁴ This man of God had absolutely nothing in the way of material things. Nevertheless, he still worked. He still served God.
2. He had nothing, that is, except great spiritual wealth. Is it not amazing how little an indication our material well-being is of our spiritual well-being? In the next chapter of Revelation, we will examine Christ's words to the Laodicean pastor. That man had great material wealth, but the Lord described him as poor and naked. All children of God are spiritually rich, no matter what material situation they are in on this old earth.
3. How different are people's opinions today, who claim God wants all of His children to be rich and prosper materially. How out of touch such prosperity proponents are with the Word of God and the will of God.
4. The opposition to the cause of Christ was, no doubt, great in the city of Smyrna. The Jewish people who lived there led the opposition. The Lord Jesus indicated that they were Jews but that they were not. This might serve as a reminder of what Paul wrote in Romans 2.17-29:

- 17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,
- 18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;
- 19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,
- 20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.
- 21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?
- 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?
- 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?
- 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.
- 25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.
- 26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

²⁴ Rienecker & Rogers, page 816.

- 27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?
- 28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
- 29 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.

While very religious, these physical descendants of Abraham served Satan in his opposition to God, God's man, and His children.

(2.10) 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.

1. The Lord tells His man to fear nothing that will happen to him. He, and some others, would be cast into prison. Prisons in those days were places where someone was incarcerated until either executed or banished to exile, rather than where long sentences were served.²⁵ Further, this preacher was told who was behind it all, the devil, and that it would only last ten days before he died. He was promised the Lord would give him a crown of life if he is faithful unto death.
2. Is that not amazing? "Son, I know it's very hard being in your situation, and it is going to get harder. My plan for you and some of your brothers in Christ includes ten days of horrible torture that will end in death. My child, be faithful unto death and I will handsomely reward you." This should not be difficult for any Christian to accept because Paul wrote, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" Second Timothy 3.12.
3. Do such things as this horrify you? They should not. Jesus said, in Matthew 10.28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which can destroy both soul and body in hell." That means do not fear mere men. Moreover, do not fear the devil, mentioned here for the first time in Revelation or his minions. Instead, fear God.
4. This man was promised tribulation. However, notice a difference in God's Word between tribulation and "The Tribulation." All Christians endure, to varying degrees, tribulation. "The Tribulation," however, that seven-year period of time in which the wrath of God is poured out on a Christ-rejecting world, is something which is yet future and which Church Age Christians will not suffer through.
5. If he was faithful unto death, this pastor was promised a crown of life. "This is one of two places where a martyr's crown is mentioned as a special reward in eternity for those who sacrifice their lives for the Gospel (James 1:12). Most martyrs were

²⁵ Ibid.

killed either by false religious leaders or by pagan governments that opposed their message.”²⁶ More about these crowns in later chapters.

(2.11) 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.

1. Again, the Lord Jesus spoke to an individual within the Church. However, others were to read, take note, and respond. Overcome, and you will have nothing to fear of the second death. What did we learn in First John 5.4-5 about a Christian being an overcomer? Every genuine Christian is an overcomer, are they not?
2. That means that no genuine Christian needs to fear being hurt by the second death. However, what is the second death? Revelation 20.11-15 reveals what the second death is:
 - ¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
 - ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
 - ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.
 - ¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
 - ¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.
3. The first death, spiritual separations referred to, not physical deaths, took place when Adam sinned against God. On the day Adam ate, he died spiritually and for that reason was physically removed from God’s presence.
4. In Revelation 20.11-15, we learn that unsaved men must be brought into Christ’s presence for judgment. When they are separated from Him this second time, which is described as the second death, they are cast into the lake of fire.
5. Do Christians need to worry about such a fate as this? Never. When this second death takes place, Christians are already with the Lord in heaven.

3B. Letter To The Angel Of The Church In Pergamos (2.12-17)

²⁶ See footnote for Revelation 2.10, *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000), page 1366.

- (2.12) And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;
1. Previously, we studied the letter written to the angel of the Church of Smyrna. Recall that the man and Church in Smyrna underwent terrible persecution. Was there any doubt that the author of the persecution was Satan, the enemy of God and God's people?
 2. In the third of the seven letters, we come to Pergamos. The word Pergamos means both "marriage" and "elevation."²⁷ It is the word from which we get parchment – a writing material developed from animal skin, first developed in the area.²⁸
 3. Who speaks in this verse? If we remember John's description of the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 1.16, we can be sure that the speaker is the Lord Jesus. Who has the sharp two-edged sword?
 4. Let me rehearse some things about this same type of sword mentioned there and in this verse:
 - a. The sword mentioned refers to a large double-edged sword used by a group of people back then known as Thracians, who were intense, war-like people.
 - b. The fact that the sword is double-edged clues us to the purpose of the Word of God being likened to such a weapon as this. One cutting edge is beneficial, and the other cutting edge is judgmental.
 - c. This description is supported in Hebrews 4.12, where God's Word is sharper than any two-edged sword.
 5. Once again, the Lord Jesus Christ showed Himself to be the Judge of His Own. What a shock this is to many people. They forget that judgment must begin first in the house of God, First Peter 4.17.
- (2.13) 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.
1. The reference to "Satan's seat" is fascinating since the Greek word translated seat is "θρόνος." Not just an ordinary seat is referred to here. The Lord Jesus is referring to Satan's throne.
 2. Some background history. Several centuries before this portion of Scripture was written, a cult of Satan-worshiping Magi was ejected from their point of origin in Babylon by the advancing armies of the Medo-Persian Empire. Do you know where

²⁷ Sale-Harrison, pages 42-43.

²⁸ See footnote for Revelation 2.12, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 1995.

the archaeologists tell us these Magi settled after they were expelled from Babylon? Pergamos.

3. History tells us that Pergamos was known everywhere, not as a commercial center or a center for learning, but as a residence of kings before coming under Roman rule and as an important religious center for the entire Middle East.
 4. There, the cult leader known as a “bridge builder,” or as one who bridged the gap between mortal man and Satan, conducted his nefarious business. The Latin title of this satanic cult leader was “Pontifus Maximus.”
 5. By the time Julius Caesar had assumed power in Rome, the cult had spread to Rome. Few people today are aware that one of the significant reasons the Caesar known as Augustus was able to consolidate power into the office of Emperor was because he, for the first time in Roman history, combined both religious and political, and military power by successfully assuming the title of Pontifus Maximus and becoming the cult’s religious leader.
 6. Pergamos, then, was the throne of Satan. We must never forget that Satan is not the ruler of Hell. He is the god of this world, according to the testimony of Scripture, Second Corinthians 4.4. Satan literally runs this planet, First John 5.19. At the time this portion of Scripture was written, the central place from which Satan exerted his ungodly influence upon the world was the city of Pergamos.
 7. Therefore, Satan would oppose the Church in that city and would be highly energetic in fighting against the ministry of God’s man. One particular man of God, Antipas, resisted Satan unto death. Little is known of Antipas in history. However, the Lord Jesus Christ never forgets the man who serves Him well. We can be sure that someday Antipas will receive the crown given for dying the martyr’s death at the judgment seat of Christ.
- (2.14) 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.
1. Though the man of God was commended by his Lord on the one hand, he was rebuked on the other hand. Why? Because some members of that Church held to the doctrine, or the teaching, of Balaam. You might remember Balaam from Numbers chapter 22. He was the prophet hired to curse the people of Israel. However, God prevented him from cursing them each time he tried to curse them. Though he could not curse the Israelites, he did harm them significantly by encouraging their opponent, Balak, to send heathen women among the Jewish men, who then coaxed those men into committing fornication and idolatry with them.
 2. The doctrine of Balaam teaches that you cannot defeat God’s people by outright attacking them, for they were too well defended against such attacks. However,

gradually influencing them to compromise and mix with false religious systems successfully lured them into spiritual fornication and idolatry.

3. Consider the comments others have offered concerning the doctrine of Balaam.
 - a) “The ‘doctrine’ of Balaam (cf. 2 Pet. ii.15, *note*; Jude 11, *note*) was his teaching Balak to corrupt the people who could not be cursed (Num. xxxi.15, 16; xx11.5; xxii.8), by tempting them to marry women of Moab, defile their separation, and abandon their Pilgrim character. It is that union of the world and the church which is spiritual unchastity (Jas. iv.4).”²⁹
 - b) “The doctrine of Balaam therefore was the teaching that the people of God should intermarry with the heathen and compromise in the matter of idolatrous worship. This is in contrast to “the way of Balaam,” that is, selling his prophetic gift for money (II Peter 2:15), and “the error of Balaam,” his assumption that God would curse Israel (Jude 11).”³⁰
 - c) “Balaam had been guilty of counseling King Balak to cause Israel to sin through intermarriage with heathen women and through idol worship. Intermarriage with heathen women was a problem in Pergamum where any social contact with the world also involved worship of idols.”³¹
 - d) “The ‘doctrine of Balaam,’ which had apparently infiltrated the Pergamos church, was that of compromise with the immoral and ungodly lifestyle of the pagans around them, in similar fashion to the way Balaam had influenced the Israelites to take Moabite wives.”³²
 - e) “Balaam tried unsuccessfully to prostitute his prophetic gift in curse Israel for money offered him by Balak, King of Moab. So he devised a plot to have Moabite women seduce Israelite men into intermarriage. The result was the blasphemous union of Israel with fornication and idolatrous feasts.”³³
3. This is what was happening to that local congregation. Some of her members influenced the Church into associating with the false religious systems of the day. They were also intertwined with the government. An unholy marriage existed. However, who does the Lord Jesus rebuke for this problem in the assembly? The angel of the Church, the pastor.

²⁹ See footnote for Revelation 2.14 from C. I. Scofield, *Editor, The First Scofield Reference Bible*, (Iowa Falls, Iowa: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1986), pages 1332-1333.

³⁰ Walvoord, page 68.

³¹ John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, General Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1983), page 936.

³² See footnote for Revelation 2.14 from Henry M. Morris, *The New Defender's Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: World Publishing, 2006), page 1990.

³³ See footnote for Revelation 2.14 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 1995.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ rebuked the pastor because he did not lead the Church members to forego worldly practices. Some Church members thought sinning was not so sinful. But who did the Lord Jesus deal with about such sinning by Church members? Before a Church member becomes angry about how a pastor deals with sin in the congregation, keep in mind that when spiritual compromise and wickedness are brought into an assembly, the first person who begins to feel the hammer blows of judgment in the form of a rebuke from the Savior is pastor. Not you, him.
5. Let us consider something else. Most commentaries dealing with Revelation assume that these seven letters to the seven angels of the seven Churches in Asia represent seven different times in Church history. There is no objective evidence that these passages are to be so interpreted, but commentators work hard to do so anyway. Suppose Christ's letter to the angel of this Church does correspond to a distinct period of Church history, which it does not really appear to do. In that case, this letter might compare to when Rome became a so-called "Christian" empire when Emperor Constantine became a "Christian" and assumed the title of Pontifus Maximus.
6. Do you remember the origin of that title? When Constantine supposedly became a "Christian," there was an immediate influx of hundreds of thousands of unsaved folks into churches throughout the empire because it was now the popular thing to do. On one occasion, Constantine marched an army through a river and decreed they had become officially baptized Christians by so doing. Therefore, when these unsaved Romans entered the Churches, they brought their false beliefs. Thus was formed, on the foundation of the Babylonian cult worship of the Magi and through the office of the Pontifus Maximus, what is now termed the Roman Catholic Church.
7. This is not just ancient history. Even today, the doctrine of Balaam is being encouraged in Churches all over America. It is called the ecumenical movement in some circles; in others, it is the Charismatic Movement or neo-evangelicalism. However, the direction is the same in any case. The so-called "Christians" are advocating interplay between nominally Christian groups and the Roman Church, which is Christian in name only, as you who know your Bible realize.
8. Let me tell you something about Baptists as an aside. Baptists have historically been separatists. We do not think we are better than anyone else is, but we do, by choice, refrain from fellowshipping with groups who compromise on crucial Bible doctrines. Why? Because we think we are superior? No. Because we are of the firm conviction that most Protestants are, however slowly, headed back to Rome, from whence they originally came.
9. Though you might think you are being generous and broad-minded, I advise you, as an under-shepherd responsible for watching over souls, to be very cautious of anyone who indiscriminately associates with different religious groups without regard to what those groups believe. Do not think that spreaders of good cheer and

smiles cannot also be spiritually dangerous because they can be. They are dangerous because they teach, by example, that it does not matter what you believe as long as you label yourself correctly. No matter what some people think or say, it does matter what you believe.

(2.15) So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

1. The pastor also allowed to remain in the Church those who held to the doctrine, or the teaching, of the Nicolaitans. Remember, the Lord commended the Ephesian pastor for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Jesus, you will remember, also hates their teachings. However, the Pergamos pastor tolerated such heresy and practice in his midst.
2. Remember what Nicolaitanism is? Our study convinces us that Nicolaitanism refers to deeds of abomination and impurity. Does this not align with the previous verse and the association with Balaam's enticement to abominable and impure behavior? Spiritual compromise typically results in lower personal standards related to modesty, attire, and personal holiness.
3. This pastor in Pergamos was noted for something which no pastor should be noted for; compromise. He tolerated things that Christ found intolerable. In addition, as we shall see in the next verse, the Lord Jesus Christ was holding him responsible for it all.

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

1. If that pastor does not repent and turn from his compromise and willingness to overlook that sin, the Lord Jesus Christ promised to come in judgment. This is not His Second Coming. However, it is a warning that He will somehow come in judgment.
2. This pastor was being warned. If he did not lead the Church he served to hate what Christ hates and to be intolerant of false teachings; the Lord Jesus Christ will take matters into His Own hands. The Lord promised to use the other cutting edge of His Word if things were not dealt with properly.
3. Do you want the Lord Jesus Christ to chastise your Church, which is to say to chastise you? Of course not. Then you had better get used to the fact that internal discipline is a way of life in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and tolerating that which is wrong is no virtue to be lauded. Furthermore, although we ought to be willing to address and deal with sin when and where we see it, we must recognize that dealing with sin is a major responsibility of anyone in pastoral ministry.

(2.17) 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*.

1. Manna is angel food. Just as God gave manna to the children of Israel in days gone by, a hidden manna is a promise to this world's overcomer. In addition, who are the overcomers? Right. Christians, according to First John 5.4-5.
2. "Black and white stones were used in the Jewish Sanhedrin to describe respectively the guilt or innocence of and the displeasure or favour to those who were brought before it. This symbol is a well-known one. It was also a method of justice in the days of long ago. We understand that many secret societies use it to-day. Therefore to be given a white stone by the Lord indicates His warmest approval and favour because of one's faithfulness on earth."³⁴
3. That same kind of intimacy will exist in heaven. Jesus will give a white stone to the believer. What is the new name written on it? I do not know. However, I look forward to receiving my private love note from the Savior. Aren't you?
4. Listen up, Church, to this message the Head of the Church has given that He wants every member to pay attention to.

4B. Letter To The Angel Of The Church In Thyatira (2.18-29)

Revelation 2.18-29 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.

³⁴ Sale-Harrison, page 45.

This is the longest of the seven letters to the angels of the Churches in Asia, with the city of Thyatira being located about 40 miles east of Pergamos.³⁵ The map helps to locate the seven cities in Asia.



(2.18) 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;

1. Lydia, Paul's first convert in Europe, came from this city, according to Acts 16.14. To the angel of the Church in Thyatira, the Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself as "the Son of God," the One who "hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire," and the one whose "feet are like fine brass."

³⁵ See footnote for Revelation 2.12, *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000), page 1367.

2. There is no Biblical record of evangelistic activity in Thyatira, so it may be that the Gospel was introduced there by means of Lydia's witness.³⁶
3. Notice that though the Lord's description of Himself here is similar to what we read in Revelation 1.14-15, He here describes Himself as "the Son of God" instead of "the Son of man," as in Revelation 1.13. Are these two phrases synonymous, as J. Vernon McGee suggests?³⁷ Or, as both John Walvoord³⁸ and Lehman Strauss³⁹ assert, are we to believe that His title of "the Son of God" bears directly on His dealings with the sins found in this Church?
- 4 I believe that the latter is the case. There was compromise in this congregation, and the Lord Jesus Christ issued severe warnings. Therefore, He described Himself as the judge.

(2.19) 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.

1. Twice in this verse, the Lord Jesus referred to this man's works. Works were predominant features in his life and ministry, among other very commendable qualities. This fellow was also the first of the pastors commended for his love. The progression from works to charity (which is love) to service, and on until we get to works again, shows development and growth in this man's life. The Lord Jesus knows everything about this man. He whose eyes are as a "flame of fire" misses nothing.
2. It seemed that this man had it all. Faith, love, patience, and works. It seemed as though he was just about perfect. He must have been a tremendous servant of God. He appeared to exhibit the personality and ethical characteristics that would make an ideal servant of God. Until we read what verse 20 says, we would have been correct in so presuming.

(2.20) 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.

1. After the commendation, the Lord severely rebuked the man's life and ministry. Notice that the rebuke stemmed not from what he did but from what he did not do, as he stood by and watched someone else do wrong without stepping in to stop it.
2. He tolerated a woman named Jezebel. Was her real name Jezebel? Or was the Lord Jesus likening her to the Jezebel in the Old Testament, who opposed the ministry of Elijah? I instead think it was the latter case.

³⁶ Walvoord, page 72.

³⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Reveling Through Revelation, Part I*, (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Books, 1979), page 25.

³⁸ Walvoord, page 72.

³⁹ Lehman Strauss, *The Book Of The Revelation*, (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1963), page 59.

3. Recall that Jezebel was the wife of wicked king Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel. In addition, old Ahab is a beautiful example of a spineless jellyfish type of husband who is ruled over and patronized by a wicked and loud-mouthed wife. Notable, is it not, how frequently such a woman is so boisterous? That observation aside, Ahab's Jezebel was responsible for the wholesale idolatry that swept across Israel while her pathetic husband quietly occupied the throne.
4. As for the woman the Lord Jesus referred to in Thyatira, I doubt her given name was Jezebel. However, she does seem to be the spiritual clone of the queen of Israel, who lived some 550 years before Christ.⁴⁰
5. The Thyatiran woman called herself a prophetess. She set herself up as an authority. We know she dominated and manipulated the man she was supposed to submit to. Therefore, a Jezebel type is a manipulative wife who speaks out as an authority and runs her husband. That is the chief characteristic of a Jezebel since there is no evidence that the Jezebel of Old Testament times was guilty of infidelity to her husband.
6. Because of this verse's wording, some commentators believe this woman in Thyatira might have been the wife of the angel of the Church in Thyatira.⁴¹ That would mean the Lord Jesus Christ harshly rebuked this pastor for refusing to restrain his wife as she pretended she was a God-called spiritual leader. Imagine that. The Lord Jesus Christ called a preacher down for not keeping his wife in line and allowing her to pawn herself off as an anointed congregation leader, as he was supposed to be.
7. I wonder what modern-day women preachers, the so-called co-pastor wives found in many Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations, and the female pastors in liberal mainline denominational churches say about this passage. I wonder how a man married to such a woman who rolls over and allows her to trample him with her words and deeds can live with himself.
8. I know men whose wives are Jezebels and have no respect for them. They are pathetic and despicable excuses for manhood. I am in no way advocating abuse by any husband. I do, however, support authentic manhood in a man and not wimpy simpering passivity because the pansy is afraid to make his contentious wife angry with him for daring to stand up to her.
9. Whoever this Jezebel was, she taught and seduced Christ's servants to commit fornication and to eat things offered to idols. To do this, she must have established herself as an authority over the plain teachings of God's Word. However, is that

⁴⁰ See note on First and Second Kings, Author and Date, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 467.

⁴¹ Walvoord, page 73.

not what bossy wives and women preachers do today? Sure they do. What do First Timothy 2.11-12 and 3.1-7 say?

¹¹ Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

¹² But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

¹ This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

³ Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

⁴ One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

⁵ (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

⁶ Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

⁷ Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

10. This Jezebel taught believers that they did not need to separate themselves from their past pagan practices. Though it may be difficult and trying for you to cut the ties to your pagan religious past, you must. Cut yourself from Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Pentecostalism, Buddhism, and secret societies like Masons and Shriners, Easter Star, Job's Daughters, and DeMolay.

11. The fornication here could refer to either literal fornication or spiritual fornication. She may have led the congregation into sexual sin, especially if she indulged in paganism, which was frequently nothing more than religious harlotry. Greek temples, those beautiful ones whose remnants are seen in National Geographic documentaries? They were nothing more than brothels, where sacred prostitution and sanctioned sodomy took place under the guise of worship. I speak the truth. If this woman did not lead people into committing physical fornication, it could be that what is meant here is that she led them into idolatry, which is spiritual fornication.

12. When the Holy Spirit deals with someone, if that individual wants to be saved, they ought to sever all religious ties to any false religious system to which they once belonged. To continue such relations with the past is to commit spiritual fornication and adultery. I encourage Churches not to mix and mingle with false religion. This is why I am a separatist.

(2.21) And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

1. The Lord allowed her to turn from her sins and be saved, and she repented not. This shows both the long-suffering mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the stubbornness of this wicked Jezebel.
2. But we see something else here. The word “space” translates from the Greek word “χρόνος,” which means “time.” In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ gave this woman Jezebel time to turn from her sins and be saved before He moved in judgment against her. This shows us that she could not just decide to be saved anytime she wanted to. Such a notion that a sinner chooses the time and place to come to Christ is unscriptural. It is akin to the heresy of Pelagianism.
3. “Pelagius, a popular Christian teacher active in Rome about AD 383–410 and then later (until AD 424) in Palestine, taught that God holds man responsible only for those things that man is *able* to do. Since God warns us to do good, therefore, we must have the ability to do the good that God commands. The Pelagian position rejects the doctrine of “inherited sin” (or “original sin”) and maintains that sin consists only in separate sinful acts.”⁴²
3. Here is a simple test of Christian orthodoxy. Ask a fellow, ask a preacher, “Who decides when a sinner is saved, the sinner or God?” If the person you ask answers “the sinner,” you know you are dealing with a fellow who is not an orthodox Christian because Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.”⁴³ The notion that a sinner decides with the Father draws him to Christ is ludicrous.
4. When you vacation, remember to go to Church on Sunday wherever you are. It will help you gauge the sermon you are about to listen to. Before the service begins, ask the preacher, “Pastor, who decides when a sinner is saved, the sinner or God?”
5. Back to the text. What kind of judgment awaits this Jezebel? We see the specifics in the next verse, but the judgment will necessarily be God’s wrath against this unsaved woman. How do I know she was an unsaved woman? Because fornication and idolatry are sins committed by unsaved people *unless you or one of your loved ones commit them. Then you can be saved and commit such sins.*
6. Wake up! I am being sarcastic. Fornicators and idolaters are unsaved people! If you are engaged in idolatrous practices, you are not a Christian. If you are having sex with someone you are not married to, even if you are in love, then you are not a Christian. First Corinthians 6.9-10:
 - 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

⁴² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Second Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), page 628.

⁴³ John 6.44

¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

7. Therefore, since this Jezebel would not come down off her high horse, since she would not disavow herself of her fraudulent claim of spiritual authority, since she would not abandon her fornication once and for all, she is doomed.

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

1. Jezebel would be cast into a bed of fornication, and her followers would be severely punished if they did not turn from their sins and be saved. By the way, κλίνην, translated “bed,” does not refer to a funeral bier or a dining couch. The bed was a bed of sickness and pain.⁴⁴ The immediate judgment of Christ for this Jezebel may very well have been in the form of some venereal disease with all its associated ills and agonies.

2. Note that no definite article exists before the word “great.” That suggests Christ was not referring to the Great Tribulation, but simply great tribulation. Life would be tough for those who followed this woman unless they quickly responded to the Gospel and were saved.

(2.23) 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.

1. Was it extreme severity for the Lord Jesus Christ to kill this woman’s children? Remember that what was a punishment to her might have been mercy for her children. God does take children home to be with Him as a way of dealing with parents’ sins, thereby showing mercy to the children simultaneously. Had this woman’s children been raised under her ungodly influence, what likelihood would they ever have of hearing and believing the true Gospel?

2. On the other hand, “her children” could be those who supposedly were converted because of her influence, her spiritual offspring, which were not converted. They would then be professing Christians who are fornicators and adulterers within the Church. They would be the sincere but sincerely wrong who embraced false hopes.⁴⁵ Jesus said He was going to kill them with death.

3. We must remember that whenever we shake our fists at the Savior for His righteous actions, thinking Him to be unfair, unloving, or unmerciful, we call His character into question. We have no right to do such things. Whatever the Lord Jesus does, to whomsoever He does, it is the right thing to do. Amen?

⁴⁴ Reinecker & Rogers, page 818.

⁴⁵ Matthew 7.21-23

4. Be mindful that when Jesus says that He searcheth the reins and hearts, He is claiming the godly attribute of omniscience, which is the knowledge of all things. Since only God can know everything, this is the second clear reminder of the deity that the Lord presents to this Church leader.
5. This all-knowing is the basis upon which Jesus rewards His faithful followers. We need never worry that something we do for Him will go unnoticed. It may go unnoticed here on earth, but at the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will be bountifully rewarded for service rendered to the cause of Jesus Christ. His omniscience is also a warning to believers. There is nothing done or thought that He is unaware of.

(2.24-25) 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.

1. The Lord turned His remarks back to the Church's angel and the congregation's genuinely saved folks. He did not deal with the truly converted in the same fashion as He will those who were deeply involved with sin and had known "the depths of Satan."
2. "It is worthy of remark that the Gnostics called their doctrine *the depths of God*, and *the depths of Bythos*, intimating that they contained the most *profound secrets* of Divine wisdom. Christ calls them *the depths of Satan*, being master pieces of his *subtlety*. Perhaps they thought them to be of God, while all the time they were deceived by the devil."⁴⁶
3. Notice what those folks escaped because of their ignorance of sin and unwillingness to follow that Jezebel? It was because they had **not** done certain things and seen certain things that resulted in them not even knowing certain things that spared them a harsh warning from Christ and judgment.
4. So many people feel that they need to have "fun," and then they can settle down to being a "Christian" after they have had their chance at real fun. I think this false notion is reinforced by the tendency of some lost people who claim to be Christians who reminisce about the good old days while wallowing in their memories of sin.
5. It is unwise to dwell on the sins of the past. Such reminiscing lures others to sin. God has called us to holy living, and we need to avoid the slime pit of sin. Be careful when you have the opportunity to testify about your past. Do not let yourself get caught up reliving your sinfulness as if it was a good thing. Do not give anyone the impression that you are glad you did wrong because the Lord Jesus was merciful and brought good out of it. He does not have to get good out of sin, and He may not do for one who follows your example what He in mercy did for you.

⁴⁶Clarke, page 982.

6. As with those in verses 24 and 25, the Lord is pleased whenever we avoid sin and hold fast to the faith until He comes again.

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

1. This verse gives us a hint of the millennium. Jesus is going to rule over this old earth for 1000 years. He will sit at that time on the throne of His father, David, the king of Israel. Revelation 20.4, in the last phrase, predicts, “and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”
2. What a glorious future to look forward to. This is the future of every child of God. We have learned that the overcomer is a genuine believer. If you are saved, you, too, are destined to be a ruler over some portion of God’s creation in the ages to come.
3. What will be the criteria determining the extent of your rewards and the greatness of your rule? In the Lord’s parable of Matthew 25.14-23, we are given insight:

- 14 For *the kingdom of heaven* is as a man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.
- 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.
- 16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents.
- 17 And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two.
- 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.
- 19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.
- 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.
- 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
- 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.
- 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

In First Corinthians 3.9-16, Paul is more specific:

- 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.
- 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.
- 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
- 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;
- 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.
- 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.
- 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.
- 16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Your faithfulness will determine your future rewards, building on the foundation referred to in verse 11, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, what kind of structure is built with the materials mentioned in verse 12? A temple. However, what temple is Paul referring to here? The Corinthian congregation, verse 16.

4. Think about it. Believers will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ and allowed to rule. What you will rule over is determined by your faithfulness to construct the temple of God, that Church you are a part of.⁴⁷
- (2.27) 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.
1. Notice the method of Christ's rule over the nations here. The type of government will be a dictatorship. It is a theocracy, a government in which Christ directly rules the people. However, His rule will be "with a rod of iron." And "as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers." Does that not evoke images in your mind?
 2. Christ will break rebellion fomented by unbelievers during that period. He will not tolerate it! One characteristic of the millennium will be the complete intolerance of sin and the instantaneous response of Christ to punish or chastise the person who sins.
 3. It will differ from the years it takes to punish serious crimes nowadays. Amen? These days, it is not unusual for sins to go entire lifetimes without punishment. All that will change in the millennium.

⁴⁷ Peter Masters, *Church Membership In The Bible*, (London: The Wakeman Trust, 2008) is recommended.

4. Before proceeding, allow me to point out something. Do you see the verb “rule” in Revelation 2.27, the word ποιμανεῖ, which relates to tending the sheep, or when referring to people, to that activity of protecting, ruling, and governing them?⁴⁸ In Ephesians 4.11, the word is translated as “pastor.” Jesus, our Chief Shepherd, will pastor His flock during the millennium. Until then, He works through angels of the Churches, undershepherds, pastors to guide His flocks.

(2.28) And I will give him the morning star.

1. Some have indicated that the morning star references the Rapture of the Church Age believer. Would it not be wonderful if the Lord were speaking literally here?
2. What if this is a promise of galaxies to rule? He did say that if we were faithful over a few things, He would make us ruler over many things, did He not?⁴⁹
3. Another thought runs along this line. Since Jesus calls Himself “the bright and morning star” in Revelation 22.16, this may reference the Rapture that precedes the full light of day brought by His Second Coming. What He is saying, according to this view, is that at the Rapture, I give the morning star, which is to be giving Himself to the faithful Christian, as was not entirely possible while we are in the flesh.

(2.29) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

1. The Lord says, “Listen to what I have to say.”
2. Additionally, it indicates what the Lord said to one man and what He has spoken to just a few people. He wants everyone in the Churches to hear and profit from.

⁴⁸ Bauer, page 842.

⁴⁹ Matthew 25.21